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# Should We Tear Down Dams?

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## **Videos:**

“Largest dam removal project in U.S. history aims to help revive America’s salmon population”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hufbg\\_96Mpo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hufbg_96Mpo) (4:44 minutes)

“Calls to Tear Down Dams Won’t Save Salmon”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_sig2WLUWoU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sig2WLUWoU) (5:54 minutes)

## **Guide:**

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

## **Analysis Questions:**

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. In the CBS Mornings video, Leaf Hillman said: “It feels like I’ve always been telling these stories about how it used to be.” What did he mean by this?
3. In the Stossel video, Todd Myers said: “Between 96 and 98% of the salmon successfully pass each dam.” Is this an acceptable number? Why/Why not?
4. According to the CBS Mornings video, the dams of the Klamath River weren’t producing enough power to be financially viable. In a case like that, is there any reason not to tear down the dams? Why/Why not?
5. Stossel showed that while early dams did kill many salmon, the salmon population has increased since then. Why do you think the media portray salmon as endangered if the population has risen?
6. Leaf Hillman said the builders of the dams would have known about the negative impact if they’d asked the local Native American communities, but “nobody asked [them].” Should local communities be consulted before projects like this? Why/Why not?
7. Stossel showed that in 1999, environmental groups claimed that salmon would be extinct by 2017, but salmon populations actually increased in that timeframe. Should we be more skeptical when organizations make predictions like these? Why/Why not?

8. According to the CBS Mornings video, federal agents tried to prevent Native American tribes from fishing the salmon that remained in the Klamath River. Should the federal government have tried to stop the Native Americans from fishing? Why/Why not?
9. The Stossel video explained the benefits of hydro power. Prior to watching this video, were you aware of the role that dams play in generating power?
10. Leaf Hillman said to his son: "In your lifetime, I know that it's going to be a different story that this river is going to tell." What did he mean by this?
11. Todd Myers said: "It's more about feeling good than environmental results." What did he mean by this? What are some other examples of "feel good" policies?
12. Do you think the dams of the Klamath River should be torn down? Why/Why not?
13. Do you think the dams of the Snake River should be torn down? Why/Why not?
14. If you had different answers to the previous two questions, why? What differentiates the two situations?
15. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
16. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
17. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
18. What else would you like to learn about this topic?