

Educating Others about Climate Change

Description:

There is an overwhelming consensus among scientists that climate change is occurring and it is caused by human activities that disrupt the Earth's systems. Despite this, the science is still sometimes wrongly discredited. In order to understand why people deny climate science, we should be familiar with some of the common opposing claims. Understanding the root of these misconceptions can prepare us to have the necessary, yet challenging, conversations in order to educate others about climate change. These conversations empower us, as individuals and communities, to take action.

Objectives:

- Encourage students to think critically about how climate change information is communicated and interpreted
- Expose students to the arguments that attempt to disprove climate science and investigate the root of these claims
- Empower students to educate others and engage with climate related discussions outside of the classroom using their foundation in climate science

Vocabulary:

Divest, politicization

Materials:

- A class set of the Educating Others about Climate Change worksheet (find on the last pages of this lesson)
- Our Climate Our Future [Have the Talk: Climate Conversations Guide](#)

- Computers, laptops, or tablets with internet access
- Interactive whiteboard or projector

Background Information:

While the scientific consensus on climate change is motivating important community, industry, and policy change, there are still some who denounce climate science. Many benefit from economic and political systems staying the same, or “business as usual.” Some individuals denounce climate science because they are misinformed, which is often due to a false representation of the topic in the media, that has historically been perpetuated by some policymakers and industry stakeholders.

The fossil fuel industry is a great example of this. There is a clear causal relationship between burning fossil fuels and climate change, but some groups invested in fossil fuels refuse to accept this, and the science that proves climate change.

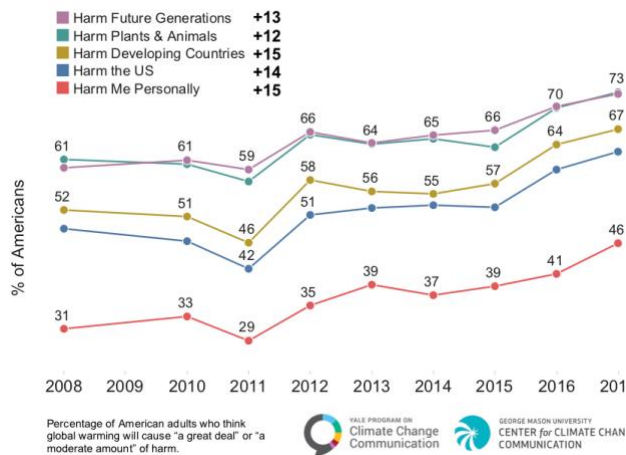
Today's conversation on climate change is usually divided into people who accept climate change, and “climate deniers”, which is a term used to describe people who denounce climate science.

The [Yale Climate Opinion Map](#) displays the estimated percent of Americans who “think global warming is happening by county” as of 2018.



Although this map demonstrates that many Americans think climate change is occurring, climate denial is still a narrative present in the media today, which gives the impression that the opinions of climate deniers are more widespread than they actually are.

When considering the risks associated with climate change and vulnerable populations, Yale researchers found that approximately 73% of adults in the U.S. believe "global warming will cause 'a great deal' or 'a moderate amount' of harm," as shown in the graph below.



Yale researchers also found that people consider climate change to be a bigger risk to future generations than to themselves. The fact that young people and future generations will be the ones forced to truly take on the burden of the intensified effects of climate change is one of the

reasons why it is so important for young people to have a strong understanding of the science, the impacts, and mitigation and adaptation strategies.

For more information on the nuances of climate change communication, explore Columbia University's Center for Research on Environmental Decisions guide, [The Psychology of Climate Change Communication](#).

Method:

- Introduce the topic by playing two short videos made by the Alliance for Climate Education (ACE) "Our Climate Our Future" educational campaign. First play [Chapter 6: Is it real?](#) and then [The Secret to Talking About Climate Change](#).
- Encourage the class to share their thoughts on these videos. Ask students if they have ever wondered if climate change is "real" and what prompted them to question this. Ask students if they have talked to someone who does not believe it is "real"? How did they respond in that moment?
- Pass out the Educating Others about Climate Change worksheet and the Our Climate Our Future [Have the Talk: Climate Conversations Guide](#). Ask students to research different publications that argue against climate science and complete the first page of the worksheet based on their findings.
- Then, ask students to imagine they were approached by someone who denies the science behind climate change. How would you communicate with that person? What would that conversation look like? Ask students to use pages 6 and 7 of the climate conversation guide for strategies to have this conversation with others.

- Once students determine their strategies, ask them to illustrate them in the comic strip on this lesson's worksheet. Be sure to print this worksheet single sided if you want to display the comic strips without their research notes on the backside.
- When the comic strips are complete, ask students to share them with a neighbor. What is similar and what stands out? Did you follow the OARTAC (Open, Ask, Reflect, Tell, Ask, Conclude) conversation structure?
- After students finish discussing their comic strips with their partner, ask for volunteers to act out their comics for the class.
- Allow for time to discuss this activity as a class after students finish performing their comic strips.

Discussion:

- Ask students why they think some still do not accept climate change. If the science exists, why do you think individuals, communities, cities, countries, and corporations are not exploring more actions or solutions?
- Discuss students' experiences hearing about the different ideas related to the climate change conversation. Discuss what they

initially thought about these arguments and whether or not their opinions have changed.

- Discuss the implications of the multiple interpretations of climate science and how that might impact the ways we react to climate change now and in the future.
- Do you think science can or should be disputed? What might motivate people to be critical of scientific findings?
- How will you engage in the climate change conversation? Would you feel comfortable discussing your position on climate change with peers, friends or family members? If no, why? If yes, how do you plan on articulating your thoughts?

Extension:

- Explore Yale's [Climate Opinion Map](#) as a class and discuss the patterns found on the map. Why do these patterns exist?
- Come up with questions and conversation starters to introduce the topic at home with family or friends.

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Educating Others about Climate Change

1. What are some of the claims made by people who deny climate science? Describe how these claims are framed based on your research.

2. How have these claims been shared (i.e. news articles, social media, video clips, etc.)? Is this a primary source?

3. Which individuals (family, friends, etc.) and/or stakeholders (organizations, politicians, media companies, etc.) are making these claims? Why do you think they are making these claims?

On the next page, create a comic strip that illustrates a productive conversation with a climate denier. Use this space to practice some strategies for addressing people who disagree with you. Be sure to title your comic and describe the scenes in the lines below each box. First, consider these questions:

a. What are the claims made by the climate denier in your scene?

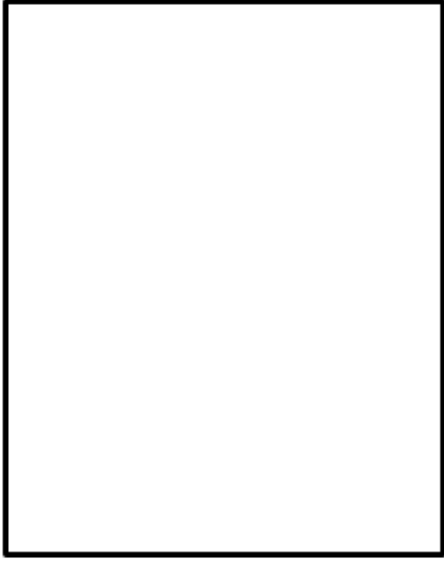
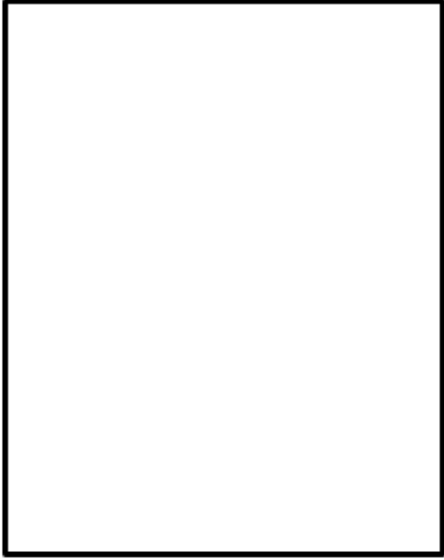
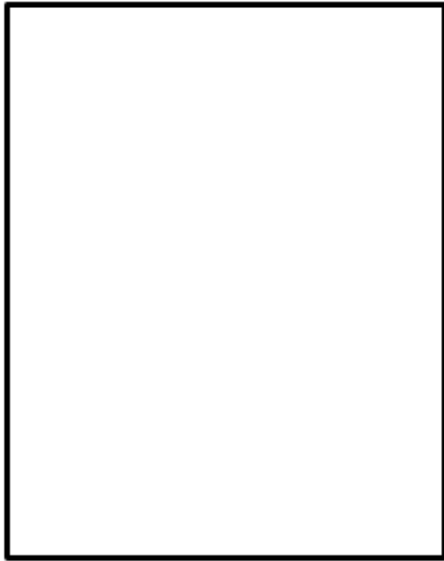
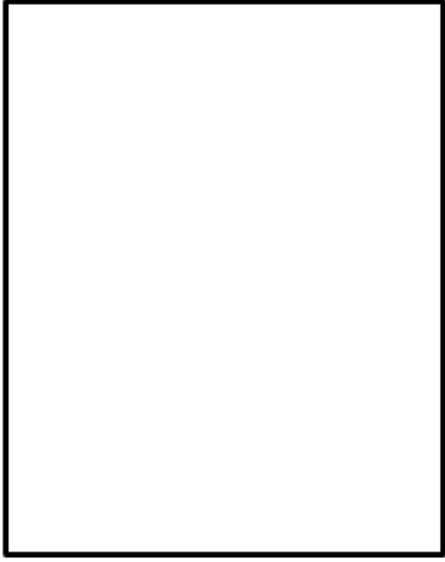
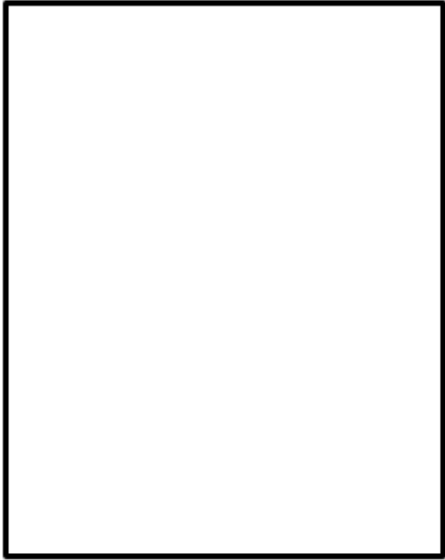
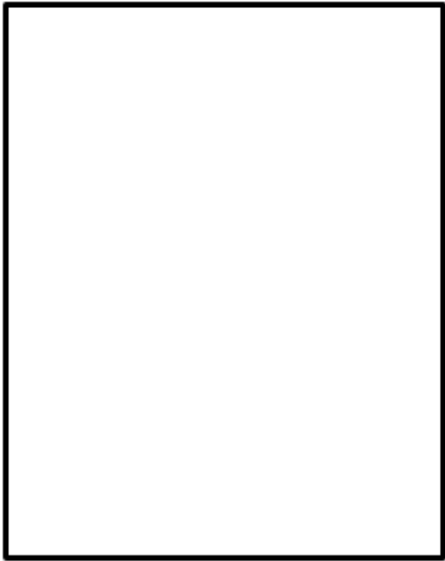
b. How will you respond to these claims?

c. When and where is the conversation taking place?

d. How will you ensure the conversation is productive?

Educating Others about Climate Change Comic Strip

Title: _____



By: _____