



A FILM BY CHRISTI COOPER

YOUTH GOV

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"THE SMITH & BOND AG. JACQUELYNNE ALLEN, "THE BURGESS, "MARTY COLLINS, "JONAS SARR, "DAVE & CHRISTOPHER, "LINDA A. COOPER, "J
"STEVE SCARF, "BERNIE SANDS, "WILLIAMS SANDS, "THE BURGESS, "MARTY COLLINS, "JONAS SARR, "DAVE & CHRISTOPHER, "LINDA A. COOPER, "J



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About Journeys in Film

Journeys in Film is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that amplifies the storytelling power of film to educate the most visually literate generation in history. We believe that teaching with film has the power to help educate our next generation with a richer understanding of the diverse and complex world in which we live.

We transform entertainment media into educational media by designing and publishing cost-free, educational resources for teachers to accompany carefully chosen feature films and documentaries while meeting mandated standards in all core subjects. Selected films are used as springboards for lesson plans in subjects like math, science, language arts, social studies, and more. Our resources support various learning styles, promote literacy, transport students around the globe, and foster learning that meets core academic objectives.

In addition to general subject areas, Journeys in Film’s programs engage students in meaningful examinations of human rights, poverty and hunger, stereotyping and racism, environmental issues, global health, immigration, and gender roles. Our teaching methods are successful in broadening perspectives, teaching for global competency, encouraging empathy, and building new paradigms for best practices in education. We seek to inspire educators, school administrators, community members, and home-schooling parents to capture the imagination and curiosity of their students by using our innovative curriculum.

We also develop discussion guides for films that don’t necessarily lend themselves to academic standards but cover topics and themes that are valuable for classroom discussions and in other settings, such as after-school clubs, community screenings, and college classes.

Why use this program?

In an age when literacy means familiarity with images as much as text and a screen has become a new kind of page, 21st-century students are more connected to media than any previous generation. This offers educators unprecedented opportunities to engage students in learning about a variety of subjects and issues of global significance.

Films, television, documentaries, and other media platforms can provide an immediate, immersive window to a better understanding of the world and matters affecting all of us.

We teach our students literature that originated from all around the world, but we tend to forget that what often spurs the imagination is both visual and auditory. Films evoke emotion and can liven up the classroom, bringing energy to a course. We believe in the power of films to open our minds, inspire us to learn more, provide a bridge to better understanding the key issues of 21st-century concern, and compel us to make a difference.

When properly used, films can be a powerful educational tool in developing critical thinking skills and exposure to different perspectives. Students travel through these characters and their stories: They drink tea with an Iranian family in *Children of Heaven*, play soccer in a Tibetan monastery in *The Cup*, find themselves in the conflict between urban grandson and rural grandmother in South Korea in *The Way Home*, and watch the ways modernity challenges Maori traditions in New Zealand in *Whale Rider*. Journeys in Film brings outstanding and socially relevant documentaries to the classroom that teach about a broad range of social issues in real-life settings, such as famine-stricken and war-torn Somalia, a maximum-security prison in Alabama, and a World War II concentration camp near Prague.

They explore complex and important topics like race and gender. Students tour an African school with a Nobel Prize-winning teenager in *He Named Me Malala* and experience the transformative power of music in *The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Ensemble* and *Landfill Harmonic*.

Our hope is that this generation of youth will contribute to the betterment of humankind through kindness and understanding, together with scientific knowledge, to help solve some of the world’s most pressing issues.

Our goal is to create relevant and engaging curricula and programming around media that encourages cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and knowledge of the people and environments around the world. We aim to prepare today’s youth to live and work as globally informed, media-literate, and competent citizens.

A Letter from Levi

I'm excited to see that you are engaging with *YOUTH v. GOV* and hope that using this guide will help you better understand climate change and why it matters so much to young people like me. Maybe this will inspire you to take action on things that are important to you.

Many people think that climate change is an adult problem that kids and youth either don't understand or can't affect, but that is not true at all. While climate change is a complex issue, it affects everyone on the planet, so it is very important to learn about. Throughout the course of history, youth have fought for what is important to them by coming together, taking action, and getting adults to lend their support. Climate change disproportionately affects young people because we will see more negative effects throughout our lifetimes than previous generations. That means it is even more important that we connect with one another to fight for our future and for future generations.

For over 50 years, the government has known about climate change. Their actions have violated our constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, as well as failed to protect essential public trust resources. Scientists agree that climate change is catastrophic and will eventually get to the point of no return. It affects everyone in so many ways, including droughts, fires, hurricanes and other extreme weather; flooding and sea level rise; negative effects on health; and social and cultural impacts. You'll see these in the film and learn more about them.

The U.S. government has a long history of supporting the fossil fuel industry. We have developed a reliance on fossil fuels, even though they cause great damage to our planet. Moving away from that reliance is the only way to make lasting change. This is one of the reasons why we chose to go through the court system to ask the courts to recognize and protect our constitutional rights and tell the government to end the reliance on fossil fuels and move to clean energy instead. This is both technically and economically feasible. Despite having the best scientists and legal team on our side, navigating the court system is both time consuming and challenging, with lots of ups and downs along the way.

In my lifetime, I have seen the effects of climate change, such as sea level rise, flooding, and damage to my local beaches. I've had to evacuate my home due to hurricanes. We even chose to move off the island I grew up on to try and escape some of these impacts. My friends in the film have also experienced different effects of climate change as have so many people around the world. Maybe climate change has even affected your own life and the lives of people in your community.

Adults don't always listen to kids, but being involved in this case helped me see the importance of speaking up and using my voice. Being educated on what you care about will help you convince others to support you and help build connections. It is important to use your voice to fight for what matters to you. I hope this film and guide help empower you to take action.



Levi
@connectwithlevi

Introducing *YOUTH v. GOV*

Any student who has taken a course on United States history has heard Thomas Jefferson's words about our inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. What makes them inalienable? Jefferson believed they are part of our very nature as human beings. Today, we are facing a climate crisis that scientists and government leaders have known was coming for a long time; it is only now, in an age of growing and more frequent wildfires, droughts, stronger hurricanes, and rising sea level, that many Americans and others have become aware of the dangers. Some are still in denial, but their numbers are inevitably shrinking as conditions worsen.

The Constitution of the United States includes the Bill of Rights and other amendments that delineate and protect the rights of citizens. If citizens perceive that their rights are being violated by the government, they have the ability to bring a constitutional case to the courts to protect those rights, suing local, state, or even the federal government if necessary, alleging that their constitutionally protected rights are threatened or abridged. (The well-known case of *Brown v. Board of Education* is an example.) *Juliana v. United States* is the first constitutional case pertaining to climate change to win a favorable ruling, and it was brought by a group of youths who contend that the Constitution guarantees an unenumerated fundamental right to a "stable climate system."

Young people are particularly aware of this accelerating emergency, both because they are disproportionately harmed by the climate crisis and because the changes in climate will become ever more pronounced in their lifetimes. Young people around the world have stepped forward to demand that adults — from government leaders to oil and gas company executives — stop their actions

that make the climate crisis worse. We see images of Greta Thunberg and others of her generation leading protests and speaking out. And even before this youth climate movement began, a group of 21 youths decided to use the law to protect their constitutional rights, in essence challenging the ways that the U.S. federal government has supported policies that, while perhaps useful to certain industries like fossil fuels in the short term, spell climate disaster for all. Coming from ten different states around the country and representing different ethnicities, geographical diversity, and social groups, these young people initiated a lawsuit with the help of the nonprofit legal organization Our Children's Trust. *Juliana v. United States* was filed in 2015, and in the year 2023, it is still making its way through the court system. Today Our Children's Trust continues to assist young people in U.S. states and in countries around the world who are also trying to stop actions taken by their governments that actively make the climate crisis worse and lead to even further climate degradation.

In the documentary *YOUTH v. GOV*, your students will learn how young people like themselves have taken a stand against climate change and persisted in the fight to protect their legal right to a safe climate for years. They will meet the individual students involved and get to know their stories. They will learn more about their constitutional rights and the American judicial system. They will also discover more about the alarming changes in the environment that are already causing significant harm to young people across the United States and around the world, affecting all our lives until both legal and scientific recourses are finally implemented.

“Climate anxiety” is very real, and, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are suffering from depression, anxiety, and, for some, even suicidal ideation at an alarming rate. Sharing this documentary with your students will help them understand that there are known solutions to address the climate crisis — and ways that they as young people can fight the sense of helplessness and engage in collective action to make a better world. Our Children’s Trust and their young clients in *YOUTH v. GOV* show there is active hope for a better world.

Film Credits

DIRECTOR: Christi Cooper

PRODUCERS: Olivia Ahnemann, Christi Cooper

CO-PRODUCERS: Liz Smith, Dennis Aig

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Jody Allen, Ruth Johnston, Rocky Collings, Jannat Gargi, David J. Cornfield, Linda A. Cornfield, Tiffany Schauer, Heather Smith

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: James Balog

WRITERS: Christi Cooper, with additional writing by Lyman Smith

Lesson

Environmental Science, Government, English Language Arts

Climate Close to Home

Enduring Understandings

- Natural systems are interdependent.
- Life on Earth depends on and affects the climate.
- Climate naturally changes over long periods of time (which is very different than anthropogenic-induced changes).
- Climate change will have consequences for all Earth systems.
- Climate change impacts all human communities, but children are the most vulnerable.
- Climate change impacts vary across geographic boundaries.
- The actions of human communities impact the climate of Earth.
- Federal, state, and local governments are actively and knowingly making the climate crisis worse through actions that permit, subsidize, and promote fossil fuel energy systems.
- Decisions at the local and state government level can be made to stop policies and government actions that make the climate crisis worse, as well as help mitigate the impacts of climate change on communities.
- Courts can judge what governments are doing to cause or address climate change and are a backstop against illegal government conduct that infringes upon the rights of citizens.
- Only courts are empowered to interpret constitutions and say what the law requires.
- Citizen participation can influence climate policy by voting (if you are 18), lobbying in the legislature, petitioning and submitting comments to the president and executive branch, and bringing cases to the judicial branch.
- All voices can play a significant role in government decision-making processes. The reality is that it takes many voices to outweigh lobbying money and the power of special interest groups like the fossil fuel industry. Sometimes, it takes the courts to step in to protect people who are disenfranchised and lack political power in influencing their government.

- Sometimes it is also easier to influence politicians at the local level by attending your city council meetings.

Essential Questions

- What is climate change?
- How is climate different from weather?
- Why is the climate of Earth changing?
- What evidence do we have that the climate of Earth is changing?
- What contributes to climate change?
- What are the impacts of climate change?
- How does climate change affect human communities?
- How does the impact of climate change vary across geographic boundaries?
- Why is citizen participation in every branch of government important?
- How can citizens participate in political processes?
- How can citizens participate in the legislative branch and advocate for climate policy reform?
- How can citizens participate with their executive branch of government?
- How can citizens participate in their judicial branch of government to protect their rights?
- What are the roles of local and state governments in causing and mitigating the impacts of climate change?
- Why is engaging local governments around climate policy important?
- What tools are available to engage local government in climate policy

Notes to the Teacher

In this lesson, students look to the example of the young people from *YOUTH v. GOV* as they discover their own voices, learn how to work for the protection of human and constitutional rights, and determine how best to respond to the existential threat of climate change. The young plaintiffs featured in *YOUTH v. GOV* come from all over the United States, from Alaska to Florida. The activities in this lesson have been designed for use as individual modules or tiered instruction with each new lesson component building upon the last. A review of the activities prior to delivery is strongly suggested to determine the class time needed for each one and plan appropriately for materials acquisition. While the suggested lesson duration is between three and six one-hour periods, the activities can easily be modified based on time available or the point in the course curriculum where the lesson can best be integrated.

This lesson assumes students have some background on the fundamentals of climate change. The following resources may be helpful in the event review material is necessary: (1) Climate Change: <https://youtu.be/dcBXmj1nMTQ>; (2) Climate Change Quiz: <https://climate.nasa.gov/quizzes/global-temp-quiz/>. Please note all suggested links in this lesson can be displayed on a projector or shared with students for use on individual devices, depending on the classroom technology available.

Part 1 of the lesson asks students to reflect on their own feelings about climate change as it impacts their own lives. If students have themselves undergone acute traumatic experiences due to climate change or are experiencing the chronic or vicarious trauma of living in a climate-disrupted world where governments are not caring for their lives, this could be upsetting. You may wish to address this with students ahead of time and allow students to withdraw

from this part of the lesson if it is emotionally difficult for them. You may also consider having a school counselor attend this part of the lesson to assist students.

In this part of the lesson, students examine climate issues affecting their own state and region. You will need enough copies of **Teacher Resource 1: How Worried Are You About Climate Change?** to create a class set of the question provided, noting that one handout will cover six students (assuming scissors or a paper cutter are available). A full set of copies of **Handout 1: Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions** is also recommended for each class; blank paper and writing utensils may also be necessary. A computer with internet access and a projector will be useful in showing the *Juliana v. United States* plaintiff page students will reference as part of the assignment during the second part of the lesson, the link for which can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juliana_v._United_States#:~:text=The%20plaintiffs%20in%20the%20case,-Jacob%20Lebel. Large index cards will also be needed for students to complete the assignment.

When students are asked to list words or phrases that come to mind when they think of climate change in Step 1, one alternative would be for the class to create a word cloud using a free digital program like Mentimeter (<https://www.mentimeter.com/signup?referral=features/word-cloud>) or Poll Everywhere (<https://www.poll.everywhere.com/word-cloud>). [Please note that, while free, these programs still require a user account.] **Handout 1: Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions** can be completed as an in-class activity or assigned as homework if time is limited. For additional context in helping students understand the concept of “eco-anxiety” introduced in **Handout 1**, please visit *How can we help kids cope with ‘eco-anxiety’?* at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220315-how-eco-anxiety-affects-childrens-minds>.

For the first part of this lesson, students will need access on their computers or devices to the article “Young People’s Climate Anxiety Revealed in a Landmark Survey” at <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-021-02582-8/d41586-021-02582-8.pdf>.

NOTE: After Part 1, it will be important to create space for students to share, publicly or confidentially, how they are feeling about the activity and the subject. This can be a class discussion, but you should also offer resources like the school counselor for students who feel overwhelmed. It may also help to take a break after Part 1 and do a relaxing or fun activity (e.g., movement, music, or going outside) to help all the students manage their emotions.

In Part 2 of this lesson, a shifting climate becomes a more personal narrative as students examine the impacts of climate change in their own communities. They will explore the most prevalent climate indicators close to home, thinking critically about the consequences of climate change relative to the health of human communities and future of our planet. A full set of copies of **Handout 2: Climate Change in My Community** is recommended for each class; computers/devices, writing utensils, index cards, and colored pencils/markers may also be necessary. A computer with internet access and a projector will be useful in showing students how to navigate the menu of websites provided on the handout: (1) “States at Risk” (<https://toolkit.climate.gov/tool/states-risk>), (2) “The 50 States in Climate Crisis” (<https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/the-50-states-in-climate-crisis/>), and (3) “Environmental Protection Agency Climate Indicator Map” (<https://tinyurl.com/98xxhx85>). **Handout 2: Climate Change in My Community** can also be completed as a homework assignment depending on the time available.

In Part 3 of this lesson, students will explore the policies and government actions at play that make the climate crisis worse, as well as policies and government actions that could help mitigate the impacts of climate on local communities. They learn about how local and state agencies knowingly exacerbate climate change as well as how they can work to protect the environment, exploring policy statements relating to efforts in their own communities or region. Students will have the opportunity to write a letter to a legislator expressing their concerns and ideas for workable solutions to a local or regional climate-related problem, including identifying governmental actions and policies that make climate change worse. A full set of copies of **Handout 3: Sharing Your Story** is needed for each class, as are computers with internet access and writing utensils. **Handout 3: Sharing Your Story** can also be completed as a homework assignment depending on the time available.

If you think students would benefit from some letter-writing tips, share these from the ACLU at <https://www.aclu.org/other/tips-writing-your-elected-officials>. It is important to give students leeway in framing their own ideas for letters to legislators. (Letters could also be sent to the president, governors, the attorney general of their state or the U.S., heads of executive agencies like EPA or state natural resource agencies, editors of media outlets from local papers to the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, local city councils and mayors, etc.) You should not require students to take any particular stance. You should also not require them to mail the letters, but encourage them to do so if they choose and to share any response they receive.

Common Core Standards addressed by this lesson**History/Social Studies****CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

Science and Technical Subjects**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts, attending to the precise details of explanations or descriptions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; trace the text's explanation or depiction of a complex process, phenomenon, or concept; provide an accurate summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 9-10 texts and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.5

Analyze the structure of the relationships among concepts in a text, including relationships among key terms (e.g., force, friction, reaction force, energy).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.7

Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically (e.g., in an equation) into words.

Writing**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1**

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.6

Use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Duration of Lesson

Three to six one-hour periods

Assessments

Completion of the **Climate Anxiety** reflection activity and discussion
Completion of the **Climate Change in My Community** research project, group discussion, and index card illustrations
Completion of the **Sharing Your Story** reflection questions and policy letter
Group discussion
Student presentations

Materials

Writing utensils
Blank 8 ½" x 11" paper
Whiteboard
Whiteboard markers
Computers/devices with internet access
Projector/speakers
Large index cards
Colored pencils/markers
Access to copies of "Young People's Climate Anxiety Revealed in a Landmark Survey" (See Notes to the Teacher, above.)
Full class copies of:
Handout 1: Climate Anxiety
Handout 2: Climate Change in My Community
Handout 3: Sharing Your Story
Teacher Resource 1: How Worried Are You About Climate Change?
Teacher Resource 2: Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions (Suggested Answers)
Teacher Resource 3: Sharing Your Story (Suggested Answers)

Procedure

Part 1: Climate Change: A Matter of Heart
(1–2 one-hour periods)

1. Ask the students to choose five words or phrases that come to mind when they think about climate change. Ask them to record their list of terms on a blank sheet of paper or in a notebook. Invite the students to share their thoughts with the class; record the student responses on the board. [Note: Please see Notes to the Teacher for Part 1, above, regarding digital alternatives to this activity.]
2. Divide the class into groups of two or three students. Distribute one copy of the question from **Teacher Resource 1** to each student. Explain that the line represents a continuum and give them several minutes to think and quietly place their response accordingly. Ask them to record their reason(s) for responding the way they did; allow students in each group to share their responses with each other for several minutes. Invite a few students to share their thoughts with the class.
3. Have students access copies of the article "Young People's Climate Anxiety Revealed in Landmark Survey" online at <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-021-02582-8/d41586-021-02582-8.pdf>. (See Notes to the Teacher, above, for guidance on making this activity emotionally safe for all students.) Also distribute copies of **Handout 1: Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions**. Invite the students to review the data in the upper right-hand corner of the article. Explain this data set is the result of a survey of 10,000 young people conducted in 2021, a year after *YOUTH v. GOV* premiered. Invite several students to share anything that stands out to them from the data.

- compare with the survey results. (Answers here may vary.)
- How did the results of this survey make you feel? Please explain. (Answers here may vary.)
5. Give students time to read the article and discuss it. Distribute a copy of **Handout 1: Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions** to each student and give time for the students to answer the reflection questions on the back.
 - b. How does it make you feel to know people your age are fighting hard to protect their right to a safe climate, demanding government accountability to end climate harms? **6. Ask members of each group from the responses to the Handout 1 reflection questions to share their answers with the other. Ask several students to share their responses to the reflection questions as a guide for the class.**
 - c. Do you feel inspired by the work of the young people featured in this film? **7. Ask the students to think about the plaintiffs involved in the case from the brief discussion using the following questions:**
 - d. Does the work of the young people featured in this film make you feel more hopeful about the future of the climate and health of human communities on earth?
 - a. What is something you have learned about the life of which you are proud?
 8. As a homework assignment for the next class, ask the students to learn more about the young plaintiffs from *YOUTH v. GOV* by visiting https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ju-liana_v._United_States#:~:text=The%20plaintiffs%20in%20the%20case,Jacob%20Lebel. (Alternatively, you could ask them to find out about cases arising in other states, including their own. This information can be found at <https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/pending-state-actions>. Plaintiffs' stories are found in the complaints for each case. There is other content on the social media channels of Our Children's Trust.) At the start of the next class, students should be prepared to share information about two plaintiffs to whom they relate or with whom they have something in common. Give each student a large index card. For each plaintiff, students should record the following on their cards (one plaintiff per side):
 - a. Name of plaintiff
 - b. Age of plaintiff
 - c. Hometown of plaintiff
 - d. Concerns the plaintiff has about the immediate impacts of climate change where they live
 - e. Something about the plaintiff to which they relate

Part 2: Too Close for Comfort (1–2 one-hour class periods)

1. Begin by dividing the class into groups of two or three. Ask each group to discuss their findings from researching the young plaintiffs from *YOUTH v. GOV* the day before. If time permits, students can revisit the plaintiffs if needed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juliana_v._United_States#:~:text=The%20plaintiffs%20in%20the%20case,Ja-cob%20Lebel.
2. Invite students from each group to share their thoughts, focusing specifically on (1) the plaintiff concerns relating to the impacts of climate change in their communities and (2) the things about the plaintiffs to which they relate. [Note: The idea here is to encourage the students to begin connecting changes in climate to the health of their communities.]
3. Ask the students what climate-related issues exist in their own communities or region. Invite several students to share and host a brief discussion, noting that some may not have experience with or know of climate impacts. (Answers here may vary, but might include new or more extreme weather patterns, shifts in water availability, increases in forest fires and drought, reduced food supply, impacts to human health, community inequity, habitat loss, ecosystem imbalance, coastal flooding, inland flooding, changes to infrastructure, urban heat island effects, etc.)
4. Explain to the students that they will have the opportunity to explore the impacts of climate change in their communities or regions. Distribute one copy of **Handout 2: Climate Change in My Community** to each student. Review the instructions for Parts 1 and 2; give students time to begin working. (Note: This activity would work well with a block schedule or split over two class periods.)
5. Once students have completed the assignment, distribute large index cards to the class (one per student). Ask each student to make a sketch of a scene from their community

impacted by the aspect of climate change they detailed in Part 2 of the handout on their index card. Allow for approximately 10–15 minutes of worktime.

6. Invite the students to share the sketch they made with the class. Ask them to discuss where the sketch scene takes place and share how it reflects the climate-related impact to their community. Consider using the prompts below from Question 2 of Part 2 as a framework for this conversation, noting that answers may vary. [Note: As an alternative to index cards, students might also consider a larger piece of art or other form of creative expression as a response to the prompt.]

- a. How is your community impacted by this aspect of a changing climate?
- b. Where do you see this problem in your community? Do you see it often? What does it look like?
- c. Does this impact of climate change affect your community in an inequitable way?
- d. How does this impact of climate change affect your life?
- e. How does this impact of climate change on the community make you feel?
- f. Why do you think it might be important to solve this climate-related problem?

Part 3: Exploring Climate and Energy Policy and Government Action (2–3 one-hour class periods)

1. Begin by asking the students the following questions, allowing room for discussion depending on the time available.

- a. How do you get people to care about something important?

- b. Think about the experience you have with the impact of climate change in your community. What ideas do you have for solving this problem?
- c. The Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution says that Americans cannot be “deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” Do you think people have a constitutional right to a climate system capable of sustaining human life?
- d. The Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution says that Americans are entitled to “equal protection of the law.” Do you think children have a constitutional right to equal protection to a climate system not harmed by fossil fuels? Do you think children should have greater protection than adults in their 60s who have lived most of their lives?
- e. What can people do if they feel their rights have been violated? If you want to change the way systems operate, what are your options? Do you believe that young people who can’t vote have to use other options to have their voices heard?

2. Tell students they will watch a video that offers an introduction to how the United States government and politics operate. Play the “Introduction: Crash Course U.S. Government and Politics” video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrk4oY7UxpQ>). While students watch, they should record three new things they learn on a sheet of paper or in a notebook. [Note: For links to more of the videos in this *Government and Politics* series, please visit the Student Voice section of the Additional Resources below.]

3. Host a brief discussion with the class about the video, using the following questions as a guide.

- a. What stood out for you in this video?
- b. What is one thing you learned you did not know before?

- c. The video describes the United States as a democratic republic, meaning its citizens have the right to participate. Voting is mentioned as a common method of citizen participation in the political process, but that is only an option if you are 18 years or older. What other ways of participating as an engaged citizen are mentioned? (Contacting your representatives to tell them what you think of a political issue through letters, calls, and emails; working for campaigns to raise money; donating to campaigns; canvassing local voters; answering public opinion polls; writing letters to the editor; commenting on online articles; blogging; making videos; participating in a rally; discussing political issues with family and friends; running for office; becoming more educated)
- d. What are some ways youth can take action that weren’t mentioned in the film? (For example, filing a constitutional lawsuit like the *Juliana* youth)

4. Explain to students that a good place to begin when you want to create environmental change within a system is understanding the policies and laws in place designed to protect the environment (like the Clean Air Act) and policies and laws that harm the environment (e.g., energy policies that mandate the use of fossil fuels and fossil fuel development permits, leases, and subsidies that carry out those policies and implement the laws). Tell the students they will now have an opportunity to explore ways in which local and state governments are taking the lead with climate policy work (or actively make the climate crisis worse) and how they can be more involved

5. Divide the class into groups of two or three. Distribute copies of **Handout 3: Sharing Your Story** to each student. Play the first segment (0:00 to 2:18) from “As Federal Climate-Fighting Tools are Taken Away, Cities and States Step Up” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/climate/climate-policies-cities-states-local.html>) for the class, giving the students time to respond to the questions in Question

1. If necessary, play the segment twice. If time permits, invite several students to share their answers.

6. When students have completed their responses, direct them to “How State and Local Governments Are Leading the Way on Climate Policy” (<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/fall-2019/how-state-and-local-governments-are-leading-way>). Assign each student group one of the following policy-related sections of the article to read; you may have multiple groups with the same topic. Review the instructions for Question 2 and allow sufficient time for groups to research.

- 100 percent renewable energy
- Low-carbon buildings
- Innovative transportation
- Wildlife corridors
- Carbon farming
- Coastal resiliency

7. When students have finished researching, invite each group to share their findings. Remind students that these are examples of climate policy in action at the local and state levels — policies that governments can use to address the climate crisis and policies that governments must end to stop making the crisis worse.

8. Tell students that local and state governments can also do things that harm climate and prevent a transition to renewable energy. Ask students to suggest some. (Laws that require fossil fuel use and development; laws that prevent people from having rooftop solar or connecting their solar to the electric grid; laws that require utilities to approve fossil fuel generation; local laws that require gas hookups in all new buildings and subsidize gas use in homes; local/state governments not requiring EV infrastructure so people can buy and drive electric cars easily; not having pedestrian- and biker-friendly transportation

routes; not having good public transportation; zoning laws that don’t allow for density in housing in cities and expand urban sprawl.)

9. Explain to the students they will now explore some of the climate policies that exist at the local and state levels for their own states. Review the instructions for Question 3 and allow sufficient time for students to research independently. When students have finished researching, invite several to share their findings and use Question 3b as a framework for the discussion.

10. Explain to the students that the final portion of **Handout 3: Sharing Your Story** focuses on sharing an idea they have for a solution to the impacts of climate change in their community with an elected official. Review the instructions for writing a letter to a legislator in Question 4, as well as the ACLU tips for creating a strong letter. Students can have the option of writing their letter long-hand or typing their letter. Remind students that the *USA.gov* tool (<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>) is an excellent resource for determining who local legislators are and how to contact them. [Note: This activity would work well with a block schedule or split over two class periods.]

11. Ask the students how it makes them feel to share their voice in a way similar to the youth from *YOUTH v. GOV*, inviting several to share their thoughts as part of a full-class discussion. Do not require students to mail the letters, but encourage them to do so if they choose and to share any response they receive. Point out to them that they may use this process to contact their legislators about other issues that concern them as well.

Extension Activities

Extension Activity 1: Take It to Your School Board

Students could write to or talk with members of their local school board or district.

- For suggestions on what to include with their communication, students could watch “Climate Action: What Can Students Do?”. <https://youtu.be/ZCYqGPqfk8>
- “How to Talk to Your School Board About Climate Change...and Have Them Listen” (https://medium.com/@abarron_80988/how-to-talk-to-your-school-board-about-climate-change-and-have-them-listen-33c13d54147c) is an excellent resource for tips on what to say and templates on how to design appropriate communication.
- “How to pass a School Board Climate Action Resolution” (<https://schoolsforclimateaction.weebly.com/pass-a-resolution.html>) suggests steps to take in knowing how to contact and approach school board members.
- This Menu of Climate Solutions from This is Planet Ed (<https://www.thisisplaneted.org/resources/menu-of-climate-solutions>) provides a helpful idea list in determining the climate-positive actions a school board may be capable of undertaking.
- An example of a student-initiated climate policy passed by a school board can be found at <https://www.dpsk12.org/dps-board-of-education-passes-student-initiated-climate-policy/>.

Extension Activity 2: Getting the Word Out

To further explore the impacts of climate change introduced in Part 2 above, students could play the role of photo-journalists in their community. They could document a climate-related issue by taking photographs and writing an article with a catchy headline.

Extension Activity 3: Youth Inspiring Action

Students could research climate actions other students are taking and design their own platform for elevating their own voice as well as others. Ideas might include a climate-themed art show, climate rally, community art project, essay competition, or photojournalism projects. Please see the *Student Voice* section of Additional Resources, below.

Additional Resources

Climate Change Basics

NASA Global Climate Change
<https://climate.nasa.gov/>

How to Talk to Kids About Climate Change
<https://www.npr.org/2019/10/22/772266241/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-climate-change>

EPA Climate Change
<https://www.epa.gov/climate-change>

Climate Reality Project
<https://www.climateRealityproject.org/>

EPA: Calculating a Carbon Footprint
<https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>

Climate Change Data/Impacts

NASA Climate Change: How Do We Know?
<https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>

NOAA: Data in the Classroom
<https://dataintheclassroom.noaa.gov/>

National Science Foundation: Climate Reanalyzer
<https://climatreanalyzer.org/>

NASA: The Effects of Climate Change
<https://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>

World Wildlife Foundation: Effect of Climate Change
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/effects-of-climate-change>

CDC: Climate Effect on Health
<https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/default.htm>

Student Voice

Alliance for Climate Education
<https://acespace.org/>

Alliance for Climate Education: Youth Action Network
<https://acespace.org/youth-action-network/?ga=2.251832330.2021594211.1661543753-2058451221.1661543753>

Youth for Climate Action (UNICEF)
<https://www.unicef.org/environment-and-climate-change/youth-action>

Fridays for the Future
<https://fridaysforfuture.org/what-we-do/activist-speeches/>

Voices of Youth
<https://www.voicesofyouth.org/>

Future Blue Youth Council
<https://bowseat.org/get-involved/alumni/future-blue-youth-council/>

YOUTH v. GOV: Meet the Youth Plaintiffs
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juliana_v._United_States#:~:text=The%20plaintiffs%20in%20the%20case,Jacob%20Lebel

Crash Course: US Government and Politics
<https://www.youtube.com/c/crashcourse/search?query=government>

Our Children’s Trust: State Legal Actions in all 50 States
<https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/global-legal-actions>

Our Children’s Trust: Global Legal Actions
<https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/global-legal-actions>

Teacher Resource 1

How worried are you about climate change?

Extremely worried *Not worried at all*

How worried are you about climate change?

Extremely worried *Not worried at all*

How worried are you about climate change?

Extremely worried *Not worried at all*

How worried are you about climate change?

Extremely worried *Not worried at all*

How worried are you about climate change?

Extremely worried *Not worried at all*

How worried are you about climate change?

Extremely worried *Not worried at all*

Handout 1

Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions

Directions: After reading the article “Young People’s Climate Anxiety Revealed in a Landmark Survey” from <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-021-02582-8/d41586-021-02582-8.pdf>, please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. The article refers to the phrase “eco-anxiety,” defined as the distress, anger, and other negative emotions in children and young people worldwide as the result of climate change. Do you think “eco-anxiety” is an appropriate term for this phenomenon? Please explain.
2. In the study detailed here, 45 percent of the participants said their feelings about climate change affected their daily lives. Can you relate to feeling this way about climate change? Please explain.
3. In the article, study co-author Caroline Hickman claims “there is a general ‘othering’ of children in society, and children’s voices that threaten the predominant narrative of the most powerful group in society.” What do you think the term “othering” means here? Who do you think is the “most powerful group in society” to which she refers?

4. In the study, 65 percent of the participants agreed with the statement that governments are failing young people in how they respond to climate change. Do you agree with this statement? Please explain.
5. The study also demonstrated that young people feel reassured when governments act. Do you agree with this statement? Please explain.
6. According to Sarah Ray, a climate researcher from California, “This research will impact more audiences than other arguments about why we should do more on climate.” Why do you think she feels this way? Please explain.
7. How does climate change affect your daily life? Please explain.

Climate Anxiety: Reflection Questions (Suggested Answers)

Directions: Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. The article refers to the phrase “eco-anxiety,” defined as the distress, anger, and other negative emotions in children and young people worldwide as the result of climate change. Do you think “eco-anxiety” is an appropriate term for this phenomenon? Please explain.
(Answers here may vary. “Anxiety” is often defined as the feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.)
2. In the study detailed here, 45 percent of the participants said their feelings about climate change affected their daily lives. Can you relate to feeling this way about climate change? Please explain.
(Answers here may vary.)
3. In the article, study co-author Caroline Hickman claims “there is a general ‘othering’ of children in society, and children’s voices that threaten the predominant narrative of the most powerful group in society.” What do you think the term “othering” means here? Who do you think is the “most powerful group in society” to which she refers?
(While answers here may vary, “othering” is defined by Oxford Languages as the act of viewing or treating (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. Additionally, the “most powerful group in society” to which Hickman refers is the government.)
4. In the study, 65 percent of the participants agreed with the statement that governments are failing young people in how they respond to climate change. Do you agree with this statement? Please explain.
(Answers here may vary.)
5. The study also demonstrated that young people feel reassured when governments act. Do you agree with this statement? Please explain.
(Answers here may vary.)
6. According to Sarah Ray, a climate researcher from California, “This research will impact more audiences than other arguments about why we should do more on climate.” Why do you think she feels this way? Please explain.
(While answers here may vary, it important to note the “other arguments” stated above could include improved environmental and human health, growth in the low-carbon sector, and matters of environmental justice/inequality. As a side note, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) recognizes climate change as a growing threat to mental health (<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/climate-change-and-mental-health-connections>). It is important to help students understand the societal and health implications of climate change as a globally prevalent cause of anxiety for younger generations.)
7. How does climate change affect your daily life? Please explain.
(Answers here may vary.)

Climate Change in My Community

Directions: For this assignment, you will explore the impacts of climate change in your own community or region. Start by visiting one of the following websites aimed at showing how people in all 50 states are experiencing the impacts of climate change.

- States at Risk (<https://toolkit.climate.gov/tool/states-risk>)
- The 50 States in Climate Crisis (<https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/the-50-states-in-climate-crisis/>)
- Environmental Protection Agency Climate Indicator Map (<https://tinyurl.com/98xxhx85>)

Find your state, explore the climate change impacts detailed for your state, and follow the instructions below to the best of your ability. [Note: You can use your current state of residence or a state associated with a prior residence, a favorite place, or locations of friends/family.]

Part 1: Exploring the Issues

1. In the table below, list your state and reasons for choosing this state.
2. Next, describe three climate change impacts you discovered for your state in the spaces provided.

State:		
Reason for choosing this state:		
Climate Change Impact 1	Climate Change Impact 2	Climate Change Impact 3
Ex: Hurricanes have become more common and destructive.	Ex: More danger days now exist with a heat index above 105°F.	Ex: Nearly 1 percent of the land has burned every year since 1984.

Part 2: Identifying the Problem

3. Choose one of the impacts of climate change that you described in Part 1 above that you have personally experienced in *your* community. List this impact in the space below and briefly describe your experience.

4. Consider the climate change impact you described above and answer the questions below in the space provided.

a. How is your community impacted by this aspect of a changing climate?

b. Where do you see this problem where you live? Do you see it often? What does it look like?

c. Does this impact of climate change affect your community in an inequitable way?

d. How does this impact of climate change affect your life?

e. How does this impact of climate change on the community make you feel?

f. Why do you think it might be important to solve this climate-related problem?

5. Using the internet, research the climate change impact you personally experienced. Find one current news article from a reputable source about this climate change phenomenon in your state. Please provide the following about your article in the space below:

Title of article:

Author:

Source of the article:

One-paragraph summary of the article:

Handout 3

Sharing Your Story

Directions: For this assignment, you will explore climate-related policies that exist at the local and state level for your community. After learning about how local and state governments can cooperate on climate policy, you will design a letter to a local elected official expressing your ideas for a workable solution to the impact(s) of climate change in your community/region.

1. With your class, listen to the first segment (0:00 to 2:18) of the article “As Federal Climate-Fighting Tools are Taken Away, Cities and States Step Up” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/climate/climate-policies-cities-states-local.html>). Please respond to the questions below as you listen.
 - a. The article references policies focused on solutions that are adapted to the needs of communities. Why do policies need to be adapted in this way?
 - b. According to the article, what are some of the benefits of enacting policies at the local level?
 - c. What limitations might local policies carry in addressing the crisis of climate change?
2. With your group, read your assigned section of “How State and Local Governments Are Leading the Way on Climate Policy” (<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/fall-2019/how-state-and-local-governments-are-leading-way>). In the spaces provided below, please describe the following:
 - a. The policy “solution” your group was assigned
 - b. Why this solution is necessary for climate change
 - c. Which state is pioneering this solution and what they are doing
 - d. Who the other state leaders are and what they are doing
 - e. Is your own state helping to slow climate change, or are inadequate laws actually increasing climate change? Find evidence to support your answer.

3. Working independently, explore the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions: State Climate Policy Maps website (<https://www.c2es.org/content/state-climate-policy/>). Find your own state. [Note: You can use your current state of residence or a state associated with a prior residence, a favorite place, or locations of friends/family.]
 - a. Review your state's climate and energy policies (greenhouse gas emissions, state climate action plans, carbon pricing, electricity sector policies, and transportation policies).
 - b. Consider the climate change impacts from your community you detailed earlier. Do any of the climate policies you see here from your state address these impacts? Please explain.
4. One of the most effective ways of participating as an engaged citizen is to make your voice heard. Consider the impacts of climate change visible in your immediate community. Think about how you have experienced these impacts, why finding a solution is important, and what solution you think is best. Choose one local or state elected official/legislator from your state and contact that person in a letter in which you share your concerns and suggestions. An excellent way to find these officials is at USA.gov: How to Contact Your Elected Officials (<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>). If you need some tips on writing to the official you choose, look at the suggestions from the American Civil Liberties Union at <https://www.aclu.org/other/tips-writing-your-elected-officials>.

Lesson

(Environmental Science, Government, English Language Arts)

Teacher Resource 3

Sharing Your Story (Suggested Answers for Part 1)

Directions: For this assignment, you will explore climate-related policies that exist at the local and state level for your community. After learning about how local and state governments can cooperate on climate policy, you will design a letter to a local elected official expressing your ideas for a workable solution to the impact(s) of climate change in your community/region.

1. With your class, listen to the first segment (0:00 to 2:18) of the article “As Federal Climate-Fighting Tools are Taken Away, Cities and States Step Up” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/climate/climate-policies-cities-states-local.html>). Please respond to the questions below as you listen.
 - a. The article references policies focused on solutions that are adapted to the needs of communities. Why do policies need to be adapted in this way?
(Town and cities of various sizes and characters have dissimilar needs relating to the impacts of climate change. Large cities will need different strategies from small towns or rural areas.)
 - b. According to the article, what are some of the benefits of enacting policies at the local level?
(The policies can be tailored to different communities; developing policies locally can help break through some of the gridlock found at the national level and allow the focus to be on the human needs and wellbeing of communities.)
 - c. What limitations might local policies carry in addressing the crisis of climate change?
(Local governments may not have the same power, authority, or money as the federal government, which is why federal policy is important. As two examples, the federal government has to approve any transmission lines or pipelines that cross state lines, and our electricity grids are regionally connected. Air pollution also crosses state lines, and the EPA is supposed to protect our national air. Many government actions require approvals by both state and federal governments.)

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PO Box 65357
Albuquerque, NM 87193