
THE
WHITE HOUSE
EFFECT
Film Discussion Guide

Aerial of Fracking Facility
Credit: Institute for Regional Education

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Cover: Two men shaking hands in front of fire
Credit: Periscope Films

How to Use this Film Guide

Welcome to the documentary film *The White House Effect*, the story of how climate change transformed from a scientific issue to a political crisis. Through a powerful assemblage of archival footage, this film shows how presidents from Jimmy Carter through George H.W. Bush grappled with the first clear scientific warnings about a warming planet. It reveals how early promises of action were reshaped by political pressure and economic interests, and how those decisions set the stage for the climate challenges we now face. Instead of relying on simple takeaways, the film lets history unfold in real time and invites viewers to consider the significance of those choices both in their moment and in ours today.

Each section begins with key events from the film and moves to deeper, more profound questions about leadership, responsibility, and values. The goal is to understand what happened, while considering what it means for people and communities everywhere — and how each of us has a vital role to play in shaping what comes next.

Because climate change is often framed in polarized terms, this guide means to create space for thoughtful, reflective dialogue. By looking back to a time before climate change became so politicized, individuals can see what once seemed possible—and imagine what can still be achieved today. The questions and activities in this guide invite conversation and self-reflection, encouraging participants to ask: *Who am I in this story, and how does my voice matter in the climate conversation?*

Each part of the film will have two sections:

1. **Reflection:** It is recommended that you stop after each part in the film to provide time for viewers to collect their thoughts and impressions before holding discussions. Here are three suggested prompts for reflection:

    - What was your main takeaway for this part?
    - Do you have any questions or concerns?
    - What would you like to know more about?

2. **Discussion questions** will provide opportunities to think deeply about the information from the film and share perceptions and thoughts with other viewers.

There is a significant Resources list at the end of the Film Guide, including films, books, action groups, and support for addressing grief and providing hope.

Introduction to the Film

When we think about climate change today, it feels urgent and ever-present. But in the late 1980s, most Americans had barely heard of it. *The White House Effect* begins in the sweltering summer of 1988, when record heat waves and deadly droughts gripped the country, killing crops and endangering lives. Scientists like James Hansen and Stephen Schneider testified before Congress that the greenhouse effect was real and already changing the climate. Journalists amplified their warnings. For the first time, many individuals in the U.S. began to see global warming not as science fiction but as a present danger.

The film's opening sequence also shows how quickly climate change entered the political spotlight. President Ronald Reagan visited drought-stricken farmland, while Vice President George H.W. Bush, then campaigning for the presidency, declared that the nation was not powerless to address the greenhouse effect. He pledged to lead on the environment, insisting that climate change was not a partisan issue but a "common agenda for the future." With this promise of leadership, the film sets the stage for its central story: how a nation poised to confront climate change instead opted to double down on fossil fuels, delay the implementation of lasting solutions, and create conditions for ongoing political confusion by giving equal weight to verifiable and dubious science. Those choices continue to shape the energy, environment, and politics we live with today.

> **Watch** *the introduction (00:00-08:19 - about 8 minutes) to learn how the record heat of 1988 brought climate change into the public eye, how scientists warned that the greenhouse effect was already happening, how political leaders began making promises to act, and the media's reaction.*

Reflection:

- What was your main takeaway for this part?
- Do you have any questions or concerns?
- What would you like to know more about?

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the film begins by weaving science, media coverage, and presidential politics together? What does this suggest about how public opinion is shaped around issues like climate change?

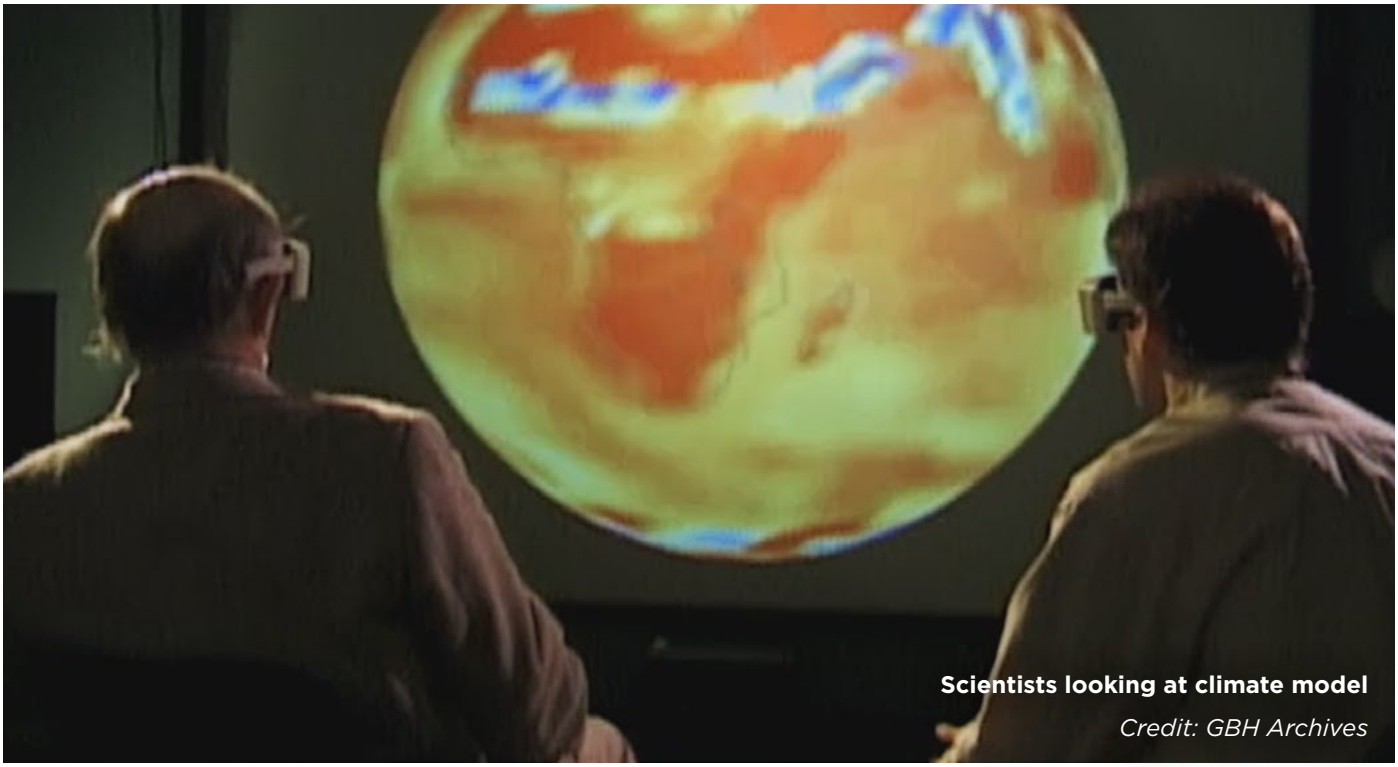
2. Why did it take a dramatic climate event for many individuals in the U.S. to finally pay attention to climate change, even though scientists had been warning about it for years?

3. If you were the advisor to President Bush, what measures would you suggest be taken after learning of the warnings from scientists? If your ideas had been implemented, then what would the world look like today?

4. In recent years, the term *climate justice* has been used while addressing climate change issues. During the oil embargo that caused the "energy crisis" in the 1970s, and long gas lines, discuss:

   - Who is most impacted by this problem?
   - Does *climate justice* factor into your answers? (e.g., those in low-income brackets may not have the ability to wait in long lines, they need to get to work, they can't afford higher gas prices, etc.)

> **Definition:** *Climate justice issues emphasize that the impacts of climate change often disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable communities. It advocates for an equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities to ensure that all people, regardless of their economic status, ethnicity, or geography, can adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.*



Scientists looking at climate model

Credit: GBH Archives

Aerial of Fracking Facility

Credit: Institute for Regional Education

Part I: Are You Willing to Make Some Sacrifices?

Overview:

Watch this film segment to learn how scientists first raised the alarm on global warming, how leaders and everyday people responded, and why early momentum for action began to stall.

This part of the film looks back to the energy crises of the 1970s, exploring how the problem of a changing climate was first named and explained to the public. It offers insight into how leaders at the highest levels of government responded. The story here shifts to politics, where presidents offered very different visions for the country's energy future. Carter urged conservation and renewable energy, Reagan rolled back regulations and championed fossil fuels, and Bush promised action on the "greenhouse effect," declaring that Americans were not powerless to act. Meanwhile, scientists continued to monitor rising carbon dioxide levels and forecast dramatic warming in the decades ahead.

Together, these moments reveal an early crossroads: embrace conservation and long-term solutions, or double down on fossil fuels and short-term growth. Politics, money, and industry pressure pushed the country away from solutions. This raises questions about what happens when leaders focus on immediate needs rather than long-term goals, and what lessons remain relevant today.

Watch *Part I (08:19-25:47 – about 17 minutes)*

Reflection:

- What was your main takeaway for this part?
- Do you have any questions or concerns?
- What would you like to know more about?

Discussion Questions:

1. Did Carter's call for sacrifice work? Why or why not?

2. What should have been done differently to motivate people to action?

3. How might the U.S. be different today if Carter's policies and approach to conservation had continued?

4. Who should bear the most significant responsibility for addressing climate change — individuals, industries, or governments? How should those responsibilities be shared?

Sununu being sworn-in
Credit: George HW Bush Library

Part II: Which George Bush Am I Looking At?

Overview:

When George H.W. Bush ran for president, he promised to be "the environmental president." Early on, he chose William Reilly, a respected Republican conservationist, to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. But his chief of staff, John Sununu, quickly became one of the strongest voices on environmental policy. Sununu often worked to slow policies that would move the U.S. away from fossil fuels while casting doubt on the reliability of predictions that foresaw a changing climate. This tension raised a bigger question: Would Bush fulfill his campaign promises to combat the greenhouse effect with the power of the White House effect, or would he follow advisers who prioritized economic growth and energy development while viewing climate action as a political liability?

This part of the film shows how these competing forces played out. Reilly pushed for international agreements and stronger protections. Sununu and others argued that protecting the environment came at the cost of jobs and economic growth, undermining solutions that could have supported both. At the same time, disasters like the Exxon Valdez oil spill sparked public anger about our reliance on fossil fuels and raised expectations for leadership. Together, these pressures revealed how presidential appointments, policy choices, and political messaging shaped the U.S. response to climate change at a critical moment.

> **Watch** *Part II (25:48-55:26 - about 30 minutes) to learn about President George H.W. Bush's environmental promises, the fallout from the Exxon Valdez oil spill, how politics shaped the use (and misuse) of science, and why the U.S. resisted global climate agreements.*

Reflection:

- What was your main takeaway for this part?
- Do you have any questions or concerns?
- What would you like to know more about?

Discussion Questions

1. What do Bush's choices of Reilly and Sununu reveal about the competing pressures presidents face?

2. How might relying on conflicting advisers shape policy outcomes?

3. Why do disasters like Exxon Valdez stir temporary outrage but often fail to bring lasting change? Have we seen similar patterns with recent events? Think of a local disaster that brought about a strong public outcry but then failed to bring about any lasting change.

4. How does framing climate action as a choice between jobs and the environment affect public opinion and limit policy solutions? How might communities create new jobs while also protecting the environment?

5. Dr. Stephen Schneider said, "I have confidence that political leaders react to perceptions of their constituents. That's why, as a scientist, I feel it's necessary to go to the public, because when the public understands and perceives problems, it's amazing how quickly politicians will follow with leadership." Consider this quote and then discuss how understanding this statement might affect a politician's behavior.

White House at night
Credit: Kinolibrary

Protesters
Credit: Getty Images

Part III: Is Science for Sale?

Overview:

By the early 1990s, the climate debate had shifted out of scientists' hands and into politics, the media, and global policy negotiations. Most scientists agreed that greenhouse gases were climbing to dangerous levels due to human influence, but fossil fuel companies funded a handful of contrarian voices and gave them megaphones. Talk shows, radio programs, and industry-backed films spread doubt, leaving many individuals skeptical about the urgency of global warming, and others dubious of its existence altogether.

Meanwhile, the world prepared for the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro — the first major international meeting on climate change. Many countries backed binding targets to cut greenhouse gases, but the Bush administration, influenced by advisers like John Sununu, pushed back, warning that firm commitments could harm the U.S. economy. The result was a watered-down agreement with no deadlines or enforcement mechanisms. Ultimately, the United States, the nation responsible for the highest greenhouse gas emissions, left the conference unwilling to take a leadership role in combating climate change.

> **Watch** *Part III (55:27-1:11:27 - about 20 minutes) to learn how fossil fuel industries and media shaped public understanding of climate science and why the U.S. resisted firm commitments at the Rio Earth Summit.*

Reflection:

- What was your main takeaway for this part?
- Do you have any questions or concerns?
- What would you like to know more about?

Discussion Questions

> **Note:** *Explain that 99% of scientists currently agree that climate change is real and is caused by the burning of fossil fuels.*

1. Do you think a debate with a pro-climate change scientist vs. an anti-climate change scientist would be effective? Why or why not?

2. Consider this quote from Upton Sinclair, American author, journalist, and political activist:

   "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it".

   Does this quote address an issue with the fossil fuel industry and its relationship to climate change? Why or why not?

3. Why didn't the U.S. agree to firm climate commitments at the Rio Earth Summit? How might things have turned out differently if the U.S. had taken the lead on climate action instead of holding back?

4. What happens to democracy when money and misinformation keep citizens from holding leaders accountable on urgent issues?

5. How does the rise of AI-generated and misleading media change the way people recognize and trust information? What are the implications of this for science, policy, and democracy?

Scientists pull instrument on sled
Credit: Klaus Thymann

Part IV: What Is Nature Doing to Us?

Overview:

Viewers observe the build-up to and fallout from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which brought leaders from around the world together to confront climate change. Under pressure, President Bush attended, but his administration used its global political influence to remove binding commitments from the agreement. The U.S. emphasized economic risks and left with a weak treaty, drawing criticism from allies and leaving the nation isolated. At home, debates over jobs versus the environment grew sharper, with activists and opponents both taking to the streets. Scientists continued warning that climate change was already underway, while political leaders delayed action.

> **Watch** *Part IV (1:11:28-1:36:44 - about 20 minutes) to see how powerful nations face the responsibility of leading global action on climate change, and the risks that arise when politics and economics outweigh science and cooperation.*

Reflection:

- What was your main takeaway for this part?
- Do you have any questions or concerns?
- What would you like to know more about?

Discussion Questions

1. When Bush said leadership sometimes means "standing alone on principle," what do you think he meant? What do you think authentic leadership should look like when the whole world's future is at risk?

2. How would the world be different today if the U.S. had joined the other countries in signing the Rio Agreement?

3. David Brower, author of *Let the Mountains Talk, Let the Rivers Run: A Call to Those Who Would Save the Earth*, had this quote:

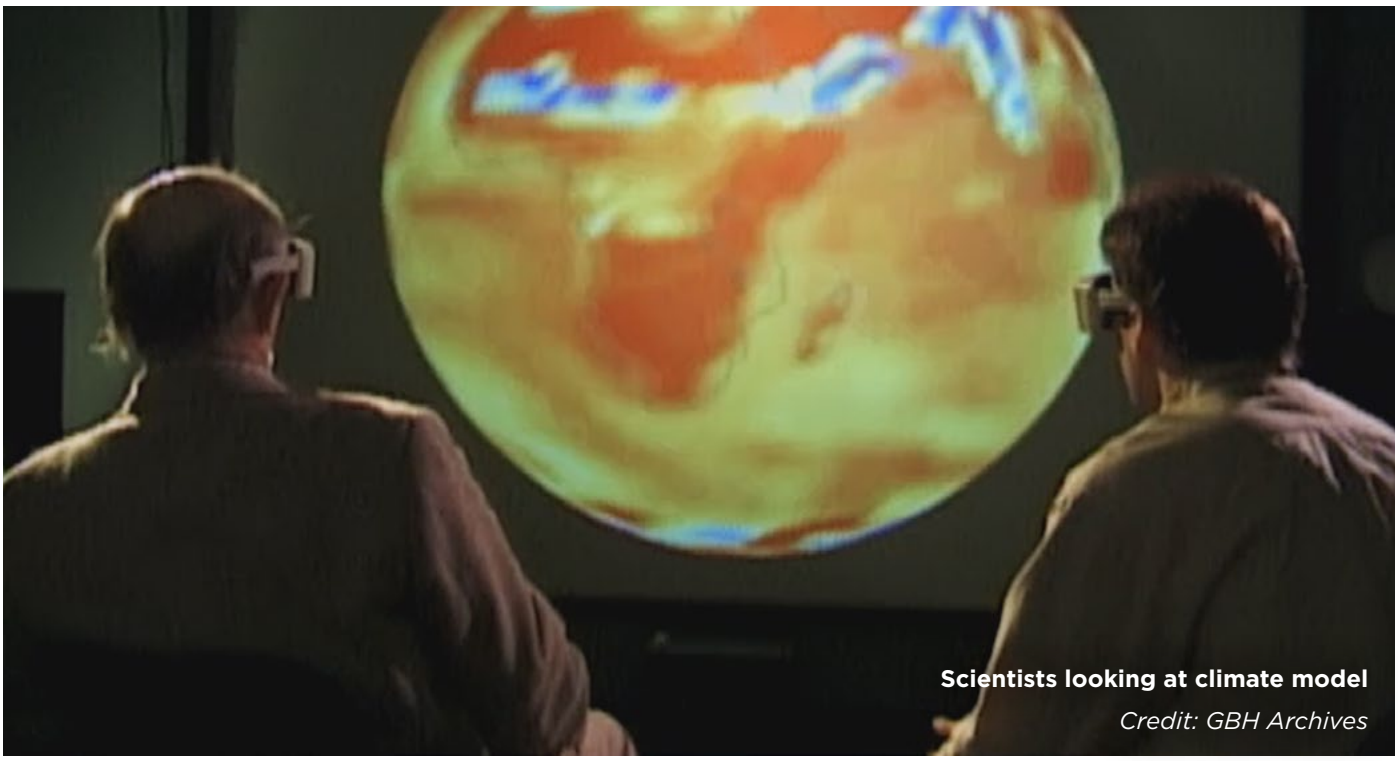
   "Politicians are like weather vanes. Our job is to make the wind blow."

   Discuss what that means and how people may have used this idea in the film. How might it affect the way you interact with politicians today?

4. Discuss the differences between President Bush's "campaign promises" and his "campaign deliveries". What are the factors that make them different?

5. What obligations do today's leaders owe to future generations when making decisions about climate and natural resources?

6. What economic losses have we seen because of climate-related disasters? What might the effect be of creating a conversation around the financial value of climate action?



Scientists looking at climate model

Credit: GBH Archives

Aerial of Fracking Facility

Credit: Institute for Regional Education

After the Film

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to get the United Nations to draft a climate policy to be followed, what would it say? Would it be different for more developed and less developed nations, and if so, how? What factors would you take into account in shaping policy?

2. What obligations do today's leaders have to future generations when making decisions about the climate and natural resources?

3. How did watching this film make you feel? What surprised you or challenged you about how you see the climate conversation? What questions do you still have?

4. What climate change impacts are most visible where you live (flooding, wildfire smoke, heat waves, or loss of green space)? Who or what is impacted most? How are people responding? Do you agree or disagree, and why? How are your local policymakers responding? Do their responses feel adequate? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Going Deeper

Here are some suggestions to dive deeper into the issues raised in the film. These can be used in a book club format where participants can research their answers and bring them back to the group at the next meeting.

1. Find three examples where communities/ societies balance individual rights with collective well-being. Why are personal rights and collective well-being often represented as being at odds, especially in the United States? How would you handle these situations differently?

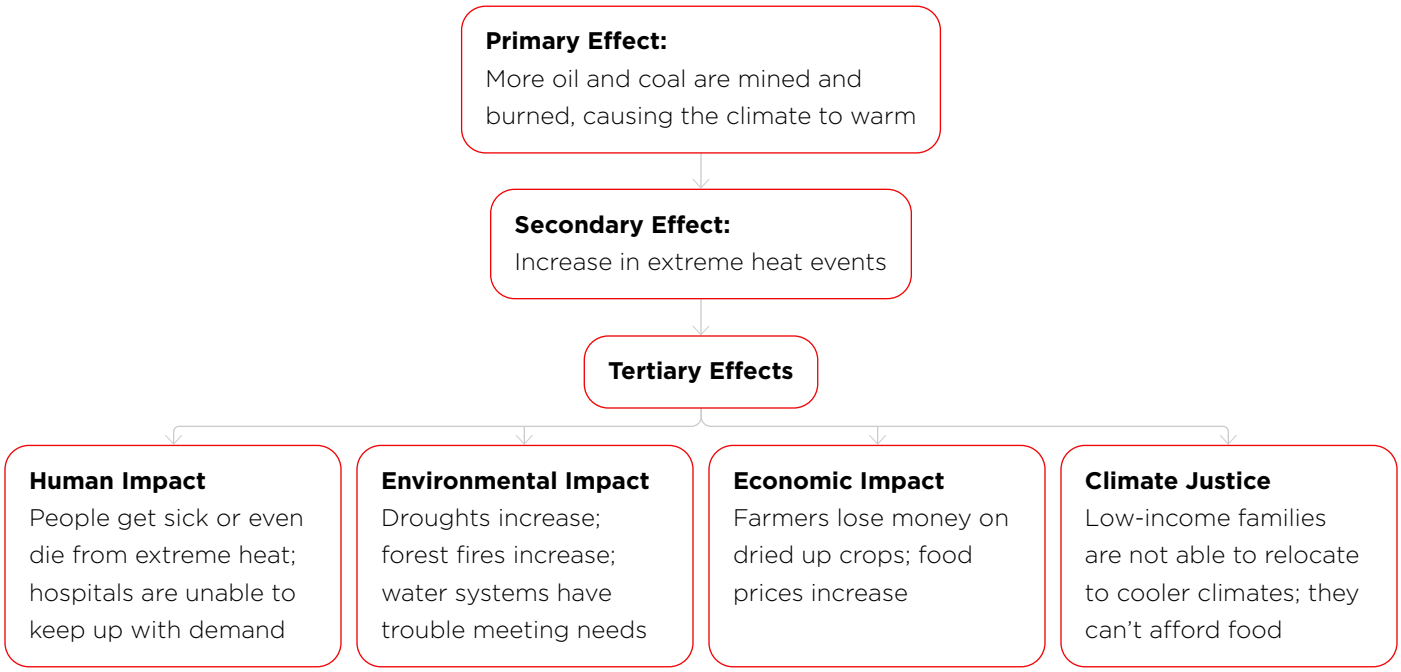
2. Ask, "What would it mean to the U.S. economy if they shifted to more green energy in the 70s and 80s? "

   Viewers can create mind maps to look at the ripple effects of two different pathways:

   - If oil and coal production continued as it did until the present
   - If green energy had phased out the use of oil and coal

   Compare the ripple effects of each pathway and categorize them into the four categories below.

For example:



3. Research leaders who have promised to protect the environment and then failed to deliver on their promises. Why do you think these leaders acted the way they did? Find leaders who vowed to protect the environment and then did! How was their situation different from the leaders who failed to act?

4. Research the ad campaigns discrediting the science from the tobacco industry and the oil industry. How were they similar? How were they different? How effective were these campaigns? What was the primary strategy used to affect public opinion?

   If this doesn't come up in the discussion, share that both industries employed the same ad companies to "sow seeds of doubt" in the public. It worked very well.

5. Part IV shows how the public became more concerned about the economy. Research the number of billion-dollar extreme weather events in the U.S. on this web page: https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/

   (**Note:** *the current administration has stopped NOAA from tracking this information after 2024. Staggering data: from 1980 to 2024, the cost of 403 weather and climate disasters that cost over 1 billion dollars was 2.92 trillion dollars!*

   Consider what might be included in a campaign to show the public how concern for the effects of climate change can also be a concern for the economy. What could result from a policy conversation that considers the economic value of climate impacts, as well as the financial implications of averted climate disasters? The group could create a policy that addresses ways to mitigate climate- and weather-related disasters and to fund adaptation to meet the changing environment. What are their suggested adaptations for your local area? (e.g., extreme heat and cold shelters; creation of sea walls and other protective measures for buffering hurricanes; plant more trees in urban areas as cooling actions, etc.)

6. Make a list of the top 5 climate change-related issues and decide if actions are being taken to address them, and if so, by whom? Are they effective solutions? If not, what else should be done?

7. Different communities experience climate change in different ways (e.g., farmers, coastal towns, tribes, urban neighborhoods). Why is it important to understand these diverse perspectives when planning solutions? What are the risks of delaying climate action for another decade? Pick a community that interests you and list the concerns the community has about potential climate change impacts. What should they do to address these concerns?

8. Who should take the lead in fighting climate change today — governments, industries, communities, or individual people? Assign percentages to which group is the most responsible for combating climate change. What shared responsibilities do we all have to leave a healthier world for future generations?

> **In summary:** *Solving the climate crisis is not a sprint or a marathon; it's a relay race. When one tires, the next one takes over. This method allows for all to participate and carry on into the next generations.*

What Now? Turning Awareness into Action

The story of climate change does not end with the history told in this film. It continues with the choices we make today. Communities across the country are confronting rising heat, erratic weather, stronger storms, wildfire risk, and threats to clean air and water. From farmers restoring soil health to students organizing for cleaner energy, positive change is happening all around us.

Suggested group activities

Learn: Research a local or state climate policy. Find out who is in charge of implementing it, how it affects your community, and how you can get involved.

Speak up!: Work with your local city/county governments to find ways to make your voice heard. Host a community event where you present solutions to local officials.

Create: Collaborate with local artists to design a mural or art installation that connects climate science to your community's identity.

Participate: Volunteer with local nonprofits, Tribes, or conservation groups on climate-related restoration projects, such as salmon habitat restoration or native tree planting.

Educate: hold a Summit and invite community members to view presentations on what concerns you about climate change and what they can do to help.

Suggested individual actions

At home:

- Insulate your home, seal drafts, and install a programmable thermostat.
- Replace old appliances with energy-efficient models, swap incandescent bulbs for LEDs, and consider a heat pump water heater or space heater.
- Wash clothes in cold water, use a clothesline, and unplug electronics when not in use.
- Power your home with renewable energy when possible.
- Heat and cool your home smartly with proper insulation and equipment maintenance.

Transportation:

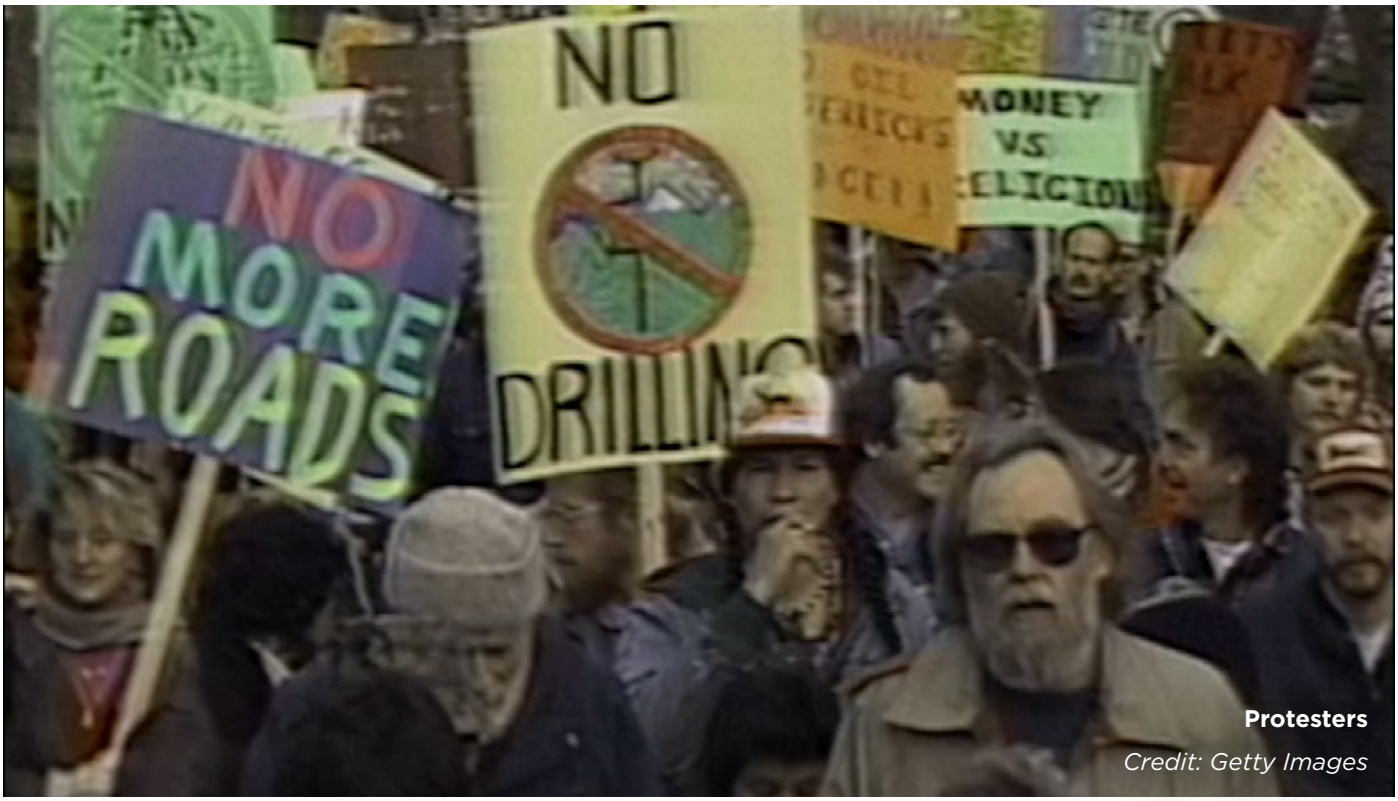
- Reduce driving: Opt for public transit, walking, biking, or carpooling whenever possible.
- Drive efficiently: Avoid aggressive driving and observe speed limits. Inflate your tires to the recommended pressure.
- Consider electric vehicles: If you need a new car, consider an electric or hybrid model.
- Reduce air travel: Minimize unnecessary flights.

Food and waste:

- Reduce food waste: Plan meals, save leftovers, and compost if possible.
- Eat more plant-based meals: Shifting towards a more plant-based diet can reduce your carbon footprint.
- Reduce, reuse, repair: Focus on reducing consumption, finding new uses for items, and repairing what you can before replacing it.
- Minimize plastic use: Choose products with less packaging and avoid single-use plastics.

Community and advocacy:

- Vote: Support candidates and policies that prioritize climate action.
- Advocate for change: Contact your elected officials to make your voice heard.
- Support sustainable businesses: Choose to support companies that promote climate-smart practices.
- Educate and organize: Talk to friends and family about climate change and get involved in local environmental groups.
- Run for office: Consider running for a local office to have a direct impact on policy.



Protesters
Credit: Getty Images

Resources

Films

Youth v. Gov

The story of America's youth taking on the world's most powerful government. Armed with a wealth of evidence, twenty-one courageous leaders filed a ground-breaking lawsuit against the U.S. government, asserting it has willfully acted over six decades to create the climate crisis, thus endangering their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property. If these young people are successful, they will not only make history, they will change the future.

Chasing Ice

Environmental photographer James Balog heads to Greenland, Iceland, and Alaska to capture images that will help to convey the effects of global warming. Balog was initially skeptical of climate change when the issue entered scientific discussion. Still, after his first trip north, he became convinced of the impact humans have on the planet and committed to bringing the story to the public. This film documents how James set up cameras around the globe to use time-lapse photography in the Extreme Ice Survey (EIS) to publicize the effects of climate change.

Chasing Time

If a single photo can inspire change, how influential are a million images? Over the course of the 15-year Extreme Ice Survey project, photographer James Balog and his team brought some of the world's first and most compelling visual evidence of climate change to the global stage as they depicted the rapid melting of glaciers around the world. *Chasing Time* is a meditative exploration of time and mortality, following James and his crew as they bring the decades-long project to a close, cataloging more than 1 million images in the process and spotlighting the power of intergenerational relationships to seed hope and inspiration toward a sustainable future.

2040

Award-winning director Damon Gameau embarks on a journey to explore what the future could look like by the year 2040 if we embraced the best solutions already available to us to improve our planet and shifted them rapidly into the mainstream.

Searching for Amani

A thirteen-year-old aspiring journalist investigates his father's mysterious murder within the boundaries of one of Kenya's largest wildlife conservancies. As a ravaging drought encroaches, his quest to find the killer shifts, and an activist is born as the collateral damage of a warming world is revealed.

Climate Emergency

Feedback Loops Curriculum: The five short films in this series use stunning video, interviews with leading climate scientists, and thoughtful narration by Richard Gere to educate viewers on key feedback loops that greatly accelerate climate change.

The Crisis Scientists

Follow seven extraordinary people working to galvanize policymakers and the public to save the planet. This compelling short film explores their preoccupations and emotions at this crucial time for life on Earth. They are inspiring examples of how we all can take action within our spheres of influence.

Books

Here Comes the Sun

From the acclaimed environmentalist, a call to harness the power of the sun and rewrite our scientific, economic, and political future. Our climate and our democracy are melting down. But Bill McKibben, one of the first to sound the alarm about the climate crisis, insists the moment is also full of possibility. Energy from the sun and wind is suddenly the cheapest power on the planet and growing faster than any energy source in history—if we can keep accelerating the pace, we have a chance.

The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg

A collection of short essays by more than 100 experts, it analyses the causes, consequences and challenges of the climate crisis:

We are in the Middle of Forever

A powerful, intimate collection of conversations with Indigenous Americans on the climate crisis and the Earth's future. Although for a great many people, the human impact on the Earth—countless species becoming extinct, pandemics claiming millions of lives, and climate crisis causing worldwide social and environmental upheaval—was not apparent until recently, this is not the case for all people or cultures. For the Indigenous people of the world, radical alteration of the planet, and of life itself, is a story that is many generations long. They have had to adapt, to persevere, and to be courageous and resourceful in the face of genocide and destruction—and their experience has given them a unique understanding of civilizational devastation.

Action Groups

Project Drawdown

An independent, internationally trusted organization driving meaningful climate action by connecting people to science-based climate solutions and strategies.

350.org

We're building a movement that fights for a fairer future for all. We believe in the collective power of ordinary people taking action: we campaign and organize locally and globally to create a world powered by just and accessible renewable energy that will move us away from fossil fuels, for good.

Citizen's Climate Lobby

A nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy climate change organization, Citizen's Climate Lobby focuses on national policies to address the national and global climate crisis. Their consistently respectful, nonpartisan approach to climate education is designed to create a broad, sustainable foundation to drive climate action across all geographic regions and political inclinations. By building upon shared values rather than partisan divides and empowering our supporters to work in keeping with the concerns of their local communities, we work towards the adoption of fair, effective, and sustainable climate change solutions.

Learn More

Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

We conduct scientific studies on public opinion and behavior; inform the decision-making of governments, media, companies, and NGOs; and educate the public about climate change.

En-ROADS:

En-ROADS is a global climate simulator that allows users to explore the impact that dozens of policies—such as electrifying transport, pricing carbon, and improving agricultural practices—have on hundreds of factors, including energy prices, temperature, air quality, and sea level rise. Developed by Climate Interactive, MIT Sloan, and Ventana Systems, En-ROADS is a system dynamics model carefully grounded in the best available science and has been calibrated against a wide range of existing integrated assessment, climate, and energy models. En-ROADS runs on an ordinary laptop in a fraction of a second, **is freely available online**, offers an intuitive user-friendly interface, and is available in over a dozen languages.

The American Presidency Project

Our goal today is to be recognized as *the* authoritative, non-partisan online source for presidential public documents. By providing easy access to useful information, we seek to promote a more informed citizenry of the United States, high-quality scholarly and media analysis, and a better understanding of American democracy throughout the world.

United Nations Rio Earth Summit, 1992

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Addressing Grief and Providing Hope

Addressing Grief:

Parents are Human

Excellent questions to gain a deeper understanding of all of us can be found in a collection of card decks, including processing grief. All card decks are offered for free (or donate any amount if you wish) and are available in 17 languages.

10 Grief Counseling Therapy Techniques & Interventions

Climate Grief:

The Emotional Toll of Climate Change

If the effects of global warming keep you up all night or trigger anxiety and sadness, you may be struggling with climate anxiety (aka climate grief). Here's a look at this growing problem and what you can do to stop being knocked down by all the bad news.

Providing Hope:

Podcast: Holding the Fire

Award-winning journalist and author Dahr Jamail hosts in-depth interviews with leaders from around the world to uncover Indigenous ways of reckoning with environmental and societal breakdown. There are 12 Episodes, each about 20 minutes long, that provide Indigenous wisdom wrapped in hope.

Video: "Five Reasons for Optimism"

This short video (3:12) from the Pachamama Alliance highlights five major trends we could be hopeful about in these uncertain times.

How to Address Climate Grief – with hope and philosophy

2019 marked a turning point in the world's fight against climate change, with a wave of protests from the younger generations led by Greta Thunberg. Climate grief is growing exponentially, and environmental novelist and activist Annis Pratt, Ph.D., is suggesting constructive coping strategies for each of us to address.

Joanna Macy, "The Work That Reconnects"

Meant for anyone who longs to serve the healing of our world more powerfully and effectively

Footage from the Gaia evening talk given by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (July 2013)

Discussing their book, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy*, Joanna and Chris reveal why hope arises in action.

A Letter from The White House Effect Film Team

The White House Effect uses an entirely archival vérité approach to tell the story of how we as a species allowed the greatest threat to our planet to get this far. By using only archival materials, we are creating a uniquely immersive experience in which viewers will feel history unfold in real time through critical turning points, stunning visuals, and characters who altered the course of our planet.

As filmmakers, we have a long history of making powerful films tackling the issue of climate change and other deeply relevant social issues, including An Inconvenient Sequel and The Island President. Climate change in particular is an area of deep passion and commitment for us. We've seen a large amount of content created about the climate movement in recent years, but we believe this angle is new and will impact audiences in very meaningful ways. We see an opportunity to turn the human history of climate change and global warming into a condensed drama, placing elements from history that have never before been juxtaposed and showing viewers how we got to this particular place.

Like *Apollo 11* and *How to Survive A Plague*, *The White House Effect* will play like exhilarating cinema vérité experienced entirely through archival footage. Like *Koyaanisqatsi*, it will be epic in scope, presenting new ways of looking at our planet, the stories we've told ourselves about it, and our role in the fight for its survival. Like *Eyes On The Prize*, it will be the definitive and enduring film on the subject.

We see this film as an opportunity to speak to an entire generation that has grown up with the climate crisis but has lacked the historical context to understand the issue fully. Unlike many who lived through this history, there are many young people who may be aware of these issues, but don't necessarily know its deeper history and this larger perspective.

—Actual Films
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