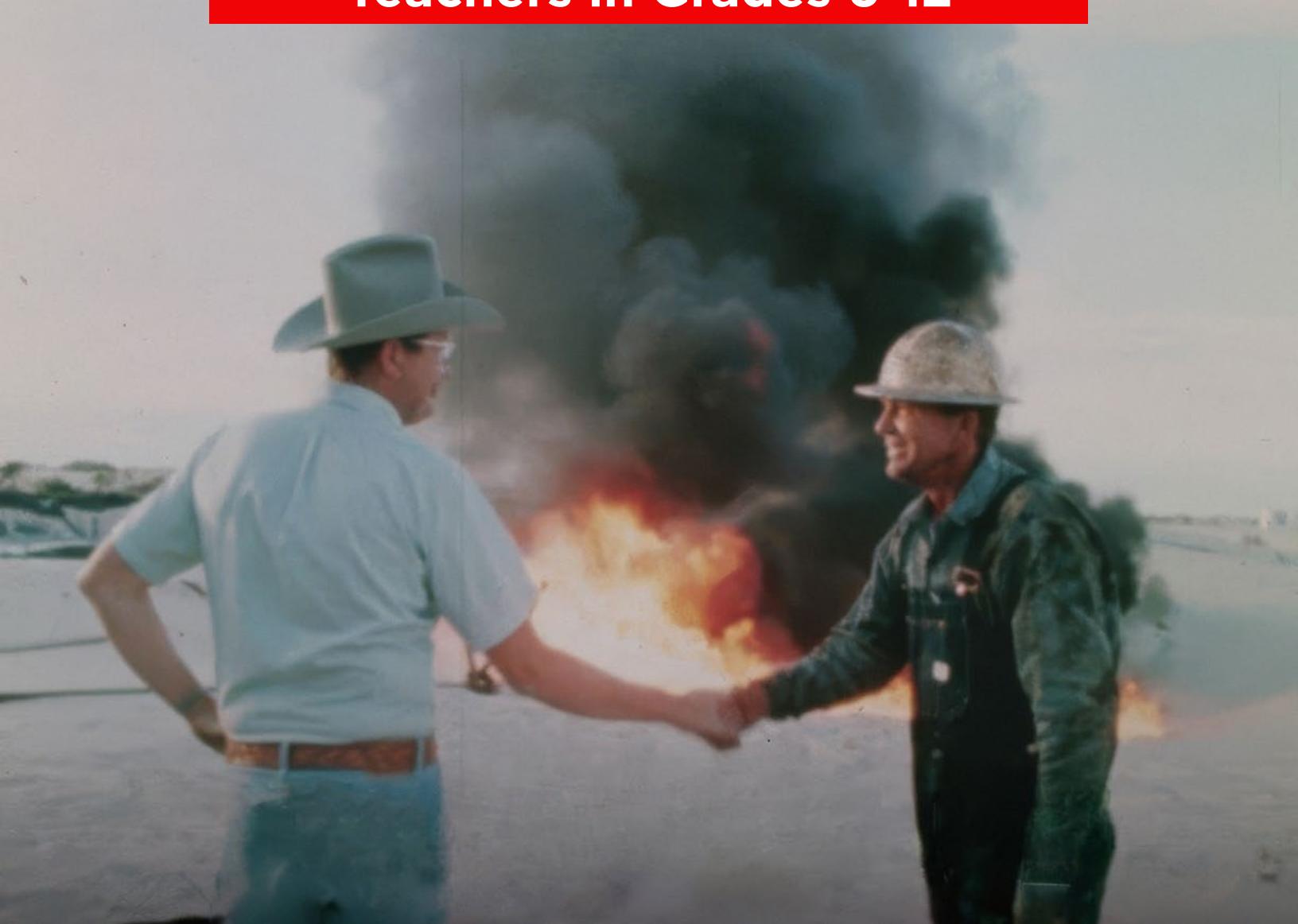


# THE WHITE HOUSE EFFECT

**Discussion and Activity Guide for  
Teachers in Grades 6-12**



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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

It is essential to be sensitive to the fact that this topic may be complex and challenging for students to handle. Since the film shows how politics can override scientific knowledge and public sentiment, it may weigh heavily on the students. The actions students can take are provided in the “What Now? Turning Awareness into Action” section.

## Each part of the film will have three sections:

1. **Reflection:** It is recommended that you stop after each part in the film to have students write their impressions, as this is an information-dense documentary. This will help them collect their thoughts and impressions before holding discussions.

Three prompts for student responses:

- 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 students opportunities to think deeply about the information from the film and share their perceptions and thoughts with their fellow students.
3. **Activities** will go deeper into the topics addressed in the film as time allows in the classroom.

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.

# Background for Teachers

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 is meant 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 could 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?

**This guide is flexible:** It can be used by showing the film all at once, but is recommended to be broken into shorter segments to fit into classroom structures and opportunities for reflection and discussion.

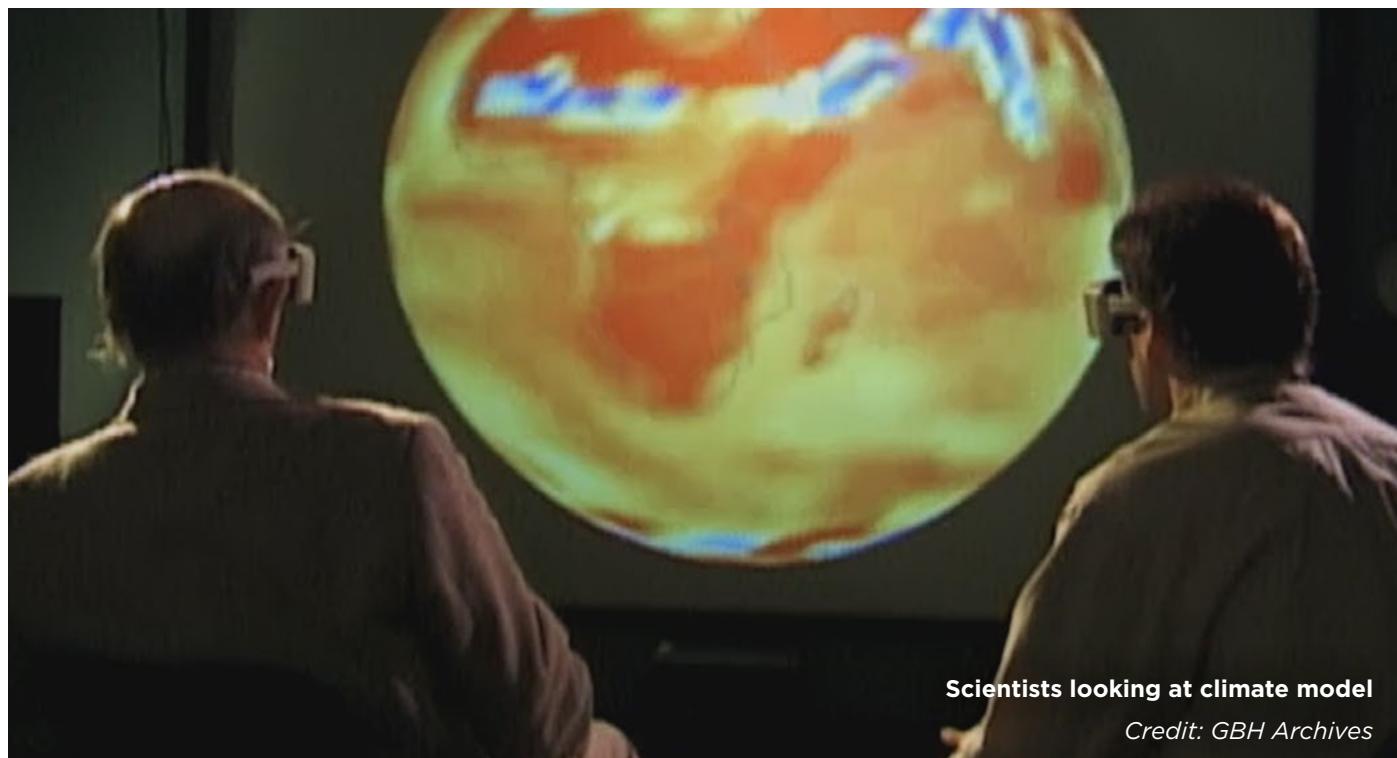
# Set the Stage for Screening the Film

Before showing the film to students, ask them to consider when they think the concept of global warming was first introduced by scientists. Have them explain their prediction.

Ask students when they first heard of climate change. What were their initial thoughts?

Have students save this information to use after viewing the film.

**Note to teachers:** In field testing, many students thought that the issue of climate change had only been known for 10 or so years. It can be surprising to students that our knowledge of the causes of current global warming and its effects on the climate has been in the public eye since the 1970s.



Scientists looking at climate model

Credit: GBH Archives

# Showing *The White House Effect* Documentary

## Introduction

1. Tell students they are going to watch a documentary that shows how the science behind global warming was brought to the public's attention in 1988 with a combination of severe weather events, congressional testimonies by climate scientists, and the media's response to these occurrences. They will observe how the presidential administration addressed the public concerns.
2. Watch the introductory film segment (00:00–08:19) to learn how a number of events put the response to climate change in motion:
  - record heat of 1988
  - scientists' warnings that the greenhouse effect was already happening
  - the media's reaction put climate change into public view
  - how political leaders began making promises to act

**Reflection:** Three prompts for student responses:

- 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. When George H.W. Bush said climate change “can be solved” in his campaign, what expectations did that set for the public? How do promises from leaders shape public expectations?
4. Discuss in small groups: If you had been President Bush, what measures would you have taken after learning of the warnings from scientists? If your ideas had been implemented, then what would the world look like today?
5. In recent years, the term *climate justice* has been used while addressing climate change issues. During the oil embargo of the 1970s, which caused an “energy crisis” and long gas lines for consumers, the phrase climate

justice was not yet in use. Looking back, we can consider the challenges of that time through a climate justice lens. Consider who was most affected by the oil embargo and related crisis. Discuss how different realities and circumstances influence a person's ability to deal with climate-related issues.

**Note to the teacher:** you may want to help with examples such as 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.

**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.*

### Activities:

1. How does the media report climate and weather-related disasters? Have students look up a recent climate- or weather-related disaster. The fires in Los Angeles in 2024 are one example. Next, have them find five articles describing the disaster that cover the information in different ways. Decide which article is the most accurate. A guide for students, [How to Determine if Information is Accurate](#), is included at the end of this guide.
2. Have students research the reasons for the “energy crisis” in the 1970s. What events led up to the long gas lines? Have a deeper discussion about climate justice and those most affected by gasoline shortages. (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.)





**Aerial of Fracking Facility**

*Credit: Institute for Regional Education*

## Part I: Are You Willing to Make Some Sacrifices?

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

### 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 government levels 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.

**Reflection:** Three prompts for student responses:

- 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 would you have done differently to motivate people to action? (students write their answers in their notebooks first, then discuss in small groups, then as a whole class)
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?
5. What does the saying "The fox guarding the hen house" mean? Can you see any

connections between that saying and the changes in regulations under the Reagan administration?

### Activities:

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?

Have students find the examples, then discuss in small groups. Have each group pick one example to share with the class.

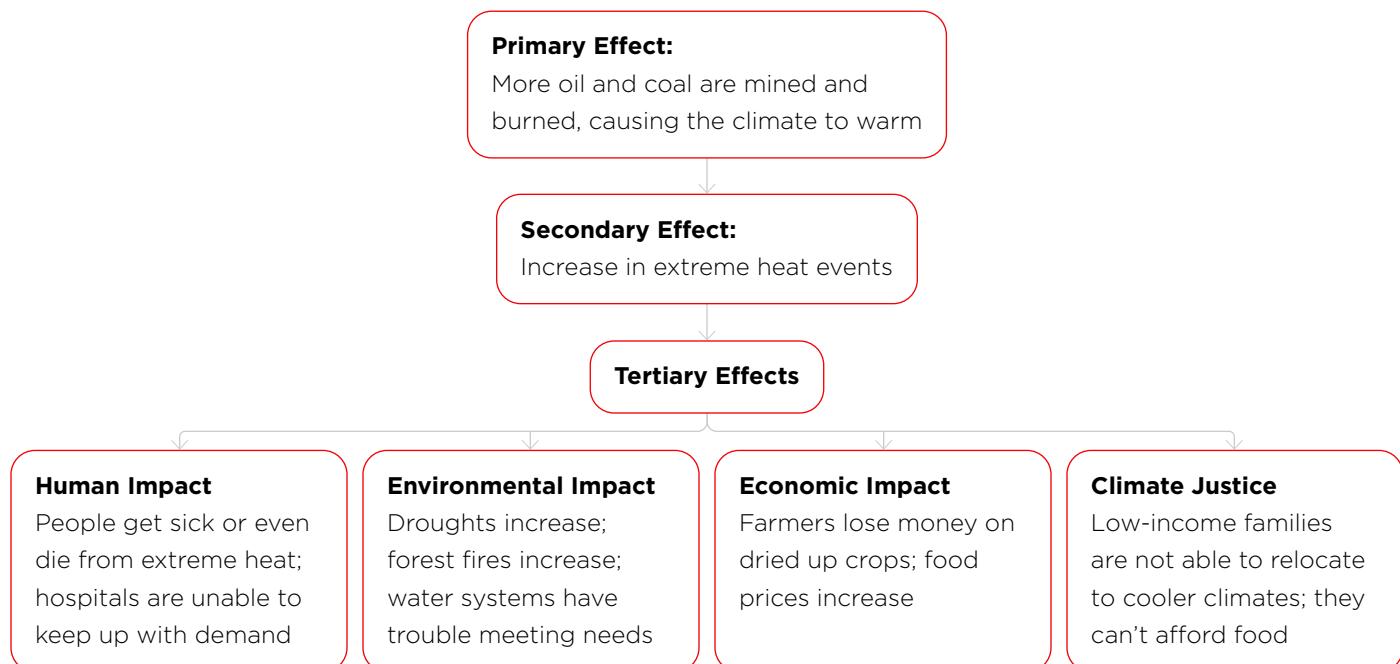
2. Ask, "What would it mean to the U.S. economy if they shifted to more green energy in the 70s and 80s?"

Have students 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

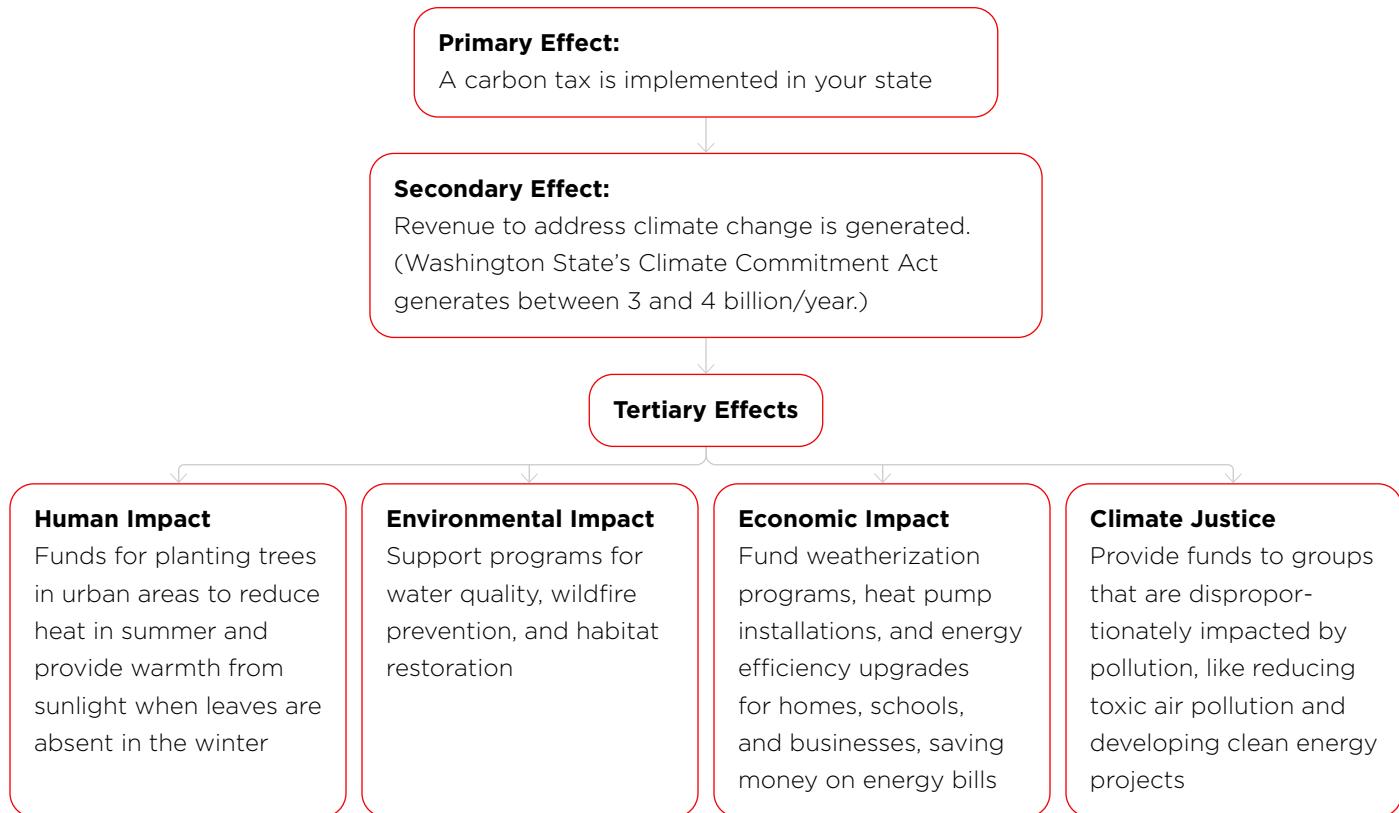
Have them compare the ripple effects of each pathway and divide the effects into the four categories below.

In a way that all students can see, provide an example of the first pathway:



*Turn to the next page for an example of the second pathway...*

In a way that all students can see, provide an example of the second pathway:





**Sununu being sworn-in**

*Credit: George HW Bush Library*

## Part II: Which George Bush Am I Looking At?

**| Watch Part II (25:48-55:26, about 30 minutes)**

### 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.

**Reflection:** Three prompts for student responses:

- 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 governmental agencies 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". Ask students to consider this quote and then discuss how understanding this statement might affect a politician's behavior.
6. Ask students to discuss how they feel about the protesters in the film and how much of an effect they had. Compare this to the protests currently underway across the country. Answer the question, "Does protesting make a difference? If so, how? If not, why?"
2. Why do disasters like Exxon Valdez stir temporary outrage but often fail to bring lasting change? Have we seen similar patterns with recent events? Have students work in groups to research a local disaster that brought about a strong public outcry but then failed to produce any lasting change. They can present their information and add how they would have handled the situation differently if they had been in a leadership position.
3. Find examples of jobs that have been created that promote sustainability and contribute to environmental health.
4. 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 promised to protect the environment and then did! How was their situation different from the leaders who failed to act?

## Activities

1. Have students role-play the interactions between Reilly and Sununu from what they remember in the film. The class can then decide how they might have wanted the following individuals to behave differently:
  - President Bush
  - John Sununu, Chief of Staff
  - Bill Reilly, Head of the Environmental Protection Agency



## Part III: Is Science for Sale?

**Watch Part III (55:27-1:11:27, about 16 minutes)**

### Overview:

By the early 1990s, the climate debate had shifted away from 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 sought 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.

**Reflection:** Three prompts for student responses:

- 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

Ask students whether they know what percentage of scientists currently agree that climate change is real and caused by burning fossil fuels. (Note: it's 99%)

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 strong 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?

## **Activities**

1. Ninety-nine percent of scientists currently agree that climate change is real and is caused by the burning of fossil fuels. Have students work in groups or individually to develop a way to convey this information to the public using various media. Have them share their ideas with the class. You could hold a poster session or use another presentation format.
2. Have students research the ad campaigns discrediting the science from the tobacco industry and the oil industry. How were they similar? How were they different? Have the students assess how effective they were.

After they present their findings, share that both industries employed the same ad companies to “sow seeds of doubt” in the public. It worked very well. One student in the field tests said, “A little doubt is all it takes”.



Scientists pull instrument on sled

Credit: Klaus Thymann

## Part IV: What Is Nature Doing to Us?

**Watch Part III (1:11:28-1:36:44, about 20 minutes without the credits)**

### Overview:

This part of the film allows students 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.

Students 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.

**Reflection:** Three prompts for student responses:

- 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 real 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 63 countries in signing the Rio Agreement?
3. The Rio Summit exposed a recurring tension between protecting jobs and protecting the environment. How can societies come up with solutions that allow for both?
4. 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.”

Have students discuss what that means and how they can draw connections between the politicians in the film and the politicians they know now.

5. Discuss the differences between President Bush’s “campaign promises” and his “campaign deliveries”. What are the factors that make them different?

## Activities

1. Using this quote from David Brower, author of *Let the Mountains Talk, Let the Rivers Run: A Call to Those Who Would Save the Earth*, “Politicians are like weather vanes. Our job is to make the wind blow.” Have students think of ways they can “make the wind blow”.
2. This section of the film shows how the public became more concerned about the economy. Have students research the number of billion-dollar extreme weather events in the U.S. on this web page:  
<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/>  
Have student groups report to the class about what surprised them most in the data they researched. How does this information affect how we address the climate crisis?
3. Have students work in groups to create 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? Students can create a policy that addresses ways to mitigate climate and weather-related disasters and fund adaptations to meet the changing environment. What are their suggested adaptations for their local area? (e.g., extreme heat and cold shelters; creation of sea walls and other protective measures for buffering hurricanes; planting more trees in urban areas as cooling actions, etc.)

**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!*



**Aerial of Fracking Facility**

*Credit: Institute for Regional Education*

## After the Film

**Review:** *Have students review their reflections from each part of the film, then lead the final discussion.*

### 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?

5. Have students discuss what these two statements mean to them:
  - Good information = good decisions
  - Facts, truth, and trust = change

### Activities:

1. Have student groups put a timeline together of events from the film. These can be on cards that they sort or put on a timeline. Then, students can insert suggested changes that they would have liked to see at various points in the timeline and indicate the outcomes that would arise from those changes. They can use events mentioned throughout the film, like this one from Part I: 1956 – the U.S. uses twice as much oil as all other countries combined, etc.
2. Students can work in groups to make a list of the top 5 climate change-related issues they see and decide if actions are being taken to address them, and if so, by which groups? Do they think these are effective solutions? If not, what else should be done?

3. 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 that community has with potential climate change impacts. What should they do to address these concerns?
4. 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?
5. What can people your age do to influence climate and conservation policy today? How can your voice have a bigger impact in local, state, or national decisions? Have students talk in small groups, then share with the class.

# Exploring the Climate Emotions Map

1. Have students bring up the Climate Emotions Map on their devices. Have the page projected so all can see.  
<https://www.us-climate-emotions-map.org>
2. Give students a few minutes to look it over before holding a guided session in class. Have them select the question to demonstrate from the drop-down menu in the upper left of the page, then select your state. Click on “View Sample Characteristics”. Give students a few moments to note anything that interests them and have them share it with their table. After they have had some time to share at their tables, take a few student responses to share any observations with the entire class.
3. Have students use the web page to answer the following questions:
  - In which states are youth experiencing drought? Can they draw any conclusions from that map?
  - In which states are youth experiencing wildfire/brushfire? Can they draw any conclusions from that map?
  - In which states are youth experiencing flooding? Can they draw any conclusions from that map?
  - In which states are youth experiencing extreme heat waves? Can they draw any conclusions from that map?
  - Ask, “How could these extreme weather events affect your emotional well-being if this happened to you?”
4. Show them how to scroll down below the U.S. map to find the following categories:
  - Responses to climate emotions
  - Responsibility for climate change
  - Actions in response to climate change
  - Views of the US government response
5. Tell them they will now explore the web page on their own. Ask them to choose three impressions from the data they will explore to share with their group. Point out that this data shows young people’s beliefs, thoughts, and ideas. They will write their impressions in their science notebooks.
6. Allow plenty of time for students to explore the page. Give a 2-minute warning before holding a debrief. First, ask them to share their three impressions at their tables and explain why they chose each one.
7. After table discussions, ask for volunteers to share what came up at their tables.

# How to Provide Hope

Tell students that they will be moving from addressing grief they may feel about climate change to reasons for hope. Hand out the [Climate Emotions Wheel](#) to each student. As they look it over, mention that all emotions are valid and personal and don't have to be defended. Students may experience a number of these emotions or very few. Remind them not to judge others' feelings and to validate whatever anyone is feeling.

## Looking to the Future

This activity is adapted from "Active Hope" by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone and used by permission.

1. Tell students that they are going to participate in a visioning activity and look into the future 100 years from now. Have them take a few minutes at their tables to think about what the future might look like in 100 years. What would their vision be for a sustainable future? What would their community look like? What sustainable practices, technology, and living conditions would be present? What key changes and societal shifts have occurred? Have students jot their ideas in their notebooks.

**Note:** *In this activity, students will make two concentric circles, facing each other. This can be around the classroom, outdoors in an open space, or in a large room without desks. Outdoors is often best to minimize noise.*

2. If you are conducting the activity in another space besides the classroom, move to that space after giving them instructions. Divide the class into two groups. Tell students they will make two circles, one inside the other. The students in the inside circle will face out, while the students in the outside circle will face in. Each student will partner with another student for the discussion. Let them know they will change partners a few times. Once you have students in place, explain the activity.
3. Tell students that those in the outside circle are from 100 years in the future, living in this location. Those students in the inner circle live in the present time, also in this location.
4. Beginning with the students living in the present, in the inside circle, have them ask their partner what living 100 years in the future looks like. Allow for a robust exchange. When the conversation dies down, get their attention. Have the students in the outside circle who live 100 years in the future ask their present-time partner what changes they made to ensure a sustainable future. What actions, ideas, and concerns caused humanity to shift? Again, allow for robust conversation.
5. Get students' attention again. Tell them this time, the students living 100 years in the future will move one person to the right. The students living in the present stay in place.

Once they get their new partner, the student in the present will ask the student in the future what the world looks like. When that person is finished, they switch so the person in the present can share what changes occurred that ensured a sustainable future in 100 years.

- Once the conversation has started to die down, get students' attention and have them shift partners again and ask the same questions. Change partners as many times as you have time for or stop when interest seems to wane.

#### **Debrief:**

- Have students return to their seats. Have them discuss the following questions at their tables:
  - What feelings or insights emerged?
  - How does imagining the future influence current actions?
  - What reasons for hope and motivation arose from your conversations?
- Hold a class discussion on the highlights from each table. At the end of the discussion, have students jot down ideas in their notebooks on the following:
  - What gives you hope?
  - What actions do you want to take to ensure a hopeful future for yourself? for your community? for the planet?
  - Who can you turn to for support as you take these actions?

- Bring up an electronic method for recording the class ideas for all to see. Ask students to share their ideas in these two areas:

- What gives you hope?
- What actions do you want to take to ensure a hopeful future for yourself? for your community? for the planet?

You may want to share this with students in a Google doc, etc., for them to access after this activity.

- To conclude the activity, ask, "What do you hope your city/town, state, nation, or world will look like in 5 years? In 10 years? In 50? In 100?" Have students discuss what they hope the future looks like at each milestone year. What is working? What is still unsustainable? Have students describe their visions of the future in their notebooks. They can use words and drawings.

**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, change is happening all around us.

## Some Suggested 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 students can get involved.

**Speak up!** Please work with your local city/county governments to find ways for students to make their voices heard. Host a community

event where students present solutions to local officials. Students can give presentations to their school board asking for the addition of sustainable practices in their schools.

**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 where students invite community members to see presentations on what students have learned about climate change and what community members can do to help.



# Resources for Teachers

## 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.

### [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.

#### **Tips for Teachers and Administrators**

### **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.

#### **Young people's climate anxiety revealed in landmark survey**

### **Providing Hope:**

#### **Your Daily Dose of Happiness**

A helpful flyer on "happiness" chemicals in our bodies: dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and

endorphins. This page explains the chemicals our bodies produce and how to create them through healthy activities naturally. A summary PDF is available to download at the bottom of the web page.

#### **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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**Actual Films** creates powerful works of documentary cinema to have a positive impact for change in the world. Over the past 20+ years, the company has created critically acclaimed, award-winning films such as 'Athlete A,' 'Audrie & Daisy,' 'An Inconvenient Sequel,' 'The Island President' and 'The Lost Boys of Sudan.' Recent work includes the Academy Award-nominated short 'Lead Me Home' and 'Make A Splash,' which premiered at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival. Distribution partners include Netflix, HBO, Paramount, ESPN, Disney+, PBS and Samuel Goldwyn. Founded by filmmakers Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk, Actual Films' documentaries have won Emmys and Peabodys, and been nominated for an Academy Award. Together with Head of Production Justine Nagan, Actual Films frequently collaborates with passionate filmmakers across the country and from around the San Francisco Bay.

# How to Determine if Information is Accurate

Use the checklist below to determine whether the information is accurate, verifiable, complete, and from a reputable source.

**Check the web address.** If the URL ends in a .gov or .edu, it is from a government agency or educational institution, which may be more reliable due to oversight and peer review.

Misleading web pages may add a few letters to the end of a URL, making it appear legitimate: www.nasa.gov is a legitimate news source, while www.nasa.gov.co or www.nasa.com is not.

**Who is the author?** Would you consider them credible? Is their organization real and respected? Check the author's sources to confirm they are accurate.

**Who is the source?** Find out where the information came from. Is it credible and respected?

**Check with the [adfontesmedia.com](#) page.** See where the source of the news falls in the areas of political bias (x-axis) and reliability (y-axis).

**Check the date.** Outdated information may no longer be relevant.

**Read the whole story.** Headlines are designed to get attention. Does the entire story prove the point of the headline?

**Consider the photos.** False news stories often contain manipulated images or videos. With AI

technology, it's hard to know what is an actual image. Sometimes the photo may be authentic, but taken out of context. Search the photo or image to verify where it came from.

**Check supporting sources.** Click on the information embedded in the article. Are these credible and respected sources? Do they support the article or draw attention to something else?

**Check whether anyone else is saying the same thing.** Are they reputable sources too?

**Check your biases.** Can your own beliefs affect whether you agree with certain information?

**Check a quote.** Use a search engine to see if it can be traced back to an actual event or a statement.

**Question the reason for the article.** Why did your article, web page, etc., make the news?

**Check with an expert.** Consult a librarian or a fact-checking website such as Snopes.com, Factcheck.org, or Politifact.com. Be careful! Some of the fact-checking web pages are biased as well.

**Is it a joke?** If some claims are too hard to believe, perhaps they aren't true. Use the [Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus](#) page as an example.

**Adapted from** the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions