

“Losing Earth” Discussion Questions

1. Before you read this story, what did you think about climate change?
 - Did you think it was a settled scientific theory? Why or why not?
 - Has your opinion changed or shifted after you did the reading?
2. Al Gore assembled his first climate change hearing as a dramatic story with a hero, villain, and victim. Did Nathaniel Rich do the same thing in the piece? Can you identify the characters and institutions neatly into one category or another?
3. Who did you notice was consistently involved in discussions about climate change policy throughout the story? In your opinion, who was missing from those discussions? Who would you invite to a meeting about addressing global climate change in 2018?
4. Who did you empathize with in the story, and why? Of the many roles that people took in the story to research and share the impacts of global warming (politicians, scientists, activists, journalists), which role most interests you? If you were a subject in this story, who might you be and why?
5. When a government employee testifies before Congress, they are speaking as an agent of the government. Do you think that government officials should have the ability to censor or change what that person will say? Does it make a difference if it is a policy statement or a scientific statement?
6. Throughout “Losing Earth,” there are two perspectives presented about the timeliness of taking action. One is that immediate action on climate change was needed and overdue; the other was that climate change was a problem for the future to solve. Do you think now is the time to act, or can action on climate change still wait?
 - How can you convince someone to act in the present when the consequence will not be evident until the future?
7. Nathaniel Rich includes details such as an architectural description of the Pink Palace (21) and background such as why Hansen joined NASA (16) in the story. What role do these elements play in the story?
8. Look at George Steinmetz’s photography from the magazine. How does he visualize climate change?
 - How do you feel when you look at the photos? Why?
 - How would you visualize climate change? What would you show to provoke an emotional response or connection to the issue?