

Unit Overview

Unit Title	Grabbing the Reins: The Fate of the Earth is in our Hands
Unit Length	5-7 Class Periods (approximately 1 week)
Grade Level(s)/Subject(s)	Grades 4-5 / ELA, Social Studies, and Science
Unit Overview	<p>Although a frightening reality, there is arguably less coverage of climate change and the current state of our home, Planet Earth, than there should be. Underreported climate stories often take a back seat to the pandemic and other issues. However, the state of the world is a pressing issue that needs to be explored, especially by the next generation.</p> <p>This unit focuses on the destruction humans are causing the Earth, and how students can be involved in raising awareness of these pressing issues. Over the course of the unit, students will learn about the causes of climate change and the effects on the Earth. Students will also read informational articles and videos to learn about young activists, such as Manisha Dhinde and Greta Thunberg, who will serve as models for how their voices can be heard despite their ages. In the culminating activity, students will use this knowledge to construct a persuasive essay or art piece for local/national government officials, and persuade them to take action on climate issues.</p>
Objectives & Outcomes	<p>Throughout this unit, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identify the causes and effects of climate change● Identify how the effects of climate change can be reduced● Construct a persuasive essay or piece of art to call to action local/national leaders around the issue of climate change
Standards	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.9 Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.</p>

	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.</p>
<p>Unit Resources</p>	<p>Pulitzer Center Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Climate Activists Warn their Elders: Stop Destroying the Planet Pulitzer Center • Where will the next Pandemic begin: Amazon Rainforest offers Troubling Clues Pulitzer Center, optional • Student Writing Where Will the Next Pandemic Begin? The Amazon Rainforest Offers Troubling Clues Pulitzer Center Contest Winning Letter (Pesticides) Pulitzer Center • Student Writing Contest Winning Letter (Pandemic Affecting BIPOC Communities) Pulitzer Center <p>Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of the World Movie Clips (video) • What is Climate Change? (video) • What is Climate Change? (article) • Carbon Footprint Quiz 1 • Carbon Footprint Quiz 2 and info, more advanced • Climate Change and Its Effects on Illinois (article) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Teachers should identify a local equivalent for their region or community</i> • Old Enough to Save the Planet (book) • Climate activist Greta Thunberg on the power of a movement (video) • Greta Thunberg's full speech to world leaders at UN Climate Action Summit (video) • Malala's Story (website), optional • Malala's Speech to the UN (video), optional • Found Project Ideas for Students <p>Teacher-Created Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Causes and Effects Worksheet [.pdf] [.docx]

Performance Task	<p>For the final activity, students will choose one of two options for their performance task:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a persuasive essay or letter to a local elected representative, identifying the causes of climate change, proposing solutions, and calling the official to action 2. Create an art piece using recycled items (found object project) to emphasize how recycling can reduce carbon imprints
Assessment/Evaluation	<p>Students who write a persuasive essay or speech will be assessed using the Pulitzer Center's Local Letters for Global Change rubric.</p> <p>Students who create an art piece will be assessed by Found Art Project Rubric [.pdf].</p>

Day 1: What is Climate Change?

Lesson Objectives and Essential Questions
<p><u>Objectives:</u> Students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define climate change and understand why it is important • Identify the causes and effects of climate change <p><u>Essential Question:</u> What is climate change and why is it important?</p>
Focus texts / Resources for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of the World Movie Clips (video) • What is Climate Change? (video) • What is Climate Change? (article) • Graphic Organizer: What Causes Climate Change? What are the Effects of Climate Change? [.pdf] [.docx]
Lesson / Activities
<p><u>"End of the World" Warm-Up</u></p> <p>Teacher: "What do you think would happen in the last days on Planet Earth?" Students might say zombies or other catastrophic natural disasters.</p>

As a class, students will watch the video: [End of the World Movie Clips](#)

Teacher: “I don’t think zombies roaming the Earth is as likely, but if we do not do anything soon, Planet Earth, our home, might not support life as we know it.”

Climate Change Introduction: *What is climate change and why is it important?*

1. Teacher: “The issue we are going to learn about is climate change. We are going to watch a short video that explains why this issue is important even though we do not hear a lot about it. After watching, we will summarize our learning around how we contribute to climate change and the effects on our daily lives.”
2. As a class, all students will watch the video: [What is Climate Change?](#)
3. With a partner, students will read the article: [What is Climate Change?](#). In their pairs, students will also complete the Graphic Organizer: What Causes Climate Change? What are the Effects of Climate Change [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)? Students can refer back to the article as a resource while completing the worksheet.

Lesson Materials

- Internet access and a projector to view video clips
- Pens, pencils, or markers to complete the graphic organizer

Day 2: What Is My Carbon Footprint?

Lesson Objectives and/or Essential Questions

Objectives:

Students will...

- Define “carbon footprint,” and do a self-assessment to identify behaviors or activities in their daily lives that can reduce their own carbon footprint
- Explore examples of how climate change is affecting youth around the world..
- Make local connections to climate change in their own city or state

Essential Question:

What is my carbon footprint?

Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today’s lesson

- [Carbon Footprint Quiz 1](#)
- [Carbon Footprint Quiz 2 and info](#), *more advanced*
- [Young Climate Activists Warn their Elders: Stop Destroying the Planet](#) (article)
- [Climate Change and Its Effects on Illinois](#) (article)
 - *Teachers should identify a local equivalent for their region or community.*

Lesson / Activities

Personal Connections: What is my carbon footprint?

1. Teacher: “Now that we have learned about climate change, let’s look at how we contribute to it in our daily lives. You are going to take a quiz that will show you how much of an impact you and your family may make towards global warming. This information helps us understand how the decisions we make directly impact our planet.
2. Students will take the quiz: [Carbon Footprint Quiz](#)
3. Students will then turn and talk to a partner:
 - What did you notice about your results?
 - Were you surprised?
 - How can I reduce my carbon footprint? (and my family’s)
4. Finally, students will do a whole group share-out of what we can do to reduce our carbon footprints.

Youth Connections

1. Teacher: “I am going to read to you an article, about a young climate activist who also thinks this issue

needs more attention. As you listen to me read, think about her experience with climate change.” The teacher will read this article aloud to students: [Young Climate Activists Warn their Elders: Stop Destroying the Planet](#)

2. While reading, the teacher will also ask these questions to the group:
 - What are the effects of climate change that Vanessa Nakate is experiencing?
 - How has social media helped her cause?
 - Do you think others in Manisha Dhinde’s community think this issue is important? How do you know?

Local Connections

1. Teacher: “Now, let's turn our attention to our community in Chicago. Yes, climate change is even affecting us directly in Chicago. With a partner I want you to read an article about the effects of climate change on our state, Illinois. As you read, I want you to highlight, circle, or underline any climate change effects mentioned.”
 - a. In pairs, students read the article, [Climate Change and Its Effects on Illinois](#), and highlight climate change effects.
2. Teacher: “Now, let’s review the article one more time. What should we do now to help Illinois? Reread the last 5 paragraphs with your partner to see what the author thinks we should do. Feel free to circle any actions we can do.”
 - a. In pairs, students re-read the article and highlight the author’s proposed solutions.
 - b. As a group, all students share out to answer the question: “What actions should we take?”

Lesson Materials

- Internet access and individual devices to take the Carbon Footprint quiz

Day 3: Can I Make a Difference?

Lesson Objectives or Essential Questions
<p><u>Objectives:</u> Students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discover how to raise awareness about minimizing the effects of climate change• Explore stories of youth activism and how other young people are using their voices to advocate for change <p><u>Essential Question:</u> Can I make a difference in the climate change issue?</p>
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Old Enough to Save the Planet (book)• Climate activist Greta Thunberg on the power of a movement (video)• Greta Thunberg's full speech to world leaders at UN Climate Action Summit (video)
Lesson / Activities
<p><u>Old Enough to Save the Planet Read-Aloud</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teacher: "Today, I am going to read aloud the text, <i>Old Enough to Save the Planet</i>. You are going to listen to stories of young activists bringing awareness to climate change. As you listen, think about if this is something you could do or if this inspires you in any way.2. Teacher reads text aloud3. After reading, students will respond to the following questions on index cards:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What stood out to you?• Is there any person or idea that inspires you?4. Students can share out as a whole class or with a partner/group. <p><u>Young Climate Activists</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teacher: "Kids who are the same age as you are standing up for the cause of climate change. Listen to this speech by Greta T."2. As a class, students will watch this video: Greta Thunberg's full speech to world leaders at UN Climate Action Summit3. Teacher, after watching: "That was amazing right? Well, speaking in front of the UN might not be

something we are ready for today, but maybe one day we will be. However, we can still use our voices to amplify our causes and bring change. Let's discuss some ways to bring awareness to our cause."

4. Students will share ideas and the teacher will compile a list onto chart paper.

Lesson Materials

- Internet access and a projector to view video clips
- Index cards
- Chart paper

Day 4: Can Art Inspire Change?

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
<p><u>Objectives:</u> Students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on how they as young individuals can bring awareness to important issues. <p><u>Essential Question:</u> How can art and language make a difference in the climate change issue?</p>
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Writing Contest Winning Letter (Pesticides)• Student Writing Contest Winning Letter (Pandemic Affecting BIPOC Communities)• Found Project Ideas for Students• Optional: Journalist Visits to Classrooms
Lesson / Activities
<p><u>Introducing Performance Tasks</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Raising Awareness through Writing Teacher: "One way we can raise awareness to issues is by writing letters to leaders in our community. I am going to share with you a letter from a student wanting to raise awareness to a cause that is important to him. As you read, think about the cause he wants to bring awareness to."<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Students read examples of student letters:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Writing Contest Winning Letter (Pesticides)• Student Writing Contest Winning Letter (Pandemic Affecting BIPOC Communities)b. Teacher: "Is this something you could do? Who do you think you should address your essay/letter to?"c. The teacher will also review other examples of raising awareness from the list that students created the previous day (Day 3).2. Raising Awareness through Art Teacher: "Another idea would be to create a found object art piece using items we could recycle. Recycling helps us reduce our carbon footprint as well. Let's look at some ideas."<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Teacher shows website to class: Found Object Project ideas for Studentsb. Teacher: "Is this something you could do? What is speaking to you?"3. Given the two options for either writing a letter or creating a found object art piece, students will begin to brainstorm their project and start working over the coming days.

Educator note: If you'd like to invite a journalist to your classroom to discuss climate change reporting, reach out to the Pulitzer Center's education staff using the form on the [Journalist Visits to Classrooms](#) page.

Lesson Materials

- Internet access and a projector to view video clips
- Index cards and chart paper
- Access to recycled items
- Art supplies such as poster boards, paper, markers, scissors, or pens

Days 5 and 6: Advocate and Celebrate

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
<u>Objective:</u> Students will... <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reflect on how they as young individuals can bring awareness to important issues
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Students may refer to any of the texts and resources previously introduced in this unit.
Lesson / Activities
<u>Performance Task: Student Work Time</u> Teacher: "Today we will spend time working on our projects. I will be around to provide support or answer questions if needed. Refer to any texts we have reviewed if you need any information for your projects." Students will have time to work independently or with a partner. Students might need 2 days to complete their projects. <u>Completion and Celebration</u> Once students complete their projects, the teacher will set up a way for students to present their final work. This can be done as a gallery walk or a presentation. Students can share out in the way that best works for them
Lesson Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Access to recycled items● Art supplies such as poster boards, paper, markers, scissors, or pens