



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2009 Volume VII: Energy, Climate, Environment

---

## **Energy, Climate, Environment: What's Plastic Got To Do with It?**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.07.07, published September 2009

by Doriel Moorman

This unit will have students take a look at the Earth from the perspective of before and after the Industrial Revolution that is said to be the onset of the global warming cycle. During the course of the unit the distinction between weather and climate will be established, students will gain an understanding of the climate system and its component subsystems, and take an in-depth look at weather, climate, and the natural cycles that impact them. Students will examine how a balanced system works and methods used for detecting an imbalance. Students will heighten their awareness of observable impacts of climate change including sea level rise, extreme events, and temperature and precipitation level changes. They will identify some of the contributing factors causing these changes. Finally they will consider plastic as a source of some of the contributing factors to climate change, as a pollutant of the environment, and as a cause of health related issues. Five environmental problems linked to climate change that will be explored include quality and availability of water resources, depletion of natural resources, degradation of land resources, reduction of marine ecosystems, and damage to food crops due to flooding and other extreme events.

(Developed for Enrichment Math and Enrichment Language Arts, grade 3-5; recommended for Elementary Language Arts, Math, and Science, grade 5, and adaptable for grades 3-4)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)