



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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## Helping Students "See Beyond the Pale"

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### Introduction

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Over the past few months, I have been working with the Yale National Initiative to develop a unit that is applicable not only in my classroom but in all the classrooms around the country. Throughout the two week intensive session, I studied "Literature and Information" with Professor Jessica Brantley. Her seminar objectives were twofold: to discuss and analyze literature in a collegial setting, and to pair fiction with nonfiction texts. This unit is inspired and driven by the conversations had and information learned throughout my time with YNI. I hope you find it applicable to many settings and levels of students.

To begin, it might be important to understand what it means to "see beyond the pale". The "pale" is not some bucket you fill up with water. Nor is it a color. The "pale" actually derives from the Latin "palum" which was a stake driven into the ground to create a sort of fence or barrier outside of a city in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this minor barricade was more figurative than it was literal. It indicated the limit of the city, that which was forbidden to go beyond. Outside this barrier was everything socially unacceptable. To see outside of this barrier was to see beyond the veil of ignorance, to gain a different perspective, and to understand that things are not as they seem.

### Rationale

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I first realized how confusing misinformation can be for students around December 21, 2012. The rumor was that the world was coming to an end. As the 21<sup>st</sup> approached, a look of anxiety marked many of my students' faces. Even those who didn't believe in Armageddon were still uneasy because of the looming message whispered throughout the halls. This was the oddest bandwagon discussion I had ever encountered, and I realized its effect on my students' minds. At the time, I merely educated them about where such misguided information came from and the majority went on break with some sense of relief.

Later in my career, my students were again befuddled by public news media, specifically the Mexican News Station, as they learned that a giant 9.8 earthquake was set to hit California at 3:47 PM on May 28, 2015. I

asked how many students had actually researched this topic. The answer was none. I went online, with my students, to see what source was spewing this information. We found several conspiracy theory websites describing an alignment between planets that was sure to devastate the population of our city. The fact that the movie *San Andreas* had just been released was of no reassurance to my students. They were certain the world was going to come to an end. *If* students showed up that day, they left with glum faces, ready to face the end of their world.

My epiphany moment came when a student asked me how it was possible that cats have nine lives. I couldn't believe it. I thought they no longer believed in fairy tales, superstition, and rumor. I was wrong. How does this happen? What kind of mind must students have if they so easily believe what they are told? These examples illustrate the immediate need for critical thinking in my classroom and in my students' lives.

I realized that my students are bombarded with all sorts of information throughout their day. Who knows how much is disinformation. Furthermore, they hold selfies and Instagram in higher regard than understanding the facts that California is quickly running out of water, the world population is increasing at unsustainable rates, and child labor means kids their age are working to death to make the products they take for granted daily. In a rapidly changing world, my goal is to wake my students up and inspire them into action.

Every topic discussed throughout this unit helps students move toward a deeper understanding of how modern society affects the environment. Although environmentalism is the underlying theme of the unit, students will digest content by learning and utilizing critical reading and thinking skills. Furthermore, by coupling fiction and nonfiction sources of information, students will have many avenues for understanding and relating to the material.

The variety of viewpoints and types of information that this unit provides are reflective of the real world. Students must have the ability to sift through and analyze all the information they receive. If they cannot think critically about a topic, then we are doomed as a society and our effort as educators will be wasted. Education should be a tool for making connections and understanding the world around us. Let's teach this skill to our students so they may become a brighter and highly educated addition to our society.

## Demographics

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I teach 7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Justice in San Jose, California. Each class period is 55 minutes long, with about 28 students per class. The demographics for my school are approximately 65% Hispanic, 30% Vietnamese, and 5% Cambodian. My students are English Learners and, although my school promotes high achievement, the reality is that many of my students are reading as low as a second grade level. This, however, does not mean their ability to comprehend the material is diminished in any way.

With slow pacing, excellent explanation and resources, and engaging lessons, these students will relish this unit. By the end of the Paul Fleischman's book *Eyes Wide Open*, students will have a basic understanding of advertising, lobbyism, world population, consumerism, peak oil, and green energy. They will have better critical thinking and deciphering skills when it comes to the information they read. They will understand how these topics connect and relate to environmentalism, and they will propose a plan for becoming active members in their community.

# Objectives

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## Overview

My goal is to wake up my students' minds to the world around them. This unit requires students to practice critical thinking skills while learning about environmentalism through many different lenses. The subtopics will be the means for practicing critical thinking skills, as students will have to read various leveled texts, analyze the source's credibility, relate the information to their lives, and discuss the information in a collegial manner. The subtopics will build upon each other and continuously relate back to the overarching topic of environmentalism.

I expect that it should take a little over two months to teach. I believe that I have constructed this unit to be one that you can do in its entirety or take bits and pieces from. I have provided many supplementary readings and short videos to further your understanding of the topic.

## Sources of Information

There will be several ways of enlightening students about the proposed subtopics. The first is through my anchor text, Fleischman's *Eyes Wide Open*<sup>2</sup>. Throughout the reading of this book, I will provide many opportunities to read and investigate supplementary materials that relate the topics described throughout the chapters. My goal isn't to spend a month on each subtopic. Rather, we will read broadly and then dive deeply into several subtopics that interest the students and spur critical thinking from those resources.

I will use several picture books as further examples to discuss the theme of environmentalism and various subtopics, such as consumerism, capitalism, conservationism, and living closely with the natural environment. Two picture books I plan on using are Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* and D.B. Johnson's *Henry Climbs a Mountain*. I will also couple the theme of environmentalism and its subtopics with various related poems and a short story by Ursula Le Guin called "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas".<sup>3</sup>

The picture books, especially *The Lorax*, are excellent tools for grounding students' understanding about these topics. The imagery literally comes to life in these texts, which will help struggling readers in their basic understanding of material. Interpretations of these stories will inspire further dialogue during class discussions.

Furthermore, I will intertwine educational videos that spark student engagement, reach different style learners, and hold interest through what might be the denser parts of the text. Overall, the unit is not meant to be difficult. Rather, I want to excite my students and promote healthy discussion of anything and everything they learn throughout the unit.

## Activities

As mentioned, students will investigate relevant supplementary resources to further their learning about a topic. They will analyze, think critically about, and discuss the information with their peers. It's important to get students talking about the information they learn. I will suggest activities that promote discussion between paired partners, in groups, or in Socratic Seminars.

Once students realize that what they are learning is real and applicable to them, in their own lives, they will

invest great interest in understanding the material, discussing the pros and cons of the topics, and figuring out ways to better the world around them.

## Summation

In summation, the main goal of the unit is to promote critical thinking about various real world topics that are interesting to students. Fleischman's book details a lot of information throughout its pages. Rather than spending a month on each topic, I will pick and choose several topics that interest my students. I will provide supplementary articles about these topics, which students will analyze, think critically about, and discuss in a collegial manner.

Each of these topics will relate back to the theme of environmentalism. I will support this theme with various fictional picture books to help students better understand the topics. Students will realize that this theme and these topics are relevant to their own lives. The very best thing that can happen is students become active participants in their own community. The worst, if it can be called that, is that students will learn how to think critically and form educated opinions about the world around them.

## Content

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### Note

From here on out, you might find yourself flipping between the "Content" section, the "Teaching Strategy" section, and the "Activity" section, as they are intertwined and support each other throughout the narrative of this unit. I'll try to be as clear as possible about my expectations and the opportune times to skip around in your reading.

### Preparing for Content

Fleischman opens his book with the notion that the powers that be want the general population to believe there isn't anything too wrong with the world. I say "too", because obviously we know the world is chaotic. However, think about it: how much do you *really* know? My guess is, unless you've done your research, not much. I was the same way and still am. I won't pretend to be an expert on all the world's affairs by any means. Yet, this book and this unit will change the way you see the world. It will, if you spend the time to investigate these topics as thoroughly as you ask your students to, lift the veil from your eyes and allow you to see beyond the pale.

With that being said, what is it that you should know before teaching this information to others? Well, I'm guessing that it's obvious that you should read *Eyes Wide Open* before doing anything else. In college, I was taught to read a text three times before teaching it to my students. Here, I would suggest reading the book twice and then investigating further articles and materials about each of the subtopics in the text. After simply glancing through the pages, it becomes overwhelmingly apparent that this book covers *many* different topics. These topics all build up to the idea of "going behind the environmental headlines." Again, environmentalism is the overarching theme of this unit. Each topic will support and build an understanding of how the world got to where it is today.

My second suggestion is to find several subtopics from each chapter that resonate with you or your students. Spend some time learning more about specific information you think you would like to discuss in class. I will help you as best as I can and have provided many further suggestions in the “Further Resources” section of this unit. Also, the book itself has excellent source notes and bibliography for further reading on any and every topic unveiled in its pages.

I believe it is important to teach topics you are interested in, because your students will feel your enthusiasm and your enthusiasm will likely enliven their minds and spark their interests. Remember, this unit is more than just teaching students about the topics related in the book. The greater purpose is to help them become critical thinkers and active participants within their community.

Also, throughout the unit, you will couple this book with short fictional picture books. I’ll provide more strategies on achieving this interconnected approach, both between the materials and critical thinking, and the nonfiction and fictional texts, later. This approach is valuable when teaching different perspectives about a topic. The ability to think and read critically about a topic is valuable for students’ transitions into the real world. Since my students are so young, I will also use this varied source approach to help hold their interest and inspire engaging discussions throughout the unit.

What I’ll do next is go through each chapter of *Eyes Wide Open* and break down the text for you, providing further information and materials that elaborate upon the subtopics.

### **Preparing for Discussion**

The first part of this unit is teaching students how to think critically, as they will be called on to use critical thinking skills frequently throughout. This may be the first time your students have heard the term critical thinking.<sup>4</sup> Explain to them the importance of differentiating sources of information, analyzing the information, and then discussing it with their peers in a collegial manner. Relate how *you* might hear about a topic and then engage in further research to better distinguish fact from fiction, or better understand the material itself. As adults, we have critical minds. As stated earlier, students think the world is coming to an end tomorrow and have yet to develop the valuable skills of critical thinking.

If your students don’t know about annotation and close reading, then now is the time to enlighten them on these skills. This can be a lesson, which I describe later in the “Activities” section of the unit. Keep in mind that there is no rush to read the information. One of the major goals is to help students become critical thinkers.<sup>5</sup>

The information and subtopics related within the book are materials that will help your students engage in critical thinking. Although the subtopics are important, what is equally important is that students make connections between the material and the overall theme, analyze and discuss the material, and use the unit to better understand the world around them.

Annotation will prepare your students for Socratic Circles/Seminars.<sup>6</sup> As you prepare for reading the text, I suggest practicing a round of engaging Socratic Seminar. I’ll provide an “Activity” that lends itself well to this practice in the “Critical Thinking Lesson.”

### **Reading Eyes Wide Open**

Once the students have been adequately prepared to begin reading the book, guide them as they start their

journey throughout the text. The book is separated into six different categories: Noticing, Perception, Defense Mechanisms, Systems, Attitudes, and Eyes Abroad and Ahead. These categories help the reader better understand the world around them and how it got to its current state of being. Within these sections are subtopics that narrow and refine the information discussed. These subtopics are what you will be discussing in class. They are what you will need to know in order to be an effective teacher of this unit.

Don't get overwhelmed. The book basically walks you through these subtopics, provides information, and helps the reader make connections to a greater theme: going behind the environmental headlines. Furthermore, I will support your reading and learning with further supplementary sources of information. As you read through the following narrative, follow along in *Eyes Wide Open*, take notes in your book, and allow the information I share to be a sort of preparation or anticipation for teaching this unit.

## **“Noticing”**

The first chapter is called “Noticing”. It starts with a narrative by Fleischman that describes his awakening to the deeper troubles of the world around him. The first section is entitled “Optical Illusions” and discusses the many different ways of seeing the world: perspective. Gather together different optical illusions that can be seen in different ways depending on a person's perspective. The illusions should be ones that lend themselves well to different interpretations and perspective, thus sparking discussion about what it is that the students are seeing. Check out street illusions, stereograms, or perspective illusions for some examples. Allow students to admire these images and then create the connection between the image and what they are about to read.

Seeing beyond the pale, one realizes that not all things are what they seem. Alas, the “it's always been this way” attitude numbs our minds and allows us to pretend the world is fine and dandy. Yet, we should be thinking critically about the world around us.<sup>7</sup> The beginning of the book directly relates the idea of history to the students. History isn't always some far-off, unrelated event. History is happening now and each of us has a say in how it plays out. We are directly connected and need to be vigilant in its wake.

Within the chapter of “Noticing”, “The Essentials,” is a strong foreshadowing of the subtopics throughout the book. There are many of these subtopics. If you haven't done your research, now is the time to do it. It's essential that you familiarize yourself with the following topics. Pick one or two subtopics from each chapter and provide further supplementary information for students to sift through, analyze, think and speak critically about. Again, the book provides excellent information about the topics, both within the text itself and in the end “Source Notes” section.

First subtopic overview is world population. How did it get so big so fast?<sup>8</sup> You can research how healthcare in first world countries has greatly affected the growing world population. Edward Jenner's 1796 inoculation against small pox was the first step in controlling disease.<sup>9</sup> Rising world population will tie into environmentalism, because an increased population requires more food, natural resources, and energy to flourish. Currently, the United States makes up about 5% of the world's population, but consumes 24% of the world's energy and resources.<sup>10</sup> This is an impossible ratio to support. If newly developing countries wish to meet similar standards, then the earth will be quickly overrun.

This leads to the next subtopic overview, which is consumption. Consumption refers to the consumption of fuel, energy, food, and consumer products. Environmentalism comes into play as one realizes where these products come from and what it takes to create and distribute them to consumerist societies. Furthermore, these products create a lot of waste, which is haphazardly thrown away and causing pollution on our planet.

Do some research on China and California’s air pollution problems. Do preliminary research on green house gases and carbon dioxide emissions. I suggest reading Regis’ “The Doomslayer” to start seeing this subtopic from multiple perspectives.<sup>11</sup> Remember, you want your students to be able to think critically about these topics. In order to do this, they have to read and analyze several sources of information. A single perspective, for example Fleischman’s, is a biased approach to understanding a topic. Allow them to see from many different points of view so their conversations with each other are rich, educated, and free flowing.

The third subtopic overview is energy. Remember, these overviews are just introductions to the main subtopics found throughout the book. I want you to start your reading with a solid foundation of resources for each subtopic. Throughout the book, energy discussions will detail peak oil and going green. Fossil fuels, modes of transportation, and renewable energy are major components of the world we live in. As you read, learn more about the sway of oil companies, how they deplete our planet of fossil fuels, and how they are resistant to making the change to green energy. Later, the Kyoto talks<sup>12</sup> , fracking<sup>13</sup> , and lobbyism<sup>14</sup> will be important discussions.

Food is the fourth subtopic overview. Two large components of the food information will be the energy that goes into making and distributing food, and how food is made—particularly GMOs. I suggest you do some research about Monsanto. If you are unfamiliar with factory farms, then you may want to watch a couple of videos that detail where your food comes from.<sup>15</sup> If you prefer textual information, you should read Michael Pollan’s riveting NYtimes article “Power Steer.”<sup>16</sup> He also wrote *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* and *The Botany of Desire*, which are useful sources of information for your background knowledge on the topic of food, but are not altogether necessary for teaching this unit.

The last introductory subtopic overview is about the climate. Many believe that rising population and consumption are having an enormous impact on our world. Research green house gasses and climate change. In the “Activities” section, I provide an example of how to use multiple articles to promote critical thinking and collegial discussion. If you want to know more, Al Gore created a useful documentary detailing global warming.<sup>17</sup> As you research climate change, make sure to note that there are people in the world who do not believe climate change is manmade. Rather, they think it is part of the natural cycles of life. Later, these juxtaposing views would be a good read for students to discuss in a debate or Socratic Seminar.

As you read the book, research the subtopics, and start to gain different perspectives about the information provided, two things should become increasingly clear. First, all the subtopics relate back to the overarching theme of environmentalism and life as we know it on our planet. The second realization is that the reading and research you are doing is a way to help you and your students see beyond the normal facets of society. You are accumulating your supplementary sources that will be used in lessons throughout the text. All of the topics are interconnected in this unit. Thinking about them critically will help students see beyond the pale of our society.

### **“Perception”**

The second chapter of *Eyes Wide Open* is entitled “Perception.” This section asks its readers to understand how the world of lobbyism, advertisement, and spin doctoring limits what we know about a topic and controls how we think about it. I suggest you watch the excellent movie *Thank You For Smoking* to better understand lobbyism and spin doctoring. Although the movie is not school appropriate, I will use clips found on YouTube to help students better grasp these concepts.<sup>18</sup>



Learn about and discuss “psychology and advertising.” There are many articles and videos that detail how people in power manipulate and manage the public’s mind. An important figure to learn about is the grandfather of public relations, Edward Bernays.<sup>19</sup> “Torches of Freedom” will help you and your students understand the levels of manipulation available to basically any educated person in power. If students have the prior knowledge, you can also relate this topic to propaganda, especially in Nazi Germany during WWII.

Slowly, you should begin to see what I mean by “seeing beyond the pale.” Here, the pale is the manipulation, the veil between producer and consumer, that leads to pollution and waste.

From a political point of view, it is important to understand how front groups disguise themselves as having a pious political agenda, but in turn are actually quite corrupt. *Eyes Wide Open* goes into much more detail on these topics in very easy-to-understand terms. As you read, you’ll learn the necessary information for teaching this unit.

Later in this chapter, Fleischman discusses advertising, the media, and concealment. A good way to practice critical thinking with your students is to show them several commercials or advertisements. Analyze the videos and advertising techniques. Be sure relate these discussions to critical thinking and the importance of looking at information from multiple perspectives. Several “Superbowl Compilation” videos can be found on YouTube. Make sure they are appropriate before sharing them with your class.

### **“Defense Mechanisms”**

The third section/chapter of the book is entitled “Defense Mechanisms.” You may have already experienced your defense mechanisms arise when you were reading and learning about animal cruelty on factory farms. The fact is nobody likes hearing that the world is falling apart. This section discusses how politicians and large corporations take advantage of our desire to ward off bad feelings.

This section will be a good one for students to analyze the credibility and information of articles claiming completely different perspectives. One subtopic in particular that would spark an interesting discussion is whether or not global warming is real. There is much scientific data that suggests global warming is a fact and is created by humans. However, there are those out there, specifically large fossil fuel harvesting and consuming companies, that want you to think otherwise. Again, you may refer to the “Activities” section for a comparative analysis that promotes discussion about global warming.

Why would they want to turn our eyes from this truth? Well, remember that all these subtopics relate to environmentalism. If the environment is crumbling because of fossil fuel emission, then these companies risk losing business and money. If global warming is a natural phenomenon, then these major companies aren’t doing anything wrong and neither are we if we continue consuming their products. It becomes a game of emotion rather than fact. How can they make us feel that we aren’t hurting anyone or anything? How can they persuade us to agree with their goings on?

Sometimes, such companies create front groups to conceal truth and give the appearance that they are actually benefiting the planet. GreenPeace is an organization that calls out these corrupt companies and misguiding front groups, helping the world see the deeper truth of the matter. In an article “Clean Coal,” readers start to understand the great lengths that fossil fuel companies go to in order to convince consumers that their practices are clean and potentially beneficial.<sup>20</sup>



## Review

So far, aside from the introductory sections of “Content”, we have discussed how politicians and large companies use advertising techniques, spin doctors, and lobbyists to promote and sell their agenda and products. Consumerism has a major impact on the environment. As more countries taste modern industrialization, they are demanding more resources to build up their communities. The taking of natural resources is affecting the planet in a way that some might call global warming. However, front groups deny that anything is going wrong, continuing to dissuade the masses and perpetuate the veil.

This halfway point in the book is a good time to pause for greater reflection on what students have learned. Support the ideas students have been learning with Dr. Seuss’ *The Lorax*. This is a great story that details the effect of consumerism on the environment. Analyze this story with students by making comparisons between the two texts. For example, where in the text do students see the rise and repercussions of consumerism? How is the Lorax an environmentalist? Discuss the purpose for writing *The Lorax* and the purpose for writing *Eyes Wide Open*. Are they the same? This text will rehook many of your checked out students, inspiring them to continue reading Fleischman’s *Eyes Wide Open*.

## “Systems”

The fourth chapter, “Systems,” marks a shift in Fleischman’s writing. Up until this point, he has opened our eyes to the hidden agendas of those in power. He relates how politicians and big businesses hesitate to state things as they truly are because people can’t seem to handle the truth. It might be important to note where U.S. politics came from<sup>21</sup> or do further reading about the public’s response to Jimmy Carter’s worrisome speech about lowering energy use.<sup>22</sup>

Continuing, Fleischman discusses capitalism and the free market.<sup>23</sup> These are the parents of our consumerist society. They beget factory farms, outsourcing, and sweatshop labor in third world countries.<sup>24</sup> What is the price for first world living? I suggest you read the short story “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” by Ursula Le Guin<sup>25</sup> and a follow up commentary by David Brooks called “The Child in the Basement.”<sup>26</sup> It is a powerful read that sparks many deep emotions. *If you feel it is appropriate, your students will surely have a lot to say about it.*

## “Attitudes”

I hope the tale of Omelas has now fully opened your eyes. If your readings, videos, and other supplementary sources haven’t helped you see beyond the pale, then I suggest going back and looking a little closer. “Attitudes” is the shift from learning and understanding to hope for the future with eyes wide open. It notes that people are waking up to the reality of the world around them. It suggests that people are willing to change. Even though humans often learn from adversity, the fact is that we are growing and evolving from our current situation, regardless of the destruction we’ve caused.

Now is the time to shift your students’ minds from what we have done wrong to what we can do right. Curiosity and ingenuity sometimes lead us in the wrong direction. However, thinking critically about our situation and working together (both as a planet and as a class) can help us overcome the shortcomings of the past. The environment has been tarnished by our ignorance. It’s not that people, government, and consumerism are all bad. Rather, we just have yet to realize their full, unpolluted potential.

So, now that we’ve seen what’s wrong, how can we change these problems into something right? When it

comes to energy, learn about the shift from fossil fuels to green and renewable energies.<sup>27</sup> There is an argument that peak oil<sup>28</sup> will happen soon. The struggle for industry required the use of fossil fuels. They made us what we are today. However, we now know the damage they are doing to our planet and ecosystems. We need to implement the age of transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies.<sup>29</sup>

Oil shortage will affect much more than our cars. It will affect how everyone lives their lives. Fleischman goes on to suggest that societies of the future will have to adopt a more eco-friendly way of living. Many people think that eco-villages and community farms<sup>30</sup> would be a downshift in our standard of living. However, moving back to the land might be the only option for our future. Bear in mind that this does not have to be a future of living like the Amish (unless you want to), but a future where people demand a better world, one that isn't on the verge of collapse and one that promotes a bright future.

How does this change come about? Often times, drastic change comes through radical action. There are many groups in the world fighting for a homeostasis of the environment. The "Occupy" movement called for a radical shift in the realm of monetary power in the U.S. Groups like GreenPeace and shows like *Whale Wars* are dramatic representations of fighting for change. While it is important for your students to understand extreme forms of protest, it is also important that they too have a voice and can inspire change. The power your students have goes beyond spoken word and beyond protests. Here, students should use their knowledge to inspire a great change in the world. Whether it's a letter intended for the environment, their community, the government, or big business, help students understand that their voice matters. See the "Activities" section for more details.

At this point, I plan on using the picture book *Henry Climbs a Mountain* by D.B. Johnson. This is a tale that mirrors the story of Henry David Thoreau as he refused to pay taxes to a state that supported slavery. You can read his reasoning in his essay "Civil Disobedience."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it might be useful to read *Walden's Pond*, which is a reflection on living simply.

Thoreau was an activist. It is important for students to understand that even political activism could land someone in jail. This example further explains the reasons for and consequences of activism. Should Thoreau have paid his taxes? How does this book compare to *The Lorax*? How is this book related to environmentalism? What are ways to promote and participate in activism without landing one's self in jail?

Before I move on, it is also important to note that one of the greatest ways to make a difference for the environment is by spending money wisely. Help students to think critically about the things that they purchase.<sup>32</sup> Buying certain products may promote industries' use of fossil fuels or harmful chemicals when making and distributing their products. Furthermore, depending on the business, buying their products may also promote sweat shop or even child labor.<sup>33</sup> Withholding money, sometimes called boycotting, is one of the greatest ways to make a change in the world. Right now, people buy what big business makes. If we band together, we'll make it so big business makes what and how we want to buy.

### **"Eyes Abroad and Ahead"**

The last chapter is called "Eyes Abroad and Ahead." At this point, the reader will realize how all the subtopics of the book have built up to the greater theme of environmentalism. Advertising techniques and lobbyism in politics sway consumer's minds so they buy what they are told and conform to a mold. These products and the politicians that often promote them are generated for the sole purpose of making money. The resources to fulfill this greed come from the natural environment, which is stripped bare all across the world.

Consumerism and capitalism outsource menial labor, promoting sweat shop conditions and, at times, child labor. The resources needed to produce these short-life products are either stripped from the country side or harvested from the earth as fossil fuels. Similar sources of energy are then needed to package and distribute these products all across the world, particularly to the U.S.

On the other hand, because of modern medicine, the world population is increasing substantially.<sup>34</sup> The majority of these people are being born in newly industrializing third world countries. In order to meet the demands of so many people, even more products must be made, stripping and using even more resources.

Furthermore, this growing population requires more food. Since the world now relies on grocery stores to provide its food, this gives business to GMO producers, such as Monsanto. As you learned, monocultures and genetically modified foods not only strip the land of its nutrients, but also pose a possible future threat for humanity as a whole. People relying on the economy and big business to provide for them daily will be devastated once the world hits peak oil and can no longer provide for so many people. It all ties back to the environment and how long it can withstand the constant barrage of the masses.<sup>35</sup>

We don't all have to become a Mick Dodge.<sup>36</sup> However, thinking critically about the state of the world and our position in it is no longer just an option. It's a necessity. We need to take control of our lives and the world we live in. Perhaps the future of our society will look something more like community farms and less like an eco-village. Regardless, people are waking up and are no longer accepting the "truth" as it is spoon-fed to them through commercials and political propaganda. We are experiencing history. We have gone beyond the pale. This truly is a time for waking up and making a positive change for our environment.<sup>37</sup>

## Teaching Strategies

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### **K/W/L**

Many of these topics will be new for students. So, a K/W/L chart will be an excellent opportunity for them to gather their ideas and keep them together throughout the unit. K/W/Ls are nothing new in the teaching world<sup>38</sup>, but I will suggest what I find useful in my classroom.

Before beginning each chapter, provide a list of vocabulary words (essentially the subtopics) that students will learn about. Students will write what they (K)now about the topic. When they write what they (W)ant to know about a topic, you can anticipate what topics they will be more interested in and begin preparing supplementary resources for these topics. Furthermore, as they express what they (L)earned, the students will be completing and providing for you a formative (and potentially summative) assessment of each subtopic.

### **Think-Pair-Share**

Think-Pair-Share is designed to give students time to read and think about a topic. Once they are finished reading, they write their ideas down and then share ideas with a partner. This meets several speaking and listening standards in the CCSS.

This is particularly effective for English Language Learners because it promotes conversation between all the students in a no-pressure atmosphere. Students get to share their ideas, which will help them refine their

thought process. They will also listen to their partners and gain new ideas through conversation.<sup>39</sup>

### **Socratic Seminars**

I won't go into detail about how a Socratic Seminar works. There are excellent sources explaining the process online.<sup>40</sup> I do, however, find this to be an excellent follow up activity following immediately or the day after a think-pair-share activity. Since students must prepare their thoughts and discuss them in a think-pair-share, they will be prepared for such an inquiry based activity.

I've found that posing a question and then stepping out of the conversation completely is the best way to conduct Socratic Seminars. The only time I interfere is when discussion rules aren't being followed, collegiality is declining, or if there is a *very* prolonged lapse in conversation.

### **Bookmark Chart / Idea Map**

A bookmark helps you reference something you once thought important. As you move through the unit, write on a large sheet of paper or a whiteboard the subtopics students were interested in throughout their readings. Since these are likely to be the topics discussed in Socratic Seminars, write down the main ideas discussed during the seminar. At the end of the unit, this chart will serve as a bookmark for their ideas so they can go back, reflect upon them, and decide if they want to explore a topic further in their expository essay.

This chart will also allow you to see how each of your classes are thinking and what their interests are. This will help you anticipate what they might like in future sections of the book and what supplementary resources they might want to read. Furthermore, this chart is a means to promote activism. What on the chart is interesting to the students? How can they take these ideas further and actually make a difference or change in their community or life? This activity meets CCSS W7.2A.

## **Classroom Activities**

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### **Critical Thinking Lesson**

After describing what critical thinking is, hand out copies of song lyrics from Gotye's "Eyes Wide Open".<sup>41</sup> This activity will serve a twofold purpose. First, it will promote anticipation for the book. Second, it will help students better understand annotation and critical thinking skills. Have students annotate the text as if it were a poem. You can focus on the recurring stanzas or the entirety of the lyrics. Begin a discussion and analysis about what they think the lyrics are saying. They should talk about their annotations with a partner in order to prepare their thoughts for sharing with the whole class. Students should write their ideas down in a "Bookmark Chart".

After the students have shared their ideas, show them the music video that goes along with the lyrics.<sup>42</sup> I think your students are going to like this video. Some may be shocked and change their ideas about the lyrics themselves. If so, this would be great critical thinking at work. After watching the video, allows students to note their new ideas and share them with a partner. Then, you should take opportunity to have your first Socratic Seminar. I imagine the students will have a lot to say.

Getting back to the lecture on critical thinking, I'll have students read the back section of *Eyes Wide Open*, "How to Weigh Information." You can go through each subcategory and talk with your students about what it means to recognize bias, differentiate between scholarly, credible, and noncredible sources of information, and avoid fallacies of the author.

From here, I suggest printing out several different articles that are from various sources and levels of credibility. I chose articles that dealt with reading nonfiction and critical thinking.<sup>43</sup> However, you can choose any articles you wish, so long as some are distinguished and scholarly and others are absolutely not credible sources of information.

### **Reading and Analyzing Multiple Articles**

One of the main goals of this unit is to get students thinking critically about different sources of information. It's important for them to understand different perspectives and that different authors use different information or evidence to advance their interpretation or bias of the topic (RI 7.9). Here are some suggested articles for such an activity regarding global warming[1]. There are two ways you can conduct this activity.

The first is to provide students with several articles to read in order to learn about a single topic. Each of the articles should be from a different perspective or bias about the topic. Students will read and annotate each article. They will note the differences and similarities between the articles. They will then form an opinion about the topic and create questions that they either have about the topic or that they want to ask their peers. Allow students to propose some of their questions to a partner, then have students discuss the articles in a Socratic Seminar.

The second way to do this activity is to group students based on lexile levels. Provide each group with an article that is appropriate for their reading level. Each article should provide a different perspective about the topic. After students have read and discussed the article, allow them to have a Socratic Seminar to discuss the material as a whole class.

If students are struggling to find their voice during discussions, be sure to have some questions prepared to further the conversation. Mentioning the differences in perspective or information provided throughout the articles will begin your analysis of bias and will promote critical thinking. One advantage of this activity is providing students with a wide range of information in a collegial manner.

### **Helping Students Find Their Voice**

As you read through *Eyes Wide Open*, be sure to chart the topics students are most interested in. Whenever you feel they are ready, propose the idea of becoming an active member of their community. What does this mean? It could mean many things. Perhaps students desire to end pollution, so they organize a method for recycling or cleaning up trash on campus. Or, perhaps they want to end world hunger, so they start a canned food drive.

What if the students want to make a larger impact? How do they do that? Should you march through the streets with them waving poster boards and dodging cars? I am guessing that radical activism is a bit beyond the scope of your classroom. However, you can still help them find their voice.

One way to help students find their voice is by taking them on a walkabout, around your school's campus. Ask them what things they think can be improved upon or what things they would like to see changed. After the

class has determined what they want to “fix” (improve or change), help them craft a letter for action. The letter for action should be specific in its request and should be addressed to someone who has the power to make the change. As each student crafts their own letter, they will provide ideas for a “class” letter that will act as a petition. Once the class letter has been crafted, have any student who desires to do so sign the petition and call for action. Then, send the letter. Hopefully, they will, at the very least, get a response. Even greater, the change might occur.

Another way to help students find their voice is to have them write a similar letter to a larger audience. Whether it’s the city, a politician, or a business, they should again be specific in who they are writing to, why they are writing the letter, and what they hope to achieve by writing the letter. Help them address and send out the letters, and see who responds.

As you write these letters, draw on your discussions about how to persuade or influence an audience into agreeing with your side. You’ve read about big businesses and advertisement companies using these tactics. Why can’t you? Help students fully express what they are trying to get across. If the letters are well written, with the notion added that it is a student who is writing the letter, I would not be surprised that most of your students get responses. Some might even get free products.

## Common Core Standards

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The Socratic Seminar is an excellent tool for active student engagement and participation. I will describe techniques I’ve used in my classroom to enhance the seminar in the “Teaching Strategies” section. Please recognize that this type of communication meets many of the Common Core Standards: SL 7.1A, 7.1B, 7.1C, and 7.1D. Essentially, these standards require students to come to seminars prepared, express ideas in a collegial setting, pose questions that elicit and spark interesting discussion, and respond to what their peers are saying with adequate responses.

Finally, as students read *Eyes Wide Open*, they will cite information from the text to support information about the text and inferences drawn from the text (RI 7.1). They will determine how the theme of environmentalism is revealed throughout the book and by the subtopics of the book (RI 7.2). They will analyze how the actions of a consumerist society impacts the greater environment of the world (RI 7.3). Students will determine the author’s point of view and analyze critically the credibility and bias of the information provided (RI 7.7). They will analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts (RI 7.9). Also, students will compare fiction and nonfiction texts to counterpart video interpretations and explanations of the topic (RL 7.7).

## Notes

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## Further Resources

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Most of the resources provided in this section are meant to be extra supplementary material to be used in class, in order to enhance learning about a particular topic. However, some are just meant for the teacher, to further and deepen knowledge about a specific topic. They are all relevant to the section I have categorized them in.

### General

"KeepVid: Download Online Videos from Youtube and More!" KeepVid. <http://www.keepvid.com>. If your school is anything like mine, you have very unreliable internet. This website will allow you to download most videos onto your computer or external hard drive. Save the file as a MP4 and watch it without internet.

### Noticing

"Anna Lappé & Food MythBusters--The Myth of Choice--How Junk-Food Marketers Target Our Kids." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWOcP-bXuO8>. This is a great video clip that details how large food conglomerates influence children to buy their food.

"BBC News: China's Grime Belt Air Pollution Extreme." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1DNjld2YfA>. I plan on using this as a visual aid to show how serious pollution is and can become.

“Behind the Scenes at a McDonalds Photo Shoot.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSd0keSj2W8>. I chose this clip because I feel it is important to know the marketing side of major food corporations. I also feel this clip is unbiased and will give students a good insight into the fast food marketing industry.

“CNN: Food’s Carbon Footprint.” CNN. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbdKZgFdazl>. When detailing the connection between food and the environment, this video will help solidify the connection for students.

“Eyes of Nye—GMO Food.” YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z\\_CqyB1dQo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z_CqyB1dQo). Bill Nye discusses GMOs from a scientific perspective.

“Fracking Explained: Opportunity or Danger.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uti2niW2BRA>. If your students are interested in fracking, this video is a good overview of the topic. It presents students with a debate as well.

“Global Energy and Carbon—Tracking Our Footprint.” YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cJQ\\_8mwSew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cJQ_8mwSew). Perhaps not a video you will use in class, but a useful video on the connection between energy use and pollution, with a mention of implementing renewable energy at the end.

“Great Pacific Garbage Patch.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nh6lkv1udb0>. This is a great visual aid and explanation of the Pacific garbage patch.

“Great Pacific Garbage Patch—Pollution Awareness.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qT-rOXB6NI>. This is a more emotional video, but it visually details the devastation pollution and garbage can have on the environment.

“How California’s Drought Affects the World.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plet8eXDFbk>. Remember, I am teaching this in San Jose, CA, so this will be applicable to my students. However, the drought does affect the entire world. This video is good to show the connection between environments around the world and how one environment influences the next.

Jane Elliott’s Blue Eyes Brown Eyes.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQAmZvKf6M>. This is a video of an interesting experiment done in a rural town in the 1970s. Use this video to show how easily people can be influenced and manipulated by propaganda and advertising.

Lappe, Anne. “Marketing Food to Children.” Tedx. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bop3D7-dDM>. This is a Tedx talk that details how major food industries market their products, often subliminally, to children.

“Monsanto—Picking Up God’s Slack.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrQe1pDRQxM>. This is a biased video, that offers a satirical commentary on GMOs.

“Population Growth.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b98JmQ0Cc3k>. This is an excellent visual aid that shows why and how the population is growing across the planet.

“Question Authority—The Big Media Lie.” Psychetruth. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQn4VjBuS3c>. This is an interesting and educational commentary on how mass media influences the masses. I would use this as further information for the advertising sections of the book.

“The Majestic Plastic Bag—Mockumentary.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLgh9h2ePYw>. This is a wonderful, artistic display of the journey of a plastic bag. It is enjoyable to watch, but also shows the devastating effect of littering and garbage on our planet.

“This is a Generic Brand Video.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YBtspm8j8M>. This video will help open your eyes to

tv and media advertisement. It almost makes you feel silly for watching commercials.

"What's In Your Fast Food?" BuzzFeed. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPZUQGxGO8Q>. This is an educational video about the nutritious value of fast food.

"When Birds Eat Plastic (Shocking)." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAL9Xvrg3hl>. This is another emotional video that includes a lot of images that are the result of pollution, consumerism, and destroyed environments on our planet.

## Perception

"A Side-by-Side Comparison of Obama's 2008 and 2012 speeches." YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C\\_x5JmHa7E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C_x5JmHa7E). This is just an interesting insight into real-life vested interests and political propaganda. Is Obama serious when he says these things, or is he just repeating what the crowd wants to hear?

"Billy Wants a Dog (An Introduction to Lobbying)." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjY5Zkt51wY>. This is a cute video that introduces the concept of lobbying in a fun and easy way for most levels of students.

"Thank You For Smoking (Opening Scene)." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvkAGrrHdIo>. As I stated in my narrative, this is a must watch movie. I chose to only include one scene for my extended bibliography. However, there are many scenes that will shed light on the topics of lobbying and spin doctoring.

## Defense Mechanisms

"Americans Don't Know Why We Celebrate the Fourth of July." YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRkFDcX\\_72c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRkFDcX_72c). This is an interesting insight, and funny compilation, of how aware the general public is about topics that really matter.

"Global Warming 101." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5woaonDFqy4>. A quick, informational video about global warming for your visual learners.

Leno, Jay. "Jaywalking." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w576CsCOts>. This is another video where the audience becomes aware of the ignorance (my own included) across the U.S. Hosted by Jay Leno.

"The Sixth Extinction." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9gHuAwxwAs>. In this video, the narrator discusses the devastation humans are bringing to planet earth.

"Timelapse: Devastating Deforestation." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hllU9NEcJyg>. Although the quality isn't too good for this video, it shows a time lapse of deforestation.

"What is Deforestation?" YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvdfqrvnu6Q>. This video explains what is deforestation. I will use this video to show what happens when we take natural resources to support economic growth and consumerism. Again, this relates back to environmentalism.

## Systems

"Capitalism Ruins the Earth." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMve8jKA9pA>. This is a clearly biased video from the late 1970s, but is a useful resource to show the connection between capitalism and environmentalism.

"Leonardo DiCaprio's 2014 UN Climate Speech." YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka6\\_3TjCckA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka6_3TjCckA). I will use this speech in comparison to Jimmy Carter's. How did the public respond differently to DiCaprio as compared to Carter? Why?

“President Jimmy Carter—Report to the Nation on Energy.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmlcLNA8Zhc>. This is Jimmy Carter’s speech on reducing energy consumption.

“Types of Government Explained.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbygHVlxpBI>. This is an educational video that details different types of government, especially ones thought more prominent by the U.S.

“What Happened to the Holes in the Ozone Layer.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSLjApQGy5s>. This is a nice visual and educational tool to discuss the problem with holes in the ozone. However, it also suggests that the ozone is healing, which will be a nice counterargument to apocalyptic world theories potentially suggested throughout the unit (which we are trying to avoid).

“Where US Politics Came From.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r161cLYzuDI>. This is an awesome educational video that describes where US politics came from. Careful with your students, it is pretty dense for the younger mind.

## Attitudes

“Baltimore City Councilman Nick Mosby.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gmu-CaKm9U>. I am going to use a string of videos that show different perspectives and outcomes of recent riots and protests in the United States. In this video, Councilman Nick Mosby uses strong words to express the purpose of the riots. On the other hand, the reporter is unengaged and perhaps a bit racist. Student thoughts?

“Baltimore Riots, Looting, Tear Gas (Raw Footage).” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=st4IHokD4Jc>. Here we see what might happen if a protest is unorganized.

“Climate Refugees Trailer.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSpDsP58udM>. This is a trailer for the movie *Climate Refugees*. It shows how climate change is affecting the world and its populations.

“Freddy Gray Protests Heating Up—Dude Tries to Keep Peace.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yt-UWF8nBIY>. Again, we see that organized protests are much more efficient. This is a useful alternative perspective to the straight chaos presented in the previous video.

“How Do Different Types of Renewable Energy Work?” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlj8EuEj8FY>. As you begin to shift the discussion from problems to solutions, it is important to note how renewable energy works.

“MindBlow #81: Edible Waterbottle.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEpqfosDLdo>. Vsauce channels are informative YouTube science channels. Here, we just have a compilation of potential future products, some that are catered to be environmentally friendly. Innovation will free the world.

“MindBlow #82: Solar Road.” YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_lg-zUHbFg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_lg-zUHbFg). Another Vsauce video that discusses future environmentally friendly technologies.

“Occupy Wall Street: Message in the Movement.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCTajhzSytl>. Another video detailing the importance of organized protest.

“President Obama on Baltimore Riots.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AH0dPEFYUg4>. In this video, Obama relates the importance of organizing your movement and conducting yourself as a responsible individual.

“The Future of Alternative Energy.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpWw7Cq2shA>. An excellent video that provides some useful information on how to make “clean” sustainable power for the future.

“The Future of Energy?” YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gz\\_L6KuqvFI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gz_L6KuqvFI). This is probably not a video you will show in class. However, it provides further background on specific renewable energy resources for the future.

The Future of Renewable Energy: From Drones?” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m13VJ2SYcjM>. This is an interesting video of potential options for harvesting renewable energy in the future.

“The Future is Here: Renewable Energy Resource 2016.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHldwuCnCxg>. This video shows an innovative way to harvest solar energy.

“Whale Wars: When Ships Collide.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jGTFiEnRPY>. This is a short video clip from the tv series *Whale Wars*. It shows the power of protest and activism and can also generate discussion about the extremes activism can reach.

## **Eyes Abroad and Ahead**

“Self Sufficient Eco Farm—Documentary.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roB8CO2Y6ko>. This video shows the life of people living self-sufficiently and in an eco-friendly manner. Students will see that it’s not easy. Hopefully this sparks conversation about the pros and cons of such a life style.

“Simple Decisions We Can Make to Fight Climate Change.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWSLJPSXszw>. This is a great video which suggests ways we can all help save the environment of our planet.

“Tiny Homes: Simple Shelters.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-2fsYypJoo>. This is just a book trailer, but it details how people are living in smaller homes, which are more environmentally friendly.

“Veggielution: Community Farm with Social Goals.” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93RjetPWpic>. This is a community farm in San Jose, CA. I plan on joining forces with them to help teach my students about the importance of organic foods, local farming, and becoming active participants in their community.

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