

# Climate Change

*“If you really think the environment is less important than the economy, try holding your breath while you count your money.”*

—Guy McPherson, American climate scientist



## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. How do humans contribute to global warming?
2. Why do some governments want to ignore climate change?
3. In your opinion, what will be different about the earth’s climate in 50 years?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

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|-------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. greenhouse gas   | a) not usual, very odd  |
| ___ 2. carbon footprint | b) a type of gas that contributes to the trapping of heat in the earth’s atmosphere |
| ___ 3. freakish         | c) to attack a problem in order to try to solve it                                  |
| ___ 4. tackle           | d) a person who doesn’t believe something is true                                   |
| ___ 5. cover-up         | e) something that prevents others from seeing the truth                             |
| ___ 6. cast doubt       | f) not responsible for  |
| ___ 7. skeptic          | g) needing to be taken care of before a deadline                                    |
| ___ 8. time-sensitive   | h) to convince other people to question something they thought was true             |
| ___ 9. undeniable       | i) the amount of greenhouse gases contributed by a single person or group           |
| ___ 10. off the hook    | j) unable to be denied, must be true  |

# Reading

## CLIMATE CHANGE

*Ignoring Mother Nature's warnings*

1. The majority of scientists around the world agree that humans are largely to blame for the warming of our planet. Over the past 50 years, temperatures on earth have increased at a higher rate than ever recorded. In order to prevent excess **greenhouse gases** from trapping heat in our atmosphere, we need to change our lifestyles. By reducing our **carbon footprint** and switching to clean forms of energy, we may be able to save our planet.
2. Despite **freakish** weather like heat waves, droughts, and hurricanes, **tackling** climate change was not a priority for some of America's 2012 presidential candidates. Four years later, candidate Donald Trump said he was not a big believer in man-made climate change. In fact, some Americans, including a handful of scientists, have been accused of taking part in a climate **cover-up**. Those who benefit financially from oil, gas, and coal industries deny the need for clean energy alternatives. By **casting doubt** on science, a few **skeptics** have caused a large number of people to question whether man-made climate change even exists. Ignoring a **time-sensitive** topic like the environment creates a vicious cycle. If the public doesn't rate the environment as a major concern, world leaders won't, either. How long can we ignore Mother Nature's warning signs?
3. Environmentalists always said that the first place humans would see **undeniable** evidence of global warming would be in the Arctic. In 2012, the summer sea ice in the Arctic was at a record low. Ice experts have warned that sea ice in the Arctic will likely be nonexistent within a few years. Instead of being concerned by these dangerous signs of global warming, some business thinkers are already considering potential opportunities. After all, open waters will lead to new shipping channels. We'll need stronger sunscreen products, too.
4. Climate change affects the whole planet, yet the world's leaders can't agree on what to do about it. Many leaders from have-not countries think they should be **off the hook**. They don't believe their people contributed to the problem, and they want wealthy nations to fix it. Developed nations aren't as wealthy as they look. They're in debt, at war, and addicted to consumption. Passing a problem down to future generations just seems easier, doesn't it?

### Beware of an Irregular Verb

The verb "to cast" is irregular.  
The past tense of "cast" is "cast,"  
NOT "casted."

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. According to the reading, what lifestyle changes do humans need to make?
2. What examples of freakish weather are mentioned? Can you think of any others?
3. Why would some people want to ignore or even deny man-made climate change?
4. Paraphrase the vicious cycle mentioned in the reading.
5. Why does the reading mention sunscreen products?

## Vocabulary Review

Complete each sentence with the correct word from the vocabulary list on page 1.

1. The company reduced its \_\_\_\_\_ by replacing business trips with online meetings.
2. New research \_\_\_\_\_ on the theory of mass extinction.
3. Please send me a list of all \_\_\_\_\_ concerns by the end of the day.
4. It's \_\_\_\_\_ that Hurricane Sandy came late in the season.
5. Due to the freakish snowstorm, the school bus driver was \_\_\_\_\_ for the field trip.

# Grammar Review

## DESPITE

Use “despite” to rewrite the sentences below. Work with a partner to form the sentences orally, then write the sentences on the lines below. Experiment with where you place the word “despite.” Can you think of other ways to describe these unexpected results?

Ex. Though there was damage from Hurricane Sandy, most New Yorkers voted in the election.

***Despite** the damage from Hurricane Sandy, most New Yorkers voted in the election.*

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*Most New Yorkers voted in the election **despite** the damage from Hurricane Sandy.*

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1. There is scientific evidence of man-made climate change, but there are still skeptical people.

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2. Regardless of the time-sensitive nature of the president’s flight, it was delayed until Monday.

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3. Even though people understand the dangers of climate change, they still buy gas-guzzlers.

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4. Polar bears aren’t listed as endangered although the ice is melting in the Arctic.

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## Discussion

1. Should government leaders be more worried about the economy or the environment?
2. What can individuals do to reduce their own carbon footprint?
3. Do you think humans have the ability to reverse the environmental damage we have already done to our planet?
4. At the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015, France's president François Hollande said that the world's most important mission should be to protect and hand over the planet to the next generation. Do you think this should be the top priority of today's world leaders?

## Critical Thinking

Discuss and debate one of these issues as a class.

1. When Hurricane Sandy flooded much of the highly populated Eastern Seaboard in 2012, many environmentalists hoped the issue of climate change would come back into the picture. If a superstorm that put the Big Apple to sleep can't get climate change back on the US agenda, what will?
2. Donald Trump has openly denied climate change and has stated that, as president, he wants to end the Environmental Protection Agency in the US. Read these two tweets from Trump, and discuss how you think his administration will tackle matters related to the environment.


*"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make US manufacturing non-competitive."*

—@realDonaldTrump (2012)

*"Snowing in Texas and Louisiana, record setting freezing temperatures throughout the country and beyond. Global warming is an expensive hoax!"*

—@realDonaldTrump (2014)

# Listening – Gap Fill

 <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2016/10/05/podcast-climate-change/>

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

*Ignoring Mother Nature's warnings*

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2. Despite \_\_\_\_\_ weather like heat waves, droughts, and hurricanes, tackling climate change was not a top priority for America's 2012 presidential candidates. Four years later, candidate Donald Trump said he was not a big believer in man-made climate change. In fact, some Americans, including a handful of scientists, have been accused of taking part in a climate cover-up. Those who benefit financially from oil, gas, and coal industries deny the need for clean energy alternatives. By \_\_\_\_\_ on science, a few skeptics have caused a large number of people to question whether man-made climate change even exists. Ignoring a time-sensitive topic like the environment creates a vicious cycle. If the public doesn't rate the environment as a major concern, world leaders won't, either. How long can we ignore Mother Nature's warning signs?
3. Environmentalists always said that the first place humans would see \_\_\_\_\_ evidence of global warming would be in the Arctic. In 2012, the summer sea ice in the Arctic was at a record low. Ice experts have warned that sea ice in the Arctic will likely be nonexistent within a few years. Instead of being concerned by these dangerous signs of global warming, some business thinkers are already considering potential opportunities. After all, open waters will lead to new shipping channels. We'll need stronger \_\_\_\_\_ products, too.
4. Climate change affects the whole planet, yet the world's leaders can't agree on what to do about it. Many leaders from have-not countries think they should be \_\_\_\_\_. They don't believe their people contributed to the problem, and they want wealthy nations to fix it. Developed nations aren't as wealthy as they look. They're in debt, at war, and addicted to consumption. Passing a problem down to \_\_\_\_\_ just seems easier, doesn't it?

1. greenhouse gases, carbon footprint
2. freakish, casting doubt
3. undeniable, sunscreen
4. off the hook, future generations

**ANSWERS:**

# Answer Key

**LESSON DESCRIPTION:**

Students read a brief definition of global warming. They learn and discuss why governments around the world are ignoring the issue of climate change. The lesson includes vocabulary review exercises and discussion questions.

**LEVEL:** Int – High Int

**TIME:** 1–2 hours

**TAGS:** environment, climate change, global warming, Earth, Earth Day, discussion, irregular verb, despite

## Pre-Reading

**A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS**

Answers will vary. Discuss the quote.

**B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW**

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. a | 5. e | 7. d | 9. j  |
| 2. i | 4. c | 6. h | 8. g | 10. f |

## Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 6. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

## Comprehension

1. According to the reading, humans need to reduce their carbon footprint and find clean energy alternatives.
2. Examples of freakish weather mentioned include hurricanes, droughts, and heat waves. They may also think of forest fires, tornados, flash floods, cyclones, tsunamis, and earthquakes.
3. Some people want to ignore or even deny man-made climate change because they have investments in oil, coal, or gas.
4. According to the reading, when leaders don't make something like the environment a top priority, the public won't rate it as an important issue. Leaders don't tackle issues that the public doesn't consider important. This is a vicious cycle when you have a time-sensitive issue like climate change.
5. The reading mentions sunscreen products because some business-oriented people are already thinking about how they can cash in on global warming.

## Vocabulary Review

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. carbon footprint | 4. undeniable   |
| 2. casts doubt      | 5. off the hook |
| 3. time-sensitive   |                 |

*(continued on the next page...)*

## Answer Key cont.

### Grammar Review

Do your students know how to use “despite” to show unexpected results? Review the grammar with your students before they begin. Remind your students that “despite” goes in front of nouns or gerunds. When used in an introductory phrase, a comma is needed. You may also want to remind students that “despite” can go in the middle of the sentence (no comma is needed in this case). Your students may ask you about “in spite of” and “despite the fact that.” Explain that “in spite of” is interchangeable with “despite,” but is simply less common. “Despite the fact that” is wordy. Remind your students of the common error many students make (despite + of). Some students also make the mistake of using “despite the fact” (without “that”). The patterns below may help your students keep it all straight (SVO = a Subject–Verb–Object clause). See our editor’s blog post, [How to Explain Despite Vs. Although](http://blog.esllibrary.com/2012/11/08/how-to-explain-despite-vs-although/), for more tips and examples: <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2012/11/08/how-to-explain-despite-vs-although/>

**despite / in spite of + noun / noun phrase:**

Despite + noun, SVO. / SVO despite + noun.

**despite / in spite of + gerund:**

Despite + gerund, SVO. / SVO despite + gerund.

**despite / in spite of + the fact that:**

Despite the fact that + SVO, SVO. / SVO despite the fact that SVO.

**although / even though / though + clause:**

Even though SVO, SVO. / SVO even though SVO.

### Discussion

Answers will vary.

### Critical Thinking

Encourage your students to dig deeper! After they have chatted for a while, you can put a few groups together and tell them to pretend they are the UN. Assign each student a leadership role (e.g., president of US). Make sure there are leaders from some have-not countries, too. What can be done to combat climate change?

#### SPELLING NOTE

The North American spelling is *Skeptic*, while the British spelling is *Sceptic*.