



Lesson Plan

Getting into the Backgrounders



In a Nutshell:

This lesson describes a number of methods to help students interact with the climate change backgrounders included in this resource, in ways that are engaging and interesting. They include whole-class and small-group activities that involve reading, brainstorming, quizzing, and teaching each other the information they have learned.



Goal:

To gain an understanding of climate change concepts from the printed backgrounders



Background Learning:

This lesson can be used with any of the backgrounders, at both intermediate and high school levels.

To find the list of backgrounders for your teaching level, click on one of the links below:

- Intermediate Backgrounders
- High School Backgrounders

Learning Outcomes:

Because this is a lesson that can be used with any of the backgrounders, it potentially covers all the climate change learning outcomes. To see what these are for your territory, visit the website and click on the icon for your territory.



Nunavut



NWT



Yukon

Grade Level: 4–12

Subjects: Sciences, Social Studies, English Language Arts, Northern Studies, Drama, Visual Arts

Enrichment: N/A

Time: One hour or more

Setting: Classroom

Materials: Backgrounders appropriate to the topic being learned

Skills: Reading, small group work, synthesis, reporting, communication, interpretation

Key Vocabulary: Vocabulary relating to the backgrounders being covered



Introduction to Lesson Plan:

In some of the lesson plans on this website, students need to learn the information from one or more backgrounders. This is sometimes part of the background learning – basic information that needs to be learned or reviewed before the lesson starts – or part of the lesson itself.

The ideas below are ways that have been suggested by teachers to help students work through our backgrounders in ways that are engaging and fun, and that lead to real understanding.



Activity:

The list below doesn't follow any particular order. Pick one to use or adapt for your class.

- 1. Read it Together** – Reading aloud is often a good approach, especially for younger grades. This can be done by the teacher alone or with students taking turns (other students following along on their own copies). It's important to stop as you go along to discuss key points. Consider assigning two students to be note-takers, taking turns writing key points on the board as they are raised. Then at the end you have a list of review points to run through.
- 2. Quiz Questions** – This could be used when you are reading material aloud, or when the class is reading individually. Assign a “quiz-kid” to each portion of the material being read. (For instance, if there were four major sections in the backgrounder, four students would be assigned the role of “quiz kid” – one for each section.) The quiz-kid's role is to think of a question to test whether the class has understood the main concepts (explain the difference between a “main concept question” and a “picky detail question”). At the end of the reading, invite your quizzers up to ask their questions.
- 3. Before & After Brainstorm** – Find out what students know already about the topic under discussion by writing a concept in the middle of the board (e.g., “climate change,” “renewable energy”), and then asking students to brainstorm, listing associated words and ideas. Read the printed information together and then look again at your pre-reading brainstorm. What else should you add? Is there anything that you should take away?
- 4. Know & Want-to-Know** – Before the students read the backgrounder, write the topic on the board. Brainstorm what the students already know about it. With the students, develop a list of things they wonder about or would like to



know about the topic. Ask them to read the backgrounder with these questions in mind.

After they have completed the reading (in class or at home), invite students to look at the list of questions and see which ones they now know the answers to, and which still remain to be answered. (These may be good research questions, or questions to post on an interactive website such as:

<http://www.arm.gov/docs/education/whoisprof.html> or
<http://gcrio.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/gcrio.cfg/php/enduser/home.php>.)

- 5. Group Read & Teach** – This is a way you can work through the backgrounders without everyone in the class having to read all the backgrounders. As well as reading and summarizing, this helps students develop presentation skills. It can be used as a quick way to learn the material (using quick, informal ways of reporting back to the class), or it could be a more in-depth lesson, involving more elaborate reporting back.



Divide the class into small groups (mixing good and poor readers in each group). Give each group a different backgrounder (or section of a backgrounder) to read and tell them they will be teaching the rest of the class this material. On the board, write a selection of ways to teach the information to the class, for example:

Pick out the main idea(s) in your reading. Then present this information as a:

- diagram and poster
- news report (either radio or TV)
- skit
- quiz (both questions and multiple choice answers)
- illustrated explanation (each person in the group explains one point, and holds up a picture)

Note: You could use the basic “read & teach” idea in a number of ways:

- Cover a large selection of backgrounders by assigning them to students who would then report back to the class.
- Divide a small selection of backgrounders (e.g., the basics, numbers 2 to 5) among three or four groups, so that they could report the basic concepts to the class.



- For intermediate students, a backgrounder could be divided into sections, with a group reporting on each section.

6. Jigsaw – Divide the class into small groups (not more than four or five students per group). Each group reads and discusses a different backgrounder or section of a backgrounder. Their instructions: to understand this information well enough to be able to teach the main ideas to someone else. Once the groups are prepared, “jigsaw” them into new groups, with every group containing at least one person from each of the original groups. Then each member of the new group teaches the others everything they’ve learned. Make sure this info-interchange has worked by giving the new groups an overview question or short task to complete, using their newly learned information. (For example, if the students were working with the backgrounders on impacts, an overview question could be: *What total effect do you think climate change will have on the north?* A task might be: *Make a list of the “Top 5 Impacts” of climate change in the north.*)



Handouts:

None.



Student Web-Exchange:

Any of the report-back processes could be posted: e.g., news reports, pictures of posters or diagrams, write-ups or pictures of skits, etc. Visit the website and click on the icon for information on how to post material.



Evaluation:

Make sure that learning really has taken place from the backgrounders and presentations, by:

- Assigning a group overview question or short task
- Asking students to write down the top three things they learned
- Brainstorming the “Top Concepts” as a class
- Mini-quiz – create five questions from the written material and ask students to write their answers in their notebooks



More Information:

Go to the Resources section for websites and resources on climate change.



Enrichment Ideas:

None



About the Author:

The Yukon Conservation Society curriculum team consists of writers, teachers, environmental educators and curriculum specialists. The team worked with teachers across the north, helping them to create lesson plans for the website, and gathering input about website features, backgrounders and lesson plans that would be useful in northern classrooms.