



Exploring Climate Change in our Communities: Field Activity



CLIMATE
GENERATION

About Climate Generation

Climate Generation is a nationally connected and trusted nonprofit centering climate justice in climate literacy, climate change education, youth leadership, and community engagement to accelerate action on the climate crisis. Urgent and rapid action on climate change is needed to ensure a habitable world for generations to come, and education and engagement are effective and critical tools for empowering action.

Our organization was founded by polar explorer, Will Steger, based on his powerful eyewitness to climate change and his history of inspiring educators and classrooms to engage in adventure learning. Climate Generation empowers individuals and communities to engage in solutions to climate change, and we do this by igniting and sustaining the ability of educators, youth, and communities to act on the systems perpetuating the climate crisis.

Climate change is a highly complex issue, and just and equitable solutions cannot be found if we proceed with the climate science and policy lens alone. By overcoming disinformation, centering anti-racism and equity in education, and personalizing and localizing climate change action we can activate individuals, as well as build resilient communities. Climate Generation is committed to addressing the intersection of climate change and economic, social, and racial disparities, and working closely with partners who understand this interface.

Exploring Climate Change in our Communities: Field Activity

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| TIME NEEDED | 30 - 45 minutes |
| AGE LEVEL | 3rd-12th, and educators too! |
| MATERIALS | Smartphone with a camera or digital camera, desktop computer, pencil or pen and paper (optional) |
| STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES | <p>By the end of the activity, students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify at least three climate change impacts and three solutions in their community.• Use a camera or cell phone to take a photo or audio clip and explain how it represents climate change in their location.• Write a poem about their community using vivid descriptions.• Describe at least one way they can contribute to local climate solutions. |



Background

Environmental changes connected to climate change have been observed around the world. Extreme weather events, wildfires, and sea level rise get much of the media's attention, but more subtle changes such as altered plant flowering times, increased pest prevalence, and water scarcity are also having impacts on human health, agricultural production, and more. We are all eyewitnesses to climate change, and many of these changes can be observed in our communities.

Though everyone is affected by environmental change, people are impacted differently by climate change depending on their age, race, gender, income, and other socioeconomic identities. Personal connection to land and community is essential to develop a love and sense of responsibility for place across all socio-economic identities. One simple way to support place-based education and inspire action for climate change solutions is to connect our identities to our place through observation and writing.

We all have a part to play in creating solutions. Sometimes it is hard to see that, especially when we aren't used to observing and thinking about climate change in our communities. Let's take time today, right now, to get outside, explore our communities, and connect to the land to reestablish our relationship to the Earth and to one another.

We invite you and your students to participate in an independent exercise of self reflection, observation, and writing. You may want to complete the activity on your own first as a point of reflection, and then share the activity with your students during class or as extra credit. We see this activity as an opportunity to connect to your community individually, and also as an activity for place-based, interdisciplinary climate change education with your students.





What are examples of climate impacts and solutions?

Climate change impacts different regions in different ways. Climate change also impacts individuals in the same region differently due to diverse socioeconomic factors and issues of justice and equity. A climate change impact is essentially anything that happens due to climate change that affects the health and wellbeing of any living being on Earth. Some impacts are direct; for example, having warmer winter temperatures in the US or the increase in number and severity of wildfires that are fueled by droughts. Other impacts are indirect, such as increased food prices caused by the additional costs needed to adapt to decreased crop productivity. Climate change affects all of us, and the impacts will continue to worsen unless we significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. [Climate Central](#) creates excellent infographics describing a variety of climate change impacts. For deeper dives into climate impact data exploration, check out these [Data Tools](#) from southernclimate.org.

Climate solutions are actions we can take to reduce the sources of greenhouse gas emissions (for example, using clean energy) and increase Earth's natural ability to pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it (for instance, planting trees and gardens, restoring wetlands and shorelines, and protecting forests and ocean ecosystems which hold carbon in plants, soils, and animals). Reducing or storing greenhouse gas emissions is sometimes referred to as mitigation because we mitigate, or lessen, the risk of further climate change. Some climate solutions are considered adaptation to climate change because they reduce the harm that people experience because of already existing or expected climate change effects (for instance, people might adapt to higher temperatures by planting more heat-tolerant trees that provide shade).

You might see examples of solutions in your community such as public transportation, composting bins, community or personal gardens, trees or native prairie, coral reef restoration sites, weather or wildlife monitoring stations, solar panel arrays, farmer's markets, electric vehicle charging stations, community cooling centers, etc. Keep an open mind as you explore, asking yourself, "what might help my community reduce their emissions and/or thrive despite climate impacts?"

For a comprehensive list of climate solutions, visit [Project Drawdown](#).



Description of Activity:

Explore your connection to your community by sharing a short poem and an image or audio clip of your place. During this 30-45 minute activity, you will head outside to make observations of a nearby place that you love. Take this time to look for changes in your community that might be related to climate change impacts, as well as climate solutions your community has already enacted. If you are completing this activity with young students, you may wish to explore your school grounds.

STEP 1: Get prepped. Grab water, snacks, sun protection, etc. Bring your phone or a camera and a notebook and pen/pencil to jot down ideas for your poem. You will need access to the reflection questions in Step 3; you can open them on your phone or write them on a piece of paper.

STEP 2: Head outside! Choose a place that you enjoy spending time in and feel comfortable and safe in. This could mean walking around your school, traveling around the block in your neighborhood, visiting a local park or green space, stepping outside your door, or even looking out the window.

Suggested Reflection Prompts:

- What community, neighborhood, or watershed do you consider home?
- What are three places that define your community?
- What does your community smell like?
- What are three tastes that remind you of this place?
- What sounds are common in your community?
- What is one memory that you have in this community?
- What does your community look like in different seasons?
- How does weather impact your community?
- What environmental changes have you noticed in your community? How do you feel about those changes?
- What actions can you take to preserve/change/support your community?
- What examples of climate change solutions do you notice in your community?



STEP 3: As you observe, keep in mind the reflection questions. You can answer as many of these questions as you wish, and ignore any that don't resonate with you. Feel free to write down other observations and thoughts as well! These prompts will help you describe your community in detail in a poem.

STEP 4: While you're out, take photos and/or record short audio clips of things that stand out to you. They may stand out because you feel they encompass your community's values or vibe, they represent a climate solution you find surprising or interesting, or they jog your memory about something that makes this place special to you. You will only need to share one photo or audio clip, but you're welcome to capture a few images/sounds to help you create your community poem.

STEP 5: Return to your workspace. Using your answers to the reflection questions and your photos/audio as inspiration, write a short poem about your community, including any intersections with climate change that you notice.

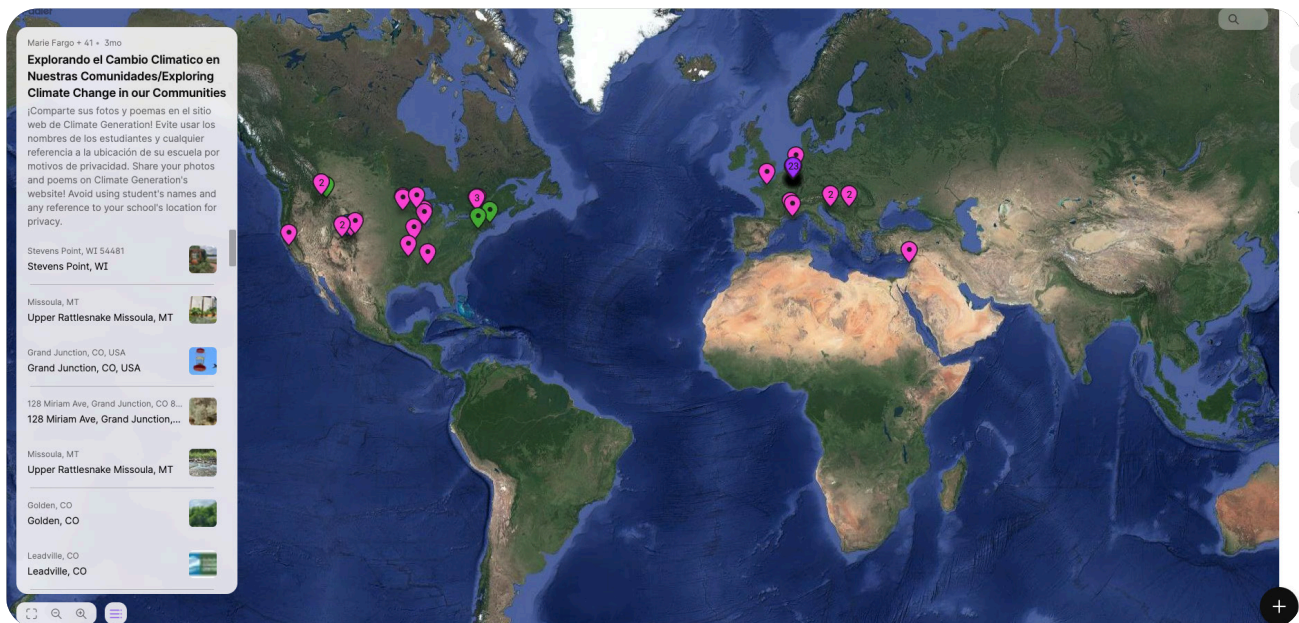
If poetry isn't normally your thing, keep in mind that this exercise is about your observations, connections, and experiences, not your writing! Remember that a short, simple format for a poem is a haiku (3 lines with 5, 7, and 5 syllables each). Poems do not have to rhyme. Make sure to break up your lines and stanzas where you want your reader to pause.



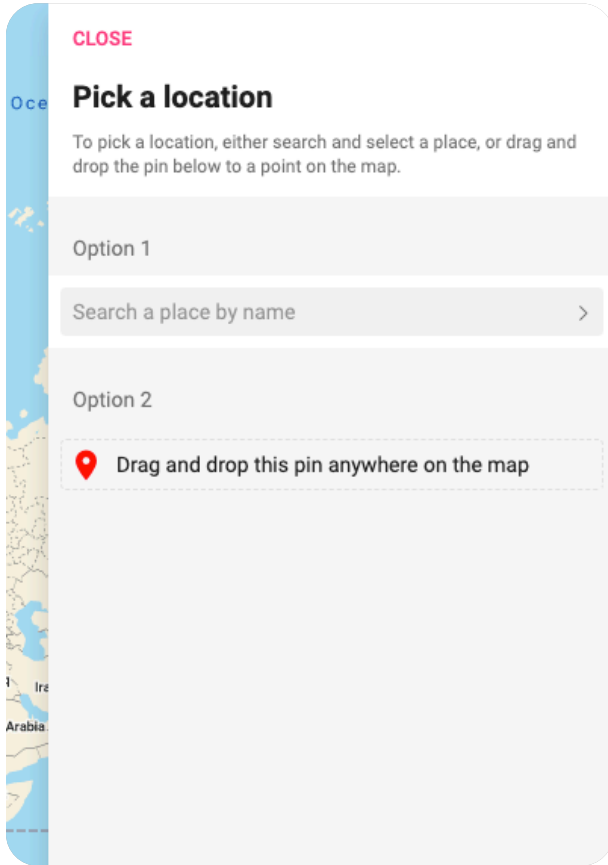
EXPLORING CLIMATE CHANGE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

STEP 6: Share your observations with us! Add your image/sound and poem to Climate Generation's Padlet Map: <https://padlet.com/marie791/vgnt1ntm8puisk0g>. Or you can create your own map in Padlet or [Google Story Maps](#) for your class.

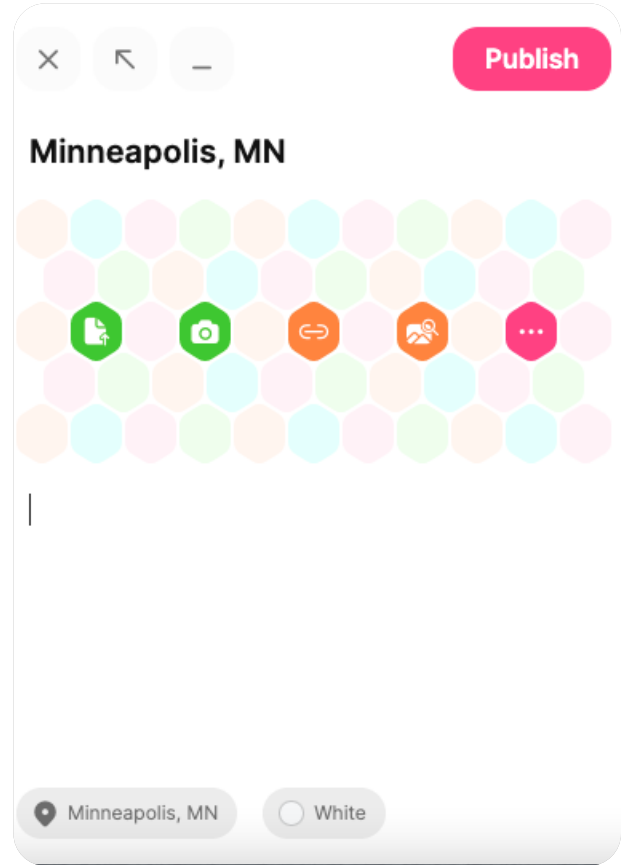
- Once the Padlet Map is opened, click the circle with the + sign in the bottom right corner of the screen to add a new location. *(Photo A)*
- Search for your location or drag and drop a pin onto the map. *(Photo B)*
- Upload your photo or audio clip to your computer so that you can share it in the Padlet.
- Click the upload icon (the first icon with an up arrow) to upload a photo, or click the pink button with three dots to upload an audio clip. *(Photo C)*
- Type the name of your poem in the description.
- Avoid using students' names and any reference to the location of your school for privacy.



(Photo A)



(Photo B)



(Photo C)

STEP 7: End the activity by looking at the map of everyone’s climate change observations.

Reflect as a group or in a journal on the following questions:

- Which poem(s) seem most similar to yours? Which do you think are most different? How did you feel when you read poems that were very similar or very different from your own?
- What surprised you most about your or your group’s observations?
- What is one climate change solution that you would like to be part of in your community? How will you take steps to contribute to this solution?



This activity is modeled from [826 Digital Neighborhood Poem](#) and was adapted by Climate Generation, CIRES, and Wild Rose Education for use at the 2022 Summer Institute for Climate Change Education.

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