



Climate Storytelling Lesson for the Classroom

Making a personal connection to climate change is the first step in being more comfortable and confident talking about it, which can then empower students to act. [Learn more about our storytelling work at Climate Generation.](#)

Age Level	Grades 6-12
Time Needed	60-75 minutes
Materials	Journal/Notebook for each student
Student Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will be able to reflect and journal using guided prompts• Students will be able to write their own climate story• Students will be able to make at least one personal connection to the issue of climate change• Students will be able to speak and share in a group about their personal experiences with climate change

Background:

Learning about the diversity of students' lived experiences and how they see and make sense of the world is important for all educators in establishing rapport and a starting point for learning in the classroom. Additionally, empowering students to see their ideas, experiences, and viewpoints as valuable is an exciting way to engage them in learning. Starting off a unit, school year, or lesson with the development of a climate story is a great way to tap into a deeper understanding of your students and get them engaged in the learning ahead.

Educator Prep:

Educators will walk students through a series of questions in three rounds. In each round there will be a question posed and individual quiet time for students to reflect and write in their journals. After writing, open it up to have the students share in their small groups about what they have written. Make sure each student is able to share at least one time within the three rounds, so everyone gets a chance to speak.

Storytelling Prompts:

1. Ask your students to write their response to story prompt #1 in their journals, giving them 10 minutes of individual quiet writing time.

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Story Prompt #1 (10 Minutes): Tell a story about an experience that helped shape the person you are today. How has that influenced the way you see the world?

Notes: This does not have to be climate change-related. The reflection should be personal. Be available for help if students get stuck. You may need to help individuals brainstorm. Give students a warning of one minute left, and then pencils down.

2. **Pair Share (10 Minutes):** Tell students they can choose a partner sitting next to them to share their responses. Make sure to note that the other person actively listens and then allows time for both partners to share.

3. Ask your students to write their response to story prompt #2 in their journals, giving them 10 minutes of individual quiet writing time.

Story prompt #2 (10 Minutes): What is your experience of climate change? How have you been impacted or what observations have you noticed?
and /or

How have you been thinking about climate change lately? What have you heard recently? What aspect resonates personally?

Notes: Be available for help if students get stuck. It may be helpful to tell people to focus in on a moment and describe that in detail using their five senses.

4. **Small Group Sharing (10 Minutes):** Invite students to share their responses in small groups (4-6 people). Encourage others to listen and reflect back what they heard, share connecting threads and emerging themes, and ask curious questions. (*Tell me more about that. Why did you feel that way? etc.*) Not all will get to share, but remind students to make sure everyone is able to speak at least once throughout rounds.

5. Ask your students to write their response to story prompt #3 in their journals, giving them 10 minutes of individual quiet writing time.

Story prompt #3 (10 Minutes)

Tell a story about a time you felt resilient.

Notes: You may need to take time to discuss what resilience means from the human perspective.

6. We know that to build a better future, we must first imagine ourselves there. What would a better world look like to you? Ask your students to take a moment to move through it, and then write it down.

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7. Ask your students to write their response to story prompt #4 in their journals, giving them 8 minutes of individual quiet writing time.

Story prompt #4 (10 Minutes): What is the role that you will play in making this future a reality? What will keep you going?

Notes: Have students take notice of any big picture themes and possible connecting points that they could draw out more. Their individual writings may or may not connect, but this exercise is meant to serve as a process to help uncover what their climate story could be about. It is okay if the story does not have a hopeful ending.

8. Small Group Sharing (10 Minutes): Invite students to share their responses in small groups again. Encourage others to listen and reflect back what they heard. Have listeners take note of: What is at the heart of this story? What themes are emerging? Are there any connections? How did this story make you feel? What was the lasting impression? What did it leave you with? Not all will get to share, but remind students to make sure everyone is able to speak at least once throughout rounds.

Homework Assignment: Write your climate story! Encourage students to keep writing and make connections between prompts to begin writing their climate stories. Once they figure out their focus, have them finish their stories and submit for feedback and editing by peers or teacher. When they have a final draft, it is important for them to practice sharing their stories.

Story Writing Tips

- Hone in on a specific moment and describe it in detail, using sensory imagery. What did it look like, what did it feel like, what did it taste like, what did it sound like, what did it smell like?
- What are some emotions that you felt in your story, or emotions that your story brought up for you? (relieved, frustrated, thankful, ecstatic)
- What values can you find within your story? (beauty, compassion, family)
- Where might you find the connections to climate change within your story? Adding 1-2 climate change facts can help to ground your story (ie. Minnesota's winters are warming faster than any other state in the U.S.).

Ideas for Sharing

- Create a video of your story.
- Share final stories with Climate Generation to feature on our online Storytelling Collection. Email stories@climategen.org and include photos.
- Offer a class period for students to get up in front of the class and share their stories aloud.

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- Encourage your students to use their story as the basis as a letter to the editor, a letter to an elected official, or in a meeting with an elected official.
- Encourage them to share their stories with friends and family.
- Host a school wide event where your class shares their stories in a Storytelling Slam.