

# An Inconvenient Truth (“AIT”)

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- Use the film itself and our required readings, plus credible sources from your own web and library research. You may wish to start your research with wikis, encyclopedias, etc, although they are not appropriate primary references.
- Your answers should show that you spent time reflecting on the film and related issues. They should be in-depth. Include enough detail in your explanations that I can follow your process.
- Type your answers in a word-processing program such as Word; check your spelling, grammar, and usage. (Type using plain text; formatting does not transfer.) Include a references list at the end of each answer. Then copy and paste your answers; do not use attachments except for supplemental information.
- To make this an in-depth discussion among colleagues, you will be posting and replying via the “An Inconvenient Truth [AIT]” discussion board in Blackboard.

## I. BEFORE viewing the film

Submit these two questions as ONE combined post (Q’s 1 & 2) titled “AIT– [Your Name]” in the “AIT” board **BEFORE YOU WATCH THE FILM.**

Post it by **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (preferably sooner).

### 1. a. If you have not seen the film...

- What have you heard about the film?
- What do you expect to learn from the film?
- What do you expect your reaction to it to be?

or

### b. If you have seen the film before...

- When, where, and why did you see the film before?
- What did you expect to learn from it the first time?
- What did you expect your reaction to it to be?
- What do you expect from viewing it again now?

### 2. In either case...

#### a. Select several of the questions below (from Part III) that you would most like to discuss.

Tell us which ones you chose, and why.

#### b. Optional: Come up with 2-3 more questions that you think would be valuable to discuss in this context.

#### c. Recommended: Take notes on one of the IPCC Summaries for Policymakers: <http://www.ipcc.ch>

- [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr\\_spm.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf) - Synthesis Report
- <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg1/ar4-wg1-spm.pdf> - Physical Science Basis
- <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-spm.pdf> - Impacts, Adaptation, Vulnerability
- <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg3/ar4-wg3-spm.pdf> - Mitigation

## II. DURING the film

Watch the film by **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (preferably sooner).

- **TAKE GOOD NOTES!** You’ll find that there is a lot of information in the film, and it can get somewhat overwhelming. You may wish to view it all the way through first, then watch it again, taking notes and pausing the DVD at key spots if needed.
- **Write down** unfamiliar terminology, questions, and information you want to learn more about, so you can research them after viewing the film.

### III. Questions for discussion after viewing the film

- **REFLECT:** Reflect on what you learned from the film, using the questions below (and/or others) as a starting point. (Note: The film is scientifically accurate.) Introduce scientific concepts – from the film, from the IPCC website, and from additional references of your choosing – as well as your personal opinions and perspectives. You are welcome to attach supplemental figures, too (with references). **Minimum length: One single-spaced page (600+ words).**
  - Post in the “AIT” board by **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (preferably sooner).
- **RESERVE:** Once you have posted your Reflection, **reserve** one of your classmates’ Reflections.
  - Thread it to your classmate’s post, as you do for the weekly Q&As.
- **RESPOND: Respond** to the post that you reserved. Discuss the aspects that interest you, the things you learned, new perspectives, etc. Respect your classmate’s opinions, even if they differ from yours! You are both welcome to reply back and forth to each other.
  - Post by **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (preferably sooner). After that, you are all welcome to respond to each other’s posts as much as you’d like, until course access is closed. ☺

#### A. Science and Other Ways of Knowing

1. What did you learn from watching the film that you didn’t know before – in terms of both the science and other “factual” aspects?
2. Who and what is affected by climate change? What does the film suggest about the relationships of human beings to the natural environment, the built environment, and each other?
3. The film presents an argument: 1) That human use of resources is releasing increasing amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, 2) which is leading to increased temperatures, 3) which are in turn changing our environment in ways that are and will increasingly continue to be harmful to the Earth and its people, and 4) it is both governments’ and individual people’s responsibility to improve the situation by their actions. How is this argument supported?
4. Overall, do you think that Gore makes a convincing case? What made the information in the film reliable for you, or what made you question the information? What characteristics of the research, the data, and the people presenting it influenced your trust levels?
5. What standard of evidence is necessary or appropriate before taking action on climate change? By way of analogy, should a hurricane evacuation be ordered only if it is absolutely certain that it will strike a city? When a sweeping economic policy is being launched, is there an expectation that there must be consensus among economic experts?

#### B. Personal Impacts

6. What is your overall feeling at the end of the film (e.g., hopeful, hopeless, perplexed, angry, motivated, etc)? Were there particular facts, images, or stories in the film that triggered strong reactions in you? How does this shape what you want to do next (even if the answer is, “do nothing”)?
7. At the beginning of the film, Gore reflects on the natural landscape that means the most to him. What place is most important to you? Do your experiences there affect your life choices? How might climate change affect that location?
8. Do you buy Gore’s argument that the choice between a strong economy and environmental protection is a false choice? What are the economic incentives and roadblocks – both direct and indirect – which influence our impact on the climate, and define our choices?

#### C. Moral and Ethical Considerations

9. Gore says that climate change is a moral issue as well as a technical and political one. What difference does it make if we approach it from a moral perspective?
10. What moral or ethical norms (principles) shape your thinking about climate change? Are there particular ethical teachings which have informed you? How do you sort out your decisions if those principles don’t agree with each other?
11. How can the costs and benefits of global warming-related changes in policies, laws, and practices be shared fairly?

12. Upton Sinclair said, ***“It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it.”*** Mark Twain wrote, ***“It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.”***  
Reflect on those quotations, with respect to global climate change.

#### D. Action Strategies

13. Winston Churchill warned that ***“The era of procrastination, of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays, is coming to its close. In its place we are entering a period of consequences.”*** Do you think that we are entering a period of consequences with respect to global warming?
14. Gore mentioned that it can be easy for people to jump from denial to despair. Where – if anywhere – do you find hope that allows you to face this problem – in personal or community action, the rightness of the cause, affirmation from your friends, etc? (*You may find it helpful to draw the distinction between “hope for”, which looks for ways of addressing the problem, and “hope in”, which focuses on the beliefs, values, and commitments which lead us into involvement.*)
15. In a May 9 interview, *Grist* writer David Roberts asked Gore about the most effective way to motivate action on global warming: ***“Do you scare people or give them hope?”*** Which tactics do you think work best, and how could scientists, policymakers, environmentalists, business people, community members, faith communities, world leaders, etc better implement them?
16. Does the film motivate you to action? If so, how? If not, why not? (Either way is ok – I’m looking for your explanation rather than a “right” or “wrong” answer.) What specific actions, if any, have you taken or will you take as a result of the movie?
17. Suppose that a movie like *An Inconvenient Truth* has a certain impact, X, as measured by the additional positive behavioral actions its watchers take in the world. What efforts (product, initiative, cultural production, etc) would create an impact of 10X or 100X? Of those efforts, what are the low-cost ones?
18. If you had to edit the film to fit into a 50-minute class period or TV “hour”, what would you include and what would you leave out? What would you put in a sequel to this film? To whom would you show each of those formats?

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#### **Sources for Questions:**

- [http://www.aninconvenienttruth.com.au/truth/doc/sg\\_an\\_inconvenient\\_truth.pdf](http://www.aninconvenienttruth.com.au/truth/doc/sg_an_inconvenient_truth.pdf)
- <http://www.eco-justice.org/TruthGuide.asp>
- [http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/letstalk/july\\_2006/film.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/letstalk/july_2006/film.asp)
- Barry Goldstein

#### **Informational Sources:**

- <http://www.ipcc.ch>
- [http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1\\_Print\\_SPM.pdf](http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1_Print_SPM.pdf)
- [http://www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/Climate101-FULL\\_121406\\_065519.pdf](http://www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/Climate101-FULL_121406_065519.pdf)
- [http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-basics/facts\\_and\\_figures](http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-basics/facts_and_figures)