

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

**WORDS
OF CHANGE**

CLIMATE

**POWERFUL VOICES,
INSPIRING IDEAS**

CHRISTINA LIMPERT

ABOUT THIS BOOK

With climate change at the forefront of current discussion, *Climate (Words of Change)* offers a curated collection of thought-provoking quotes and passages from activists in the environmental community. These excerpts, taken from writings and speeches, place an emphasis on a diverse range of voices, from celebrities to less familiar names, who are taking key places in the vanguard of this movement. Alongside these fresh voices that represent today's environmentalists are the words of leading thinkers and long-time activists such as Rachel Carson and Winona LaDuke. Included are brief bios for each person quoted to provide context for their life and work. *Climate (Words of Change)* is the newest inclusion in the Words of Change series, which introduce readers to social justice through inspiring quotes.

Voices include: Greta Thunberg, Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, Rosario Dawson, Naomi Klein, Vic Barrett, Majora Carter, Denis Hayes, Stella McCartney, Wangari Maathai, and many more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Christina Limpert is a multidisciplinary social scientist and qualitative researcher at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Her work investigates sites of informal education and examines the role of culture and society in shaping human thought and action, especially where environmental behaviors, attitudes, and practices are concerned. Dr. Limpert teaches and writes about eco-cinema and popular culture, gender, identity, and power; sociology; critical pedagogy; and qualitative research. She is also the director of the Writing, Rhetoric, and Communications program.

NOTE TO EDUCATOR

While *Climate (Words of Change)* is a compilation of stirring quotes about the current global climate crisis and the activists looking to solve it, the book serves another purpose. It is intended to prompt change and deepen readers' conviction by celebrating activism, focusing on solutions, and being a call to action. For that reason, a number of the quotes are from younger people who are climate change activists. A passage from Lilly Platt explains, "You don't have to be a grown-up to do something. Children are allowed to help the environment. If they don't, they won't have a future." Guided by this philosophy, the author has curated a guide so that students will see themselves as participants in what Eyal Weintraub calls "the greatest obstacle of our generation," motivating them to find the passion—and solutions—to solve it.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- Climate change
- Environmental activism
- Environmental racism
- Intersectionality
- Capitalism
- Youth activism
- Becoming an activist
- Animal farming
- Clean water
- The power of the spoken word

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Watch documentaries to learn more about many of the areas that are a part of the climate justice movement:

- *Before the Flood* (a 2016 doc narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio and featuring interviews with then-president Barack Obama, Pope Francis, and a range of climate experts)
- *Cowspiracy* (on the livestock industry)
- *Climate Change: The Facts* (a one-hour BBC documentary)
- *This Changes Everything* (inspired by Naomi Klein's nonfiction book, this documentary visits communities in nine countries that are on the front lines of climate change)

Learn more about some of the activists quoted in the book:

- Watch:
 - *I Am Greta* (a documentary on Greta Thunberg)
 - *Ansel Adams: A Documentary Film* (by PBS)
- Read:
 - *This Changes Everything* by Naomi Klein
- Listen to a TED Talk:
 - [Ayana Elizabeth Johnson](#)
- Get online:
 - Find out about these organizations (created or staffed by people quoted in the book) by checking out their websites and following them on social media:
 - Hudson Valley Wild
 - Zero Hour
 - Earth Guardians
 - Fridays for Future USA
 - North American Association for Environmental Education

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the introduction, before the author mentions the climate, she lists a series of issues with which people across the globe have “had enough,” from “unjust policing of Black, Indigenous, and people of color” to “politicians who place profit over people.” Why do you think she chose to include these other topics, as opposed to just focusing on the climate?
- What does it mean that today’s climate movement is, in the words of the author, “intersectional”?
- The quotes in this collection come from “activists, poets, scientists, students, potters, singer-songwriters, farmers, and everyday people,” Dr. Limpert writes in the introduction. Why do you think the author included voices that were not experts or environmental scientists?
- What do you think of when you hear the word “climate”? Is it the weather or does it mean more for you?
- David Wicker said, “We must put life before profit.” What does it mean to put life before profit? And in today’s world, what are some examples of how profits are put before life?
- What are ways that you contribute to what Miranda Wang calls the “plastic pollution problem”? And what can you do to change this?
- Do you agree or disagree with Anthony Tamez-Pochel who said, “The land and the plants are our relatives.” Why or why not?
- The book includes a quote from former president of the United States Barack Obama. What can elected officials do to save the planet? How is their role unique and necessary in this movement?
- “As climate change and global warming present a real and immediate risk, it is a critical time [to] rethink our approach to adventure and how we justify the impact of our carbon footprint and the mark we leave on places,” says Lizzie Carr. What is a carbon footprint? And how do you think people can live adventurous lives while reducing their carbon footprint?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Alexandria Villaseñor said, “There is no climate justice without racial justice.” And in Ayana Elizabeth Johnson’s quote she asks white people to become “actively antiracist” because, she says, “our racial inequality crisis is intertwined with our climate crisis.” Why do you think these are linked? And do you agree or disagree that climate justice is impossible to achieve without racial justice?
- In their quote, Saoi O’Connor advised activists to get on Twitter. How can social media be used to build a movement?
- “Environmental racism is a really big thing. The environmental movement is still predominantly white, how do we change that conversation? Having women of color leading is one way to do that,” says Isra Hirsi. What is environmental racism? And what are some of the biggest news stories in recent years that are examples of environmental racism?

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- Learn about the work (and what prompted it) of some of the activists in the book, including Greta Thunberg, Mari Copeny, and Rachel Carson.
- Lizzie Carr created Planet Patrol (formerly Plastic Patrol), an app that crowdsources plastic pollution cleanup actions and provides data to reduce plastic pollution. What are some other apps that can be used to save the environment?
- Research the court case *Juliana v. United States*, including how the youth involved joined the case and became activists.
- A number of the quotes stress that it is necessary for humans to see themselves as part of nature. As a class, find a tree (one that can be seen from the class window or the schoolyard). On the same date each month, everyone should draw the tree. What do you notice about how it changes during the seasons? Notice what you include in your drawing that someone else does not. At the end of the school year, discuss how you feel about the tree compared to when the project began.

TAKE ACTION

As these quotes make clear, youth activists can be some of the most effective in bringing about environmental change. Here are things you can do to be a positive part of the movement:

- Kevin J. Patel says, “With climate change, what can we do right now? Changing who we are, our habits. Changing the foods we eat, how we travel. Taking direct action to make our community better. Planting trees, community action, community-based solutions that are already there. That’s what we as individuals can do.” As a classroom, chose something you can do right now as a semester-long project—and then do it.
- When Mari Copeny was eight years old, she sent a letter to President Obama about her hometown of Flint, Michigan, and the fight for clean water. As a class, write a letter to a politician on an environmental issue that directly affects your school, neighborhood, or town.
- Go online to the websites of the speakers in the book and see who will be in your town or doing a virtual event in the near future. Attend as a class.
- Research online for a petition in support of an environmental issue that you believe in and sign it. Then, follow the issue for a month (or longer!) and see what other things you can do to support it (from petitions to phone banks to attending talks).

This guide was prepared by Ayana Byrd, an author and journalist who has been writing about activism for her two-decade-plus career. As a new mother, she is now thinking more passionately about how words and actions will shape the future for the next generation. Her work has appeared in publications including *The New York Times* and *Essence*, and she has an essay in Kenrya Rankin’s *How We Fight White Supremacy*.

