Class: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

Mini-Project: Short stories | Climate fiction



AI-generated image (ChatGPT)

You have two options:

1) either you **read** another short story and **analyze** and **discuss** it
2) or you **write your own** short story on global challenges.

Tasks

- Decide what you want to do and tell me **before** you start.
- Hand in your work by _____ – either digitally or handwritten.
- You **are allowed** to use AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT or DeepL) to check and improve your work, but **only after** you have completed your own answers:
  - you use AI to check your grammar, spelling, vocabulary and sentence structure.
  - you may use AI suggestions to improve your text, but you must decide for yourself which suggestions are useful and appropriate.
  - **do not** use AI to write your answers, develop your arguments or interpret the short story for you. Your ideas and arguments **must** be your own.
  - make your use of AI transparent: briefly state which AI tool you used, what you used it for and which parts of your work you changed based on its suggestions. For example, at the end of your assignment, you could add a short note:
    - AI tool used: … Purpose of use: … Changes based on the AI feedback:…

→ AI is a tool to help you improve your English – not a substitute for your own thinking!

Option 1: Read another short story and discuss it. Use the "questions for discussion".

Here is a collection from 2024 and 2025:

"This View From Here" by Rich Larsen follows a young woman torn between her love for her ecological work in the city and her love for her family home in the Appalachians.

Questions for Discussion: What details show us how Vivian feels about her home? Have you ever felt torn between leaving or staying? Whose perspective makes more sense to you: Vivian's or her pa's?

→ https://grist.org/climate-fiction/imagine2200-this-view-from-here

In "The Ones Left Behind" by K.J. Chien, Grace runs a silkworm restaurant in flooded Chinatown. She misses lost family members and worries about the water supply.

Questions for Discussion: Why is it important to Grace to preserve her family business? What factors make it challenging for her? What connections do you make to this story?

→ https://grist.org/climate-fiction/imagine2200-the-ones-left-behind

"Our Continuity, Each of Us Raindrops" by Parker M. O'Neill portrays how an upstate New York community copes with the legacy of past efforts to make rain.

Questions for Discussion: What might this story suggest about the value of collective effort vs. individual heroism?

→ https://grist.org/climate-fiction/imagine2200-our-continuity-each-of-us-raindrops

© Nina Toller | tollerunterricht.com

"Cabbage Koora: A Prognostic Autobiography" by Sanjana Sekhar examines generational patterns of food, technology, and love, as a woman in L.A. reaches out to relatives as a daughter, as a mother, and finally as a grandmother herself.

Questions for Discussion: What changes over the course of the main character's life? What stays constant? What does this story make you consider about family?

→ https://grist.org/climate-fiction/imagine2200-cabbage-koora

"The Last Almond" by Zoe Young tells the story of two floods in California, past and present, showing how drought and rain change lives and livelihoods.

Questions for Discussion: Why is the deliberate flooding of the farm necessary? What small details in the story stand out to you the most?

→ https://grist.org/article/imagine2200-the-last-almond

The narrator in "When We Are Ruins, Dance on Us" by M. Jesuthasan is the old Supreme Court Building of Singapore, carrying all the old perspectives of colonial power as it critiques the emerging worldview of human survivors of cultural and climate changes.

Questions for Discussion: What parts of the building's perspective surprised you? What is your perspective? How is it similar or different?

→ https://grist.org/climate-fiction/imagine-2200-when-we-are-ruins

Nothing interesting yet? Check the entries from previous years on the website (scroll down):

https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/climate-short-stories-teaching

Option 2: Write your own short story on "Global Challenges – Climate Fiction"

1. Before you start

☐ Choose a topic: Think about a global challenge, e.g. climate change, extreme weather, water scarcity …
☐ Find an idea: Imagine a situation, a problem or a conflict connected to your topic.
☐ Create a main character: Who is your story about? What does the character want, fear or struggle with?
☐ Choose a setting: Where/when does your story take place? How does climate change affect this world?
☐ Plan the plot: What happens at the beginning, in the middle and at the end?

2. While writing

☐ Start in an interesting way: Begin with an action, a problem, a surprising event or a vivid description.
☐ Show, don't just tell: Use details, dialogue and the character's thoughts and feelings.
☐ Create a conflict: Give your character a problem that they have to face or deal with.
☐ Build suspense: Make the reader curious about what will happen next.
☐ Use descriptive language: Describe the setting, the atmosphere and the effects of climate change.
→ Use the five senses where appropriate. ("He could smell the rain coming.")
☐ Write a clear ending: Resolve the conflict or leave the reader with a surprising twist or an open question.
☐ Focus on the story: Avoid simply explaining climate change or writing an essay. Let the reader experience the challenge through the characters and events.
☐ Use your chosen tense consistently: Simple past/past progressive are often useful for storytelling.
☐ Write in paragraphs: Start a new paragraph when the time, place, speaker or focus changes.
☐ Check the "useful sentence startes" below for the different parts of your story.

© Nina Toller | tollerunterricht.com

3. After writing

☐ Check the plot: Does the story have a clear beginning, middle and ending?

☐ Check your characters: Are their actions and reactions believable?

☐ Check your language: Look for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation and verb tenses.

☐ Check your word choice: Have you used a variety of words instead of repeating the same words?

☐ Read your story again: Is it interesting to read? Does it make the reader think or feel something?

Remember:

A good short story does not have to explain everything. Focus on one character, one central conflict and one meaningful moment.

Useful Sentence Starters

Use these phrases to make your short story more vivid and engaging.

1. Setting the scene

The year was 2050, and …
The world had changed dramatically since …
The once-green landscape was now …
As far as the eye could see, …
The air was thick with …
In the distance, I could see …
The streets were deserted because …

2. Introducing a character and a problem

I had never imagined that …
Nobody had expected …
Everything changed when …
At first, I thought …
I knew something was wrong when …
The problem was that …
For the first time in my life, I …

3. Describing climate change and its effects

The temperature had risen so much that …
The river had dried up, leaving …
Crops had failed because …
People were forced to leave their homes when …
With every passing day, …
The only thing we could do was …
We had run out of …
If we did nothing, …

4. Creating suspense

Suddenly, …
Without warning, …
Just as I was about to …, …
A strange noise came from …
My heart began to race as …
I froze when I realised that …
There was no time to …
Little did I know that …

5. Showing thoughts and feelings

I couldn't believe my eyes.
A wave of fear washed over me.
I had never felt so helpless.
I wondered whether …
Deep down, I knew that …
I wanted to believe that …
Despite my fear, …
For the first time, I began to hope that …

6. Introducing a turning point

Then, an unexpected thing happened: …
Just when everything seemed hopeless, …
Suddenly, I realised that …
We had two choices: … or …
It was then that I understood …
I knew I had to act when …

7. Ending the story

From that day on, …
As I looked towards the horizon, …
Maybe there was still hope for …
I finally understood that …
We had lost so much, but …
I couldn't help wondering whether …
Perhaps it was already too late.
One thing was certain: …

© Nina Toller | tollerunterricht.com