

# English and Social Studies Curriculum Guide

for the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns



## SECTION 2: EARTH



Mercy Education  
System of the Americas

Educación de la Misericordia  
de las Américas

# Earth



## English and Social Studies Curriculum Guide for the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns

### Definition

In discussing the environment, Pope Francis has stated that “the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” Care for the earth is one of the primary critical concerns for society today and requires practices and policies designed to protect all creation from unnecessary destruction including respecting the earth’s ecosystems, combating climate change, advocating against unnecessary fracking, drilling, or mining, improving access to potable water, and encouraging sustainable lifestyles.

### Characteristics

- Failure to care for the earth is a form of violence against God’s creation and shirks our obligation to be good stewards of the earth.
- Care for the earth is rooted in a belief in the sanctity and connectedness of all life.
- The Sisters of Mercy believe in the need to work toward the sustainability of life and support movements and legislation that secure the fundamental right to water for everyone and that address climate change. They seek to examine behaviors and policies and to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices. They advocate against hydrofracking; against mining that impacts indigenous and impoverished communities; for regulations that protect land, air and water; and for national and international agreements that mitigate climate change and ensure support for those most vulnerable to its effects.

### Essential Questions

- What is the science of climate change?
- How is climate change related to global inequality?
- Can capitalism be reconciled with the effects of climate change?

- How is climate change connected to food production and consumption?
- Beyond “reduce, reuse, and recycle,” what can individuals do to support and care for the earth?
- Can technology change essential human nature?
- What can individuals do in support of actions and policies that reflect Mercy priorities regarding care for the earth?
- What is the Carbon Footprint of our school?

### **Recommended Topics**

- The science of climate change
- The inequality of the distribution of natural resources
- Extreme Weather: hurricanes, wildfires, droughts
- Commercial farming, mono crops, urban sprawl
- Effects of extractive industries, like fracking, drilling, mining, dredging, and quarrying, on the earth, public health, and the economic vitality of local communities
- Meat production and climate change
- Relationship between climate change and poverty, migration
- Green revolution
- Effects of climate change on health

### **Recommended Resources**

- [USCCB on the Environment](#)
- [Catholic Climate Covenant](#)
- [Sisters of Mercy Links on Environment](#)
- [Sisters of Mercy Links on Climate Change](#)
- [Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship](#)
- [The Climate Reality Project](#)
- [Sierra Club](#)
- [GreenPeace](#)
- [Global Sisters Reports on the Environment](#)
- [Conceptual Unit Outlines](#)
- [ISLE Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment](#)
- [Poetry and the Environment](#)
- [Poets.org. Environment](#)

### **Recommended Readings**

#### **Articles**

- [Laudato si](#)
- ["Drowning Kiribati"](#)

- "This Changes Everything"
- "How Our Diets Impact the Planet"
- Obstacles to Arab-Israeli peace: water
- They Will Inherit the Earth

### **Fiction**

- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*.
- Bradbury, Ray. "The Veldt," "August"
- Wordsworth, William. "The World Is Too Much with Us" (poem)
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. "God's Grandeur" (poem)
- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*
- Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*
- Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Pioneers*
- Cather, Willa. *O! Pioneers*

### **Nonfiction**

- Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*; *Prodigal Summer*; *Flight Behavior*
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*
- Singer, Peter. *The Ethics of What We Eat*
- Swimme, Brian. *The Universe Story*
- The works of Thomas Berry
- Lappe, Frances Moore and Anna Lappe. *Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet*

### **Recommended Videos**

- "An Inconvenient Truth" Documentary
- "Food Inc." Documentary
- Climate 101 With Bill Nye
- Doubting the Science
- Top 10 Things To Know About Laudato Si
- Disney-Pixar, *Wall-E*
- Ecological Impact of the Industrial Revolution

Lesson with Link and Source	Lesson Topics	Connection to English Curriculum	Connection to Social Studies Curriculum
<u>Climate Change</u> by New York Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Climate Change</li> <li>- Effects of Climate Change</li> <li>- Global Warming and Flooding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use when studying fictional or nonfictional works involving climate change.</li> <li>- Barbara Kingsolver's <i>Flight Behavior</i> carries thematic resonance to climate change.</li> </ul>	
<u>Solar Energy</u> by NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renewable Energy</li> <li>- Solar Radiation</li> <li>- Data Collection</li> </ul>		
<u>Global Warming</u> by PBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greenhouse Effect</li> <li>- Persuasive Writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use when studying fictional or nonfictional works involving climate change</li> <li>- Use when studying persuasive writing</li> </ul>	
<u>Health Effects of Climate Change</u> by Scholastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health Effects of Climate Change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use when studying fictional or nonfictional works involving climate change</li> </ul>	
<u>Potential Solutions to Climate Change</u> by Scholastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential Solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use when studying fictional or nonfictional works involving climate change</li> </ul>	
<u>Ocean Pollution</u> by Teacher.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ocean Pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use when studying fictional works in which an ocean is a key element of the setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use when exploring the concept of mercantilism, Great Britain and the relationship between New England cod fisheries colonies (USHIS 1700s)</li> </ul>

<p><u>Farming and the Environment</u> by Young People's Trust for the Environment (UK)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arable Farming</li> <li>- Organic Farming</li> <li>- Genetically Modified Food</li> <li>- Livestock Farming</li> <li>- Commercial Fishing</li> </ul>	<p>- Use when studying fictional works in which a farm is a key element of the setting</p>	<p>-Use when exploring the role of poor farming techniques and prolonged drought in OK, KS, northern TX and the subsequent Dust Bowl (USHIS 1930s)</p>
<p><u>Toxic Waste</u> by PBS SoCal</p>	<p>- Toxic Waste</p>	<p>- Use when studying fictional works in which digital electronic devices play a key role</p>	<p>-Use when exploring man-made disasters and their environmental impacts on such topics as Three Mile Island (USHIS 1979), DDT usage (USHIS 1940-1970), The Exxon Valdez (USHIS 1989), or Deep Water Horizon (USHIS 2011)</p>