

Literature of Social Change

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An Inconvenient Truth exists on a continuum of literature of social change. Both fiction and non-fiction have long sought to document social conditions and call for social change. To do this, the author has to convince you to “see” the argument he or she is making. In other words, the literature of social change, even when it comes in the form of a novel, poem or a film, always has an argumentative thesis. The writer is making a claim and you, as the reader, are affected by it. The relationship of literature and social consciousness can be seen in texts as varied as *1984*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Plum Plum Pickers*, *The Jungle*, *SuperSize Me*, and *The Color Purple*, as just a few examples.

For this assignment, I want you to consider *An Inconvenient Truth* as “literature of social change.” For this assignment, you will be looking at six documents:

1. 2007 Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available on-line at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>
2. United Nations Foundation. “Confronting Climate Change.” Available on-line at: <http://www.unfoundation.org/SEG/>
3. *An Inconvenient Truth*
4. Two environmental blogs of your choice
5. One scientific article published in a peer reviewed journal (you must use Ebsco for this).

Task 1: Based on items 1, 2, and 5, how is global climate change characterized? As you read items 1, 2, & 5, highlight factual information about climate change in blue. Highlight adjectives and descriptive phrases meant to influence you in yellow. Highlight areas you do not understand in green.

As you read, here are some other questions to keep in mind: Who did the research? How do you know that the information is “authoritative”? How does this information affect you as a reader? What is your response to it? Why?

Task 2: Next, I want you to read and highlight *An Inconvenient Truth* and the blogs you have selected. Again, highlight factual information about climate change in blue. Highlight adjectives and descriptive phrases meant to influence you in yellow. Highlight areas you do not understand in green.

Here are some questions to keep in mind: How do these sources characterize climate change? Quite literally, how does the language change? What role to images and pictures play in this characterization?

Task 3: Compare your colored notes of each text. Count the instances of yellow, blue, and green in each text (I would make a chart to do this). Are the reports and scientific articles more or less factual than the blogs and *An Inconvenient Truth*? Which sources

use more affective language? What else affects you as a reader when you consider these reports?

Task 4: You are now ready to begin to write. Please write an essay in which you evaluate *An Inconvenient Truth* as literature of social change. How does it take scientific evidence and recast that evidence using descriptive language, phrases, and images, to affect you as a reader? Does it work?

The first draft of your essay should begin with a proposed outline and thesis that answers the question above. Your essay should be 750 words minimum and should include quotes and examples from the 6 texts you looked at. I will read and comment on your first draft in preparation for a revision. We will also peer review these papers, so you should be prepared to submit your paper on BlackBoard by the due date so that you can receive the maximum amount of feedback.