

Sandy asks new climate change questions

1st November, 2012



Hurricane Sandy killed at least 62 people and caused billions of dollars of damage to America's east coast. Water from the superstorm, which hit on Tuesday night, has

flooded subways and tunnels in New York City and cut off electricity to millions of homes. Politicians and scientists are now asking whether America and the world are ready for such devastating and deadly weather events. Sandy has firmly put climate change back onto the agenda of the 2012 presidential election. Former U.S. vice president Al Gore told reporters: "Hurricane Sandy is a disturbing sign of things to come. We must [pay attention to] this warning and act quickly to solve the climate crisis." Mr Gore added: "Dirty energy makes dirty weather."

Climate expert Dr Shaye Wolf warned of "a future full of Frankenstorms". He said: "Climate change raises sea levels and super-sizes storms. The threat of killer winds and crushing storm surges will grow by the year unless we get serious about tackling greenhouse gas." Other scientists say a mixture of rare weather systems caused Sandy. They say that warmer temperatures and rising sea levels were probably not the reason for the hurricane. Meteorologist Kevin Trenberth said of Sandy: "A lot of [different] weather conditions that lined up [caused] what we might call a meteorological bomb." Sandy is certain to get politicians once again asking questions about fossil fuels and pollution.

Writing

Writing to politicians about the need to act over climate change is our duty, but also a waste of time. Discuss.

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True / False

- Hurricane Sandy caused billions, not millions of dollars of damage. T / F
- Climate change wasn't such a hot topic for politicians before Sandy. T / F
- An ex-vice president of the USA said there was no need to take action. T / F
- The ex-VP suggested that using coal and gas brings us bad weather. T / F
- A specialist on the climate warned of what he called "Dracula-storms". T / F
- The expert said there would be more deadly weather year by year. T / F
- Many experts said a mix of common weather systems caused Sandy. T / F
- The article said Sandy would soon disappear from politicians' agendas. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. at least | a. questioning |
| 2. hit | b. sure |
| 3. asking | c. struck |
| 4. devastating | d. worrying |
| 5. disturbing | e. combination |
| 6. expert | f. not less than |
| 7. threat | g. uncommon |
| 8. mixture | h. danger |
| 9. rare | i. damaging |
| 10. certain | j. specialist |

Discussion – Student A

- What did you think when you read the headline?
- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'hurricane'?
- What do you know about Hurricane Sandy?
- How can we help the people affected by Sandy?
- Why did politicians in the USA stop talking about climate change?
- How important is climate change?
- What do you do every day to save energy?
- What pictures of Sandy do you remember looking at / watching?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Hurricane Sandy killed at | a. sea levels |
| 2. flooded | b. things to come |
| 3. Sandy has firmly put climate change back | c. greenhouse gas |
| 4. a disturbing sign of | d. onto the agenda |
| 5. Dirty energy | e. least 62 people |
| 6. warned of a future full | f. for the hurricane |
| 7. Climate change raises | g. subways and tunnels |
| 8. get serious about tackling | h. fuels and pollution |
| 9. probably not the reason | i. of Frankenstorms |
| 10. asking questions about fossil. | j. makes dirty weather |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of the word "Frankenstorm"?
- How has the climate changed in your country recently?
- Why can't scientists agree on climate change?
- What should we do every day to save energy?
- Why do countries do so little about climate change?
- How much influence do oil companies have with politicians?
- What questions would you like to ask climate expert Dr Shaye Wolf?
- What is a "meteorological bomb"? What do you think of this term?

Spelling

- doledfo subways and tunnels
- tiadgnetvas and deadly
- back onto the daaneg
- a ubntriisdg sign of things to come
- We must pay eanotntti
- Dirty energy makes dirty haeertw
- climate perxet
- the etarth of killer winds
- crushing storm uessrg
- warmer ttarspmreeeu
- a oalgleeotimrco bomb
- sofsli fuels

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. c	3. a	4. i	5. d
6. j	7. h	8. e	9. g	10. b

Role Play

Scientist A - You don't think human activity causes global warming. The Earth is too big for a few billion people to do this. You think it's just the normal weather. It happens every thousand years. You believe the others have no idea what they are talking about. Tell them that every time they speak.

Scientist B - You strongly believe that humans cause global warming. There are thousands of reports that say this. The Earth's weather is going crazy. People who say humans do not create climate change get lots of money from oil companies. You think scientist A should quit his/her job for his/her opinions.

Average Jo - You are an average person. You are sure there is a link between the way humans live their lives and the changing weather. Ask the scientists lots of questions. Ask them what we can do to save the penguins. Tell them to change their lifestyles to save energy.

A penguin - You are a penguin living in Antarctica. You are fed up with humans. You know how to live a life that does not pollute the air, rivers and oceans. Order the others to go back to nature and live lives that create zero pollution. If they do not do this, all penguins will die one day.

Speaking

What can you do to help the Earth? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- use the stairs
- use less air-con / heat
- turn off lights
- plant trees
- walk, don't drive
- use less hot water
- recycle
- energy-efficient products

Answers – True False

a T	b T	c F	d T	e F	f T	g F	h F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.