

What Is Our Relationship with the Earth?

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Write definitions of the concepts of “extractivism” and “regeneration” based on textual information.
- Identify, describe, and evaluate both historical and modern-day examples of “extractivism” and “regeneration.”
- Determine how extractivism and regeneration differ in the ways that each places value on people and the planet’s resources.
- Discuss whether it is possible to have economic growth that values both people and the environment.
- Create posters that visually capture the idea of extractivism or regeneration, using stories from their study for inspiration.

Themes

- Extractivism
- Regeneration
- Legacy of Colonialism
- Social Justice
- Economic Growth

Materials Needed

All materials are available for download at thischangeseverything.org/studyguide.

Book excerpts:

- “Extractivism” (pg 169-170, *This Changes Everything*)
- “Regeneration” (pg 447-448, *This Changes Everything*)

Handout: Group Organizer (p. 29 of this guide)

Film clip: “Short-term Profits v. Long-term Damage” (length: 7:04)

Clip Summary: A group of activists laments a Canadian corporation’s plans to expand a gold mine in their area and the potential destruction of the landscape. One of them thinks the question of whether or not to expand the mine is an ethical issue. She believes the core problem is capitalism and that it promotes short-term profits for companies and long-term damage for residents. Klein describes our economic system as one based on the “logic of extractivism,” a worldview that sees everything as a commodity from which to extract value – nature, people, and entire nations.

Activities

1. Before class, have students read the *This Changes Everything* book excerpts, “Extractivism” (p. 169-170) and “Regeneration” (p. 447-448). Ask them to write definitions of the concepts of “extractivism” and “regeneration” based on information in the texts. Students should then bring their definitions to class, along with an historical or modern-day example of each concept, conducting research as needed. For example, a student might define “regeneration” as, “Taking purposeful action to generate life so that the environment and communities can grow or revive,” and give as an example the agroecological practice of using “green manures,” or quick-growing plants that prevent erosion and replace nutrients in the soil.
2. In class, organize students into groups of three or four and give each group the handout. Within their groups, students should share their individual definitions of extractivism and regeneration with each other, and then merge them into group definitions of these concepts that they can record on their handout. Have students also take turns sharing their examples of extractivism and regeneration and explaining how they support the definitions. Group members should evaluate whether each example truly fits the definition, asking for clarifications and more details as needed. Add each example to the handout once it has been vetted by the group. Then, the group should identify or label a couple of local examples from home, the school, or the community.
3. Ask the groups to review their handouts to make sure all relevant points of their discussion have been captured. Invite a representative of each group to share the group’s definitions and examples with the class. Ask members of other groups to identify who benefits and who is hurt in each example provided. What patterns does the class notice about the examples of extractivism and regeneration? How do extractivism and regeneration differ in the ways that they place value on people and the planet’s resources?
4. Show students the 7-minute video, “Short-term Profits v. Long-term Damage,” which illustrates the values of extractivism and regeneration coming into conflict in modern-day Greece.

After watching, discuss:

- Based on the information in the video, what are the values of the gold mining company in regards to the land? What are the values of the residents of Halkidiki? Why are these values in conflict?
 - How does the narrator’s definition of “extractivism” compare with yours?
 - Why do you think the woman in the video believes that capitalism is the core problem in their struggle against the proposed expansion of the gold mine? What is your reaction to her perspective? Explain.
 - Is it possible to have economic growth that values both people and the environment? Why or why not? What examples support your view?
5. Have students each create a poster that visually captures the idea of extractivism or regeneration, using stories from their study for inspiration.

Go Further

- Ask students to determine whether extractivism or regeneration best describes the economic behavior and decision making of the people, corporations, and government leaders in your country. Have students write persuasive essays about their positions and include specific examples.
- Learn more about a legal strategy based on “regeneration” that seeks to stop harmful corporate activities based on “extractivism.” It focuses on establishing a legal framework for the “rights of Mother Earth” so that these rights can be defended in court if they are violated. In 2010, people at the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth collaborated to define these rights in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (<https://pwccc.wordpress.com/programa/>). Have students write news stories that research and explain the legal strategy for establishing these “rights of nature,” and the progress that proponents have made so far. A good source of information for students to start with is the Frequently Asked Questions page (<http://therightsofnature.org/frequently-asked-questions/>) at the website for the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature.
- Evaluate the roles that lifestyle choices (such as recycling or consuming less) and economic, political, religious, and cultural systems play in defining humanity’s relationship with the Earth. What are the strengths and limits of each in terms of their ability to place value on both people and the environment? Create a chart that tracks these strengths and limits side by side.
- Have students define and assess their own relationship with the Earth. Do they support an extractivist or a regenerative point of view? Do their everyday decisions reflect their values? Why or why not? Where can improvements be made at both the lifestyle and systemic levels?

Lesson 4 Handout: Group Organizer

Group Members:

Extractivism	Regeneration
Group Definition:	Group Definition:
Examples:	Examples:

What examples do you see in your home, school, or community?

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