

OVERPOPULATION

Video Review and Activity Sheet

A. Global Issue: Overpopulation

B. Target age/grade level: 14-18 yrs / 9-12 Grade

C. Film Information:

Into the Wilderness, Planet Earth – The Complete Series.
DVD. BBC Worldwide Ltd. 2007.

D. Description:

Is Earth's wilderness disappearing as a result of overpopulation? In this documentary a Film Producer, Economist, Ecologist, Wildlife Biologist, Conservationist, Archbishop of Canterbury, Founder of the Green Belt Movement, and many others respond to that question by discussing the global impact of losing the world's wilderness and share their perspectives on how human population growth threatens those areas. Some argue that since only 0.7% of the human population lives in the wilderness, which covers about 40% of the Earth's land, overpopulation can't possibly be considered a threat. However, most seem to agree that overpopulation is an indisputable threat to wilderness and that we should be investigating more closely the impacts of consumer patterns on the environment and how to use our resources in the most sustainable manner possible. Still, if most agree that controlling the world's population growth will save wildernesses and sustain a high standard of living for humans over a long period of time, then why can't population growth be controlled?

The last 10 minutes of the film shifts away from discussions about the impacts of human population growth on the borders of wilderness areas to discussions about the impacts of extracting natural resources from the heart of wilderness areas. The dilemma is that a great abundance of oil and natural gas is located at the heart of some of the most pristine wilderness areas in the world and for underdeveloped countries the acquisition of those resources could mean the difference between life and death.

During-Film Questions

TIME	TOPIC
2:00	The concept of a wilderness has really been developed a lot in western <u>societies</u> .
2:50	In a growing <u>economy</u> the wilderness may be protected so long as it contains valuable <u>resources</u> such as oil.
3:55	The <u>boreal</u> forest circling the globe contains 1/3 of all the trees on earth and it produces so much oxygen it changes the <u>composition</u> of the <u>atmosphere</u> .
4:00	39% of the planet is covered in <u>wilderness</u> .
4:40	However, about one third of the wilderness is <u>ice</u> .
4:50	<u>Antarctica</u> , one of the largest wilderness areas on the planet, is about one and a half times the size of the U.S.
6:50	Over the last <u>300</u> years about <u>one half</u> the world's forest have been lost.
7:10	The <u>Amazon</u> forest is losing an area the size of <u>Switzerland</u> every year.
8:20	Right now only about <u>12</u> percent of the wilderness is legally protected.
12:15	The wild dogs are one of the most <u>endangered</u> mammals in <u>Africa</u> , and the main reason for their decline is they have caught diseases from <u>domestic</u> dogs.
14:15	The gelada baboons living on the slopes of the Simien mountains in <u>Ethiopia</u> are eating human grown <u>barley</u> grass because their natural <u>alpine</u> grass has run out.
17:45	The threat to the <u>environment</u> is a combination of the number of people and their <u>consumer</u> patterns, which is driven largely by their <u>economic</u> wealth.
18:20	If we all lived on this planet the way <u>Americans</u> live, we would need three planets to support the Earth's current <u>population</u> .
23:00	As a population grows one of the first <u>resources</u> to come under pressure is <u>fresh water</u> .
24:00	In 1950 there were about <u>5,000</u> large dams around the world, today there about 45,000 large <u>dams</u> around the world.
25:00	70% of the water taken out of rivers, lakes, and <u>aquifers</u> is used for <u>irrigation</u> ?

After-Film Questions

- 1) If you had to decide to keep a tree standing or feed one of your children what would you do?
- 2) Is population growth really the biggest threat to our wilderness?
- 3) What are some of the difficulties in designating wilderness areas?.
- 5) Would it be realistic and/or ethical to cut the world's population in half so that the surviving half would be able to live sustainably and preserve the wilderness?
- 6) If you had a million dollars to spend on America's wilderness, how would you spend it?
- 6) What can we do to conserve water?
- 7) Do you think that drilling for oil in an area that's only 2,000 acres out of 19 million acres would have a detrimental impact on the caribou population that crosses through?
- 8) E.O. Wilson coined the term "Biophilia," how would you define it?