

# 5 Environmental Justice and Personal Responsibility

## Introduction

The documents in this unit cover a wide historical spectrum and include very different types of writing, from poetry to a Supreme Court dissent. Yet they all explore the ethics of environmental protection and how the use and abuse of the environment relate to social justice. The texts in this unit emphasize the ideas that environmental harm and environmental protection have different impacts on different groups of people, and that people of every demographic have the right, the opportunity, and—some would argue—the responsibility to participate in environmental action. As students read these passages, encourage them to think about how different groups of people in their community are impacted differently by the environment and harm to it, how they can participate in environmental action, as well as whether and how they should urge others to become involved.

## Objectives

1. Students will analyze how authors of key texts explore the ethics of environmental protection, and how the use and abuse of the environment relate to social justice. They will discuss the reasoning, rhetoric, and evidence in texts that encourage environmental activism.
2. Based on their reading of texts in this unit, students will choose an environmental issue, conduct research, synthesize information from a diversity of sources, write a persuasive essay, and perform it as a speech that presents a compelling and persuasive case for activism.

### Core Passages and Images

**Close Reading Passage:** “Everything Is a Human Being,” by Alice Walker (pages 659–662, 662–665, 667)

1. “About Trees,” by Sterling Morton (pages 126–129)
2. Dissent in *Sierra Club v. Morton*, by William O. Douglas (pages 355–358)
3. from *Love Canal: My Story*, by Lois Marie Gibbs (pages 609–611)
4. from *Love Canal: My Story*, by Lois Marie Gibbs (pages 614–616)
5. Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech, by César Chávez (pages 693–695)
6. from *Dumping in Dixie*, by Robert D. Bullard (pages 725–727)
7. from *Dumping in Dixie*, by Robert D. Bullard (pages 729–731)
8. “The Summer Day,” by Mary Oliver (pages 737–738)
9. Epilogue from *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, by Terry Tempest Williams (pages 752–759)
10. from *The Legacy of Luna*, by Julia Butterfly Hill (912–916)
11. from *Blessed Unrest*, by Paul Hawken (pages 962–965)
12. from *Blessed Unrest*, by Paul Hawken (pages 968–970)
13. Image 10: Carleton Watkins, *The Three Graces, 272 Feet*
14. Image 22: Darius Kinsey, *On the Spring Boards and in the Undercut*



*The Three Graces, 272 Feet*  
(c. 1865–66), by Carleton Watkins



*On the Spring Boards and in the Undercut*,  
*Washington Bolt Cutter and His Daughters*  
(1904), by Darius Kinsey

15. Image 48: Stanley Mouse/Mouse Studios, poster for Sierra Club Wilderness Conference
16. Image 63: Lois Gibbs at Love Canal
17. Image 68: Julia Butterfly Hill
18. Image 73: Kim Stringfellow, *Pumping Out Flood Water, Salstson Sea Beach, California*
19. Image 78: Demonstration against salvage logging, Siskiyou National Forest, Oregon
20. Image 79: Anti-pollution protestors, San Francisco, California

### Standards

Common Core State Standards

**RI.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**RI.9-10.2** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI.9-10.5** Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of the text (e.g., a section or chapter).

**RI.9-10.6** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

**RI.9-10.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient.

**RI.11-12.3** Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact over the course of the text.

**RI.11-12.6** Determine the author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how the style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

**RH.9-10.3** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

**RH.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

**RH.9-10.6** Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

**RH.9-10.9** Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

**RL.11-12.5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

**W.9-10.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**W.9-10.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**W.9-10.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

**W.9-10.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**W.11-12.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**W.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**W.11-12.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

Next Generation Science Standard

**HS-LS2-7** Design, evaluate, and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on the environment and biodiversity.



### Motivate

Ask students to look at Images 68, 78, and 79 and to read the caption for each photo. Each photo shows a different way people are taking action on an environmental issue or problem. Invite students to discuss the photos in small groups and then share their ideas with the class. Ask students to consider these questions:

- What environmental problem are the people in each photo protesting? What result do they likely hope to achieve?
- How are the people shown in the photos taking action against the problem?
- How are people in your community taking action on environmental issues? What issues are they addressing and which types of action are they taking?
- What are some other ways people can take action to combat environmental problems?



### Explore

Each activity in this section focuses on the work of an individual author. Activities in later sections involve comparing the works of more than one author. Activities marked with an asterisk (\*) are more suited to strong readers.

1. \*At the end of his **dissent in *Sierra Club v. Morton*** (page 358), **William O. Douglas** quotes Aldo Leopold's "land ethic." As a class, discuss the relevance of this quotation and how it contributes to Douglas's argument. Then, again as a class, conduct a close reading of Douglas's text, having students identify and discuss instances in which they think the reasoning is sound and evidence relevant and sufficient, and instances where it is not. Make sure students understand that as Douglas's text was a dissent, the majority of the Supreme Court did NOT agree with him. Ask students to consider and share their thoughts on the effectiveness of a dissent like this as a form of environmental action. (RI.9-10.8)
2. Have students read from page 725 to ". . . allocation of community amenities" on page 727 in the passage from **Robert D. Bullard's *Dumping in Dixie***. Then ask them to consider the following assertion in Bullard's writing with respect to their own community: "An abundance of documentation shows blacks, lower-income groups, and working-class persons are subjected to a disproportionately large amount of pollution and other environmental stressors in their neighborhoods as well as their workplaces." Does this statement hold true in terms of what they see around them in the place where they live? Have students write a persuasive essay in which they craft a precise thesis and cite specific evidence from their own community. Students' essays should use valid reasoning and reference words in Bullard's writing. (RH.9-10.4; RI.9-10.8; W.9-10.1)

3. On page 759 of the epilogue of **Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place***, the author refers to trespassing on military lands as “an act of civil disobedience.” Have students conduct a short research project exploring the concept of civil disobedience. Instruct them to make sure they find and synthesize at least three relevant sources to define and provide examples of civil disobedience, and to explain when in their view it is warranted. When they are finished, have students share their definitions and the examples they chose. Later in her text, Terry Tempest Williams calls her pen and paper “weapons.” Ask students if, in their view, writing should be considered a form of civil disobedience and what they feel is the role of the written word in the fight for environmental justice. (RI.9-10.2; W.9-10.7; W.11-12.7)
4. In the section of the passage from **Paul Hawken's *Blessed Unrest*** on pages 969–970, Hawken compares the environmental movement to an immune system. Have students analyze the content of this text and write a paragraph analyzing this comparison, explaining what similarities it is based on, and evaluating whether or not the comparison is valid. (RI.9-10.5)



*Logging in the Cascade Mountains, near Seattle (c. 1906), by Darius Kinsey*



### Close Reading

**Alice Walker’s “Everything Is a Human Being”** (pages 659–662, 662–665, 667)

 Lexile®: measure = 1200L

#### Vocabulary

**conifers**, *pl n*, trees that bear cones and evergreen needlelike or scalelike leaves

**profusion**, *n*, an abundance or large quantity

**rheumatoid**, *adj*, resembling or reflecting rheumatism, any disease marked by inflammation and pain in the joints, muscles, or fibrous tissue, especially rheumatoid arthritis

**discourse**, *n*, written or spoken communication or debate

**psyche**, *n*, the human soul, mind, or spirit

**puritanism**, *n*, a system of moral beliefs that is regarded as excessively strict and disapproving, especially with respect to pleasure and sex

**enthusiasts**, *pl n*, people who are highly interested in a particular subject or activity

### Close Reading Comprehension Questions

Have students read the Close Reading Text, **Alice Walker’s *Everything Is a Human Being***, on their own. Direct students to re-read from the beginning of the passage on page 659 to the break at the top of page 662; from the top of page 662 to the break in the middle of page 665; and the first full paragraph on page 667. Have them work individually or in groups to answer the following close reading questions:

1. In the section from the beginning of the passage, on page 659, to the break at the top of page 662, what does Walker notice about the trees when she is lying on their roots? *The trees are sickly, probably because something in their environment is doing damage to them.* (RI.9-10.1)
2. What impact do you think Walker intends to have on her readers by imagining a dialogue with the trees and referring to their “feet” and “faces”? *By suggesting that the trees are similar to humans, she can help readers identify with and see the value of the trees.* (RI.11-12.6)
3. Why do the trees in Walker’s dialogue not accept her protestations that she is innocent of harming them? *She is part of the human species and shares collective responsibility for human actions toward trees in general.* According to Walker, who is ultimately responsible for taking care of the Earth

and preventing crimes from being committed against it? *All people are responsible; it is a collective or shared responsibility.* (RI.9-10.1)

4. Reread the section from the top of page 662 to the break in the middle of page 665. What is the impact of Walker's use of the word "murder" and her reference to the story of Adam and Eve in regard to the snake? *Both emphasize Walker's feeling that killing the snake was not just wrong but actually a crime or a sin.* (RI.11-12.6)
5. Why is Walker so bothered by the killing of the snake? *It was a harmless animal that was simply going about its business and making its home in the garden.* To what does she attribute both the "murder" of the snake and other human slaughters of nature? *unreasonable fear* (RI.9-10.1)
6. What parallels does Walker draw between the way she treated the snake, and humans treat nature more generally, and the way white settlers treated Native Americans? *Walker killed the snake for trying to return to its home, humans destroy the natural order in places where plants and animals should exist, and white settlers drove Native Americans from their homes and killed them when they tried to return.* What does Walker see as Native Americans' role in America? *She sees them as parents or guardians of the land.* How does Walker suggest that other Americans should relate to this role? *She suggests that we should try to understand and accept the Native American point of view toward the land and stop harming or killing it.* (RI.11-12.3)
7. Reread the first full paragraph on page 667. What problems does Walker identify in this paragraph? How does she use language to show the seriousness of these problems? *Walker identifies the problems as the rape and plunder of the Earth. She uses strong language associated with crimes and greed to show that these problems should be taken seriously.* (RI.11-12.6)
8. How does she suggest addressing or solving these problems? *She suggests that solving these problems demands an awareness of and respect for all beings as equal and valuable, simply by the fact of their existence.* (RI.9-10.1)





## Close Reading Comprehension Questions

1. In the section from the beginning of the passage on page 659 to the break at the top of page 662, what does Walker notice about the trees when she is lying on their roots?
2. What impact do you think Walker intends to have on her readers by imagining a dialogue with the trees and referring to their “feet” and “faces”?
3. Why do the trees in Walker’s dialogue not accept her protestations that she is innocent of harming them? According to Walker, who is ultimately responsible for taking care of the Earth and preventing crimes from being committed against it?
4. Reread the section from the top of page 662 to the break in the middle of page 665. What is the impact of Walker’s use of the word “murder” and her reference to the story of Adam and Eve in regard to the snake?
5. Why is Walker so bothered by the killing of the snake? To what does she attribute both the “murder” of the snake and other human slaughters of nature?
6. What parallels does Walker draw between the way she treated the snake, and humans treat nature more generally, and the way white settlers treated Native Americans? What does Walker see as Native Americans’ role in America? How does Walker suggest that other Americans should relate to this role?
7. Reread the first full paragraph on page 667. What problems does Walker identify in this paragraph? How does she use language to show the seriousness of these problems?
8. How does she suggest addressing or solving these problems?



## Comparing Texts

1. Have students read **William O. Douglas's dissent in *Sierra Club v. Morton*** (pages 355–358) and the paragraph beginning “Our thoughts must . . .” in **Alice Walker's *Everything Is a Human Being*** (page 667). Have them analyze both texts and write a short essay comparing and contrasting Douglas's and Walker's views of nature, nature's rights, and how we should and can protect those rights. (RH.9-10.6, W.9-10.1)
2. Have students write short essay comparing and contrasting how the following authors suggest people can or should take action on behalf of the environment: **Lois Marie Gibbs**, in the passage from ***Love Canal: My Story*** (pages 609–611, 614–616); **César Chávez**, in his **Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech** (693–695); and **Julia Butterfly Hill**, in the passage from ***The Legacy of Luna*** (912–916). (RH.9-10.9; W.9-10.9)
3. The passage from **Lois Marie Gibbs's *Love Canal: My Story*** (pages 609–611, 614–616) and the epilogue of **Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*** (pages 752–759) both take the form of personal narratives. Have students write a short essay comparing the authors' personal experiences, including details about the issues that inspired them to take action, the damage caused by those issues, and how the authors responded to those issues and damage. Encourage students to refer to the introductions to each text for more information about the authors' actions and experiences. (RH.9-10.6; W.9-10.9)
4. One of the founding documents of the environmental justice movement is “Principles of Environmental Justice,” drafted and adopted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. This document can easily be found on the Internet. Have students read Principles of Environmental Justice and the Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech by César Chávez. Ask them to consider, as they read, which principles are most evident in Chávez's speech. To that end, direct them to create a grid or rubric that aligns specific phrases and sentences in the speech with particular principles in the “Principles of Environmental Justice.” Hold a class discussion in which students present and explain alignments they have identified between the two documents. (RH.9-10.4; RH.9-10.6; RH.9-10.9)



## Making Connections to Today

Have students work in pairs and ask each pair to select an environmental issue that is important to them. Give students time to conduct research on their issue. They should find out:

1. The history of the issue, most importantly why it has come about
2. At least two groups of people on whom it has an impact, and how they are impacted differently

3. At least one nonhuman species on which it has an impact
4. Who, if anybody, is working to improve the situation
5. What they (the students) and others can do to participate in addressing the issue

Tell students to make sure to identify and synthesize information from multiple relevant authoritative sources, including the following:

- At least two relevant news articles
- At least two relevant video news reports
- At least one organization involved in the issue
- Interviews the students conduct with at least two people whose views on the issue are relevant

When their research is done, have students work in groups or as a class to carefully examine the argument and rhetoric in **César Chávez's Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech** (pages 693–695). What techniques make his speech effective? Are there ways in which the speech could have been more effective? Have students use their research to write a speech on the issues they chose. Before writing, they should identify a specific audience the speech is intended to persuade and encourage to take action regarding the chosen issue. Also, share the questions below, which will be discussed at the conclusion of each speech. You may wish to have the students work collaboratively in their research pairs. Have students present their speeches to the rest of the class and/or an invited audience. As students listen to each other's speeches, ask them to take notes on each speech in order to discuss the following questions at the conclusion:

- What was the main idea of the speech? Was it clear?
- What evidence supported the main idea?
- Did the speaker speak clearly and emphasize important points?
- How persuasive was the speech? Would it inspire you to take the action the speaker recommends?
- Which, if any, of Chávez's persuasive techniques did the speech use? Did they help make the speech convincing? How?
- What other techniques or information helped make the speech convincing or not convincing?

(HS-LS2-7; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; W.9-10.9; W.11-12.1; W.11-12.7; W.11-12.8)



### Core Passages Assessment Questions

Have students answer these questions individually. Questions are printed on separate pages that can be reproduced for students.

Question #	Correct Answer(s)	Standard(s)
1	B	(RH.9-10.4)
2	C	(RI.9-10.8)
3	A	(RI.9-10.1)
4	D	(RI.11-12.6)
5	C	(RI.9-10.6)
6	D	(RI.11-12.3)
7	C	(RL.11-12.5)
8	B	(RH.9-10.3)
9	B	(RI.9-10.1)
10	C	(RI.9-10.2)



César Chávez

## UNIT 5



## Environmental Justice and Personal Responsibility

## Core Passages Assessment Questions

- 1. In William O. Douglas’s dissent in *Sierra Club v. Morton* (pages 355–358), what does the word “standing” mean as it is used in the text?**
  - A** the status of protected regions
  - B** the legal right to bring a case to court
  - C** the role of community in nature conservation
  - D** the formal responsibility to care for wilderness areas
  
- 2. Which piece of evidence from William O. Douglas’s dissent in *Sierra Club v. Morton* (pages 355–358) best supports his claim that nature has a right to be represented in court?**
  - A** “Public interest’ has so many different shades of meaning as to be quite meaningless on the environmental front.”
  - B** “Groves of trees, swampland, or even air . . . feel . . . the destructive pressures of modern technology and modern life.”
  - C** “Inanimate objects are sometimes parties in litigation. A ship has a legal personality, a fiction found useful for maritime purposes.”
  - D** “Federal agencies . . . are not venal or corrupt. But they are notoriously under the control of powerful interests who manipulate them.”

3. According to pages 609–611 in the passage from **Lois Marie Gibbs’s *Love Canal: My Story***, why did Gibbs and her neighbors leave their neighborhood?
- A Toxic chemicals that caused illnesses, miscarriages, and birth defects were buried under a nearby field.
  - B After their children were grown, they no longer needed to be so close to a school and a playground.
  - C The government forced them to move so that the Hooker Chemical Corporation could develop Love Canal.
  - D Many of the houses in the area had unkempt, overgrown gardens and lawns and were surrounded by chain link fences.
4. What is **César Chávez’s** intent in pages 693–695 of his **Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech**.
- A to persuade listeners to petition the courts to hear cases related to pesticide use
  - B to persuade listeners to support lawmakers and politicians who favor banning pesticides
  - C to persuade listeners to provide help to children and workers injured or killed by pesticides
  - D to persuade listeners to give money and boycott grapes to protest the use of harmful pesticides
5. In pages 693–695 of **César Chávez’s Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech**, what is one way Chávez uses rhetoric to help persuade listeners to support his cause?
- A He appeals to powerful political figures for aid.
  - B He uses flattering language to try to appease growers.

- C** He refers to the protesters against pesticides as a family.
- D** He warns that listeners themselves may be harmed by pesticides if they do not act.
- 6.** Read from “The problem of polluted black communities . . .” on page 729 to “. . . have common roots” on page 731 in the passage from **Robert D. Bullard’s *Dumping in Dixie***. Which answer best represents the reason that the social justice and environmental movements became intertwined?
- A** Civil rights leaders became active in the early environmental movement.
- B** Desegregation opened environmental organizations to new black participants.
- C** LULUs began to have an increased impact on middle-class environmental activists.
- D** Poor black communities were disproportionately used to dispose of unwanted toxins.
- 7.** In **Mary Oliver’s poem “This Summer Day”** (pages 737–738), what do Oliver’s questions at the beginning of the poem and her description of the grasshopper suggest?
- A** that people are responsible for maintaining natural systems
- B** that people are responsible for protecting wildlife in nature
- C** that people are responsible for appreciating even the smallest parts of nature
- D** that people are responsible for following religions that are compatible with nature

8. In the epilogue of **Terry Tempest Williams's** *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (pages 752–759), what does the author believe is responsible for the pervasiveness of cancer in her family?
- A bad genetics
  - B fallout from nuclear tests
  - C visits to contaminated towns
  - D insomnia from recurring nightmares
9. In the section of the passage from **Paul Hawken's** *Blessed Unrest* from “The third report . . .” on page 962 to the break on 965, according to Hawken what is the main issue in the Coca-Cola case?
- A the profitability of Coke versus Pepsi
  - B community rights versus corporate rights
  - C large nonprofit organizations versus small NGOs
  - D E.U. water standards versus Indian water standards
10. In the section of the passage from **Paul Hawken's** *Blessed Unrest* on pages 969–970, what does the author consider the most effective way to stop a corporation from violating a community's right to resources such as clean water?
- A encourage members of the community to file lawsuits
  - B pass legislation banning corporations from using natural resources
  - C have motivated individuals and small groups work together to take action
  - D increase lobbying by large, well-established organizations such as the Audubon Society