

The Kyoto Protocol

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you usually use public transit or drive a car?
2. What is global warming? Do you know what causes global warming?
3. Why is global warming a problem? Do you worry about global warming and other environmental problems?
4. Do you think many governments are trying to deal with global warming?
5. Have you heard of the Kyoto Protocol, the international agreement that deals with global warming?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. trap | a) a goal, an objective |
| ___ 2. precipitation | b) to promise |
| ___ 3. drought | c) required according to the law |
| ___ 4. devastating | d) results, effects |
| ___ 5. reduce | e) to lessen, to decrease |
| ___ 6. legally binding | f) necessary, critical, very important |
| ___ 7. pledge | g) to catch |
| ___ 8. crucial | h) terrible |
| ___ 9. target | i) a continuous period of no rain |
| ___ 10. consequences | j) rain or snow |

Reading

1. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement that deals with global warming. Global warming is caused by an increase in greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere.
2. Greenhouse gases are produced by the industrial activities of developed nations, mainly from burning oil, gas, and coal. When these gases collect in the atmosphere, they **trap** heat near the earth's surface and cause the global temperature to rise. This increase in temperature can produce changes in wind patterns and **precipitation**. These changes can lead to severe weather such as **droughts**, floods, or powerful hurricanes that can have **devastating** social and economic **consequences**.
3. The Kyoto Protocol was created to encourage countries to **reduce** the amount of greenhouse gases they produce and to become more energy efficient and socially responsible. To be **legally binding**, the protocol had to be signed by 55 countries that produced 55% of the industrialized world's greenhouse gases in 1990.
4. Several countries, including Canada, Japan, and the European Union, signed the protocol, but there was concern that the required numbers to make it legally binding would not be reached. However, Russia's decision to sign the protocol in September 2004 ensured it would take effect. In return, the European Union **pledged** to support Russia's application to join the World Trade Organization. Russia's signature was **crucial** because both the United States and Australia refused to ratify the protocol.
5. In February 2005, 30 industrialized countries started to limit or reduce their greenhouse emissions to meet the scientific **targets** set out for them by the protocol. The goal was to reduce greenhouse gases by 5% by 2012. Countries that had not produced significant amounts of greenhouse gases in the past, including India and China, would be expected to participate in the protocol as they become more industrialized.
6. While Canada was one of the first to sign the protocol, its greenhouse gas emissions rose significantly. In 2011, prior to the expiry of Kyoto, Canada pulled out of its commitment. In 2012, Australia, the European Union, and several developing nations agreed to work toward a replacement treaty. The proposed goal was to prevent global temperatures from ever rising more than two degrees Celsius. However, Canada, the US, Japan, and Russia refused to sign on to Kyoto's extension.

"We will act, learn, and act again, adjusting our approaches as science advances and technology evolves."

—President George W. Bush, 2001,
 regarding the US rejection of the Kyoto Protocol

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers below.

1. How are greenhouse gases produced, and how do they cause global warming?

2. What problems can global warming cause?

3. Why was the Kyoto Protocol created?

4. What was required to make the agreement legally binding?

5. Which industrialized countries did not sign this agreement?

Vocabulary Review

Complete the sentences using a word from the vocabulary list on page 1. You may need to change the word form.

1. We have had no _____ for two months. The land is very dry.
2. The destruction from the earthquake was _____.
3. Governments are trying to _____ the amount of industrial pollution.
4. If there is another serious _____ in Africa, many people will die.
5. It is _____ for everyone to recycle in order to cut down on pollution.

Discuss

Work with a partner or in small groups. Discuss the following questions.

1. Why do you think Russia finally agreed to sign the Kyoto Protocol?
2. Do you think governments should do more to prevent industries from polluting the environment?
3. If companies are not forced by law to reduce pollution and harmful emissions, do you think they will do so voluntarily?
4. Why do you think the United States and Australia refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol?
5. What new technological developments are helping to reduce pollution?

Debate

Below are two topics to debate in small groups or pairs. Your teacher will tell you if you will be debating for or against the idea. You will have ten minutes to prepare your arguments.

TOPIC #1

To reduce automobile pollution, governments should substantially increase taxes on cars that are not energy efficient.

TOPIC #2

Governments should increase environmental restrictions on industry, even if this leads to increased unemployment.

Write

Choose one of the questions from the Discuss section above. Then write a paragraph in your notebook stating your own opinion.

Useful Expressions and Transitions for Debating

Agreeing and Disagreeing

- That doesn't take away from the fact that...
- That's beside the point.
- With all due respect...
- I agree with you there.
- I agree with ---- (name).
- I see your point, but...
- That may be true, but...
- We're going to have to agree to disagree.
- I get/see where you're coming from, but...
- I'm afraid I disagree entirely.
- I'm afraid I'd have to disagree.
- I agree to some extent, but...
- I disagree with you there.
- Pardon me for disagreeing, but...

Interrupting / Asking to Contribute

- I hate to interrupt, but...
- If I may come in here...
- I'd like to add something.
- Would you like to contribute something?
- I'd like to raise a point.
- If I could speak for a moment...
- I'd like to cut in here.
- You haven't answered my question.

Persuading

- Can you see where I'm coming from?
- I challenge you to give this a try/chance.
- I want you to see it my way.
- Put yourself in my shoes.
- Am I getting through to you?

Expressing an Opinion

- In my honest opinion...
- It is my belief that...
- From my experience...
- From where I look at it...
- From my point of view...

Clarifying / Rephrasing

- Let's be clear here...
- I think you misunderstood what I said.
- What I said was... (repeat a point that was misunderstood or confused)
- What I meant to say was... (rephrase something in a way that is clearer)
- In other words...
- What I was trying to say before I was interrupted is that...

Summarizing / Concluding

- So let me get this straight. You think...
- To conclude...
- I'd just like to summarize by saying...
- Finally, I'd like to reiterate that...
- It's time to take stock of what we've heard today.
- Both sides have some valid points.
- The stronger argument/team today is...