



THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMANE EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 260
SURRY, MAINE 04684
207.667.1025
info@HumaneEducation.org
www.HumaneEducation.org

SPACESHIP EARTH

Grades: 7 and up

Time: 60 minutes (or in essay form)

Materials: Two scenarios (see below); questions to encourage discussion (see below)

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, Urban Planning, Geography, History, Health, and Language Arts

1. Divide the classroom into two groups; give one group scenario A, and the other scenario B. Have them develop a comprehensive plan in response to their scenario, using the questions as a guide:

Scenario A: The year is ____ (some future date). In ____ (some past date), the world used up all remaining fossil fuels. Electricity produced from fossil fuels is no longer available. People have not been able to use their appliances for tasks such as cooking food or heating their homes. Gasoline-powered vehicles are a thing of the past. For several years there have been riots and escalating crime due to panic and the shortage of food and other supplies. Thousands of people have died from lack of health care, and businesses have collapsed. Now people in your town are looking to you to lead them in figuring out how to successfully survive (and thrive) under these new conditions.

- What is your first priority? What actions will you take in the next 6 months?
- How will people be sheltered?
- Where will you get food -- now, and years from now?
- Where will you get clean water?
- How will you get from one destination to another?
- How will you dispose of your waste?
- What new laws should be established? Which current laws should be abolished?
- What leadership roles need to be assigned and how will you assign them?
- How will children be cared for and educated?
- How will you deal with the sick or dying? With the dead?
- How will you handle those who are emotionally traumatized?
- How will you handle people who commit crimes?
- What natural resources are available to use? How will you maintain those resources sustainably?
- What will the relationship be between humans and nonhuman animals?
- What other problems/issues will you need to address?

Scenario B: You are the mayor of a small town. A leading panel of scientists has informed you that the world will use up all fossil fuels within the next five years. After that, everything that relies on fossil fuels (electricity, heat, gas-powered vehicles, etc.) will cease to be available. You must prepare your town for this eventuality.

- What are your first steps in handling this crisis?
- What goals will you need to achieve in the next five years?
- How will you inform the people in your town about this crisis, without causing panic?
- How will you change your town's lifestyle? Will it be immediate or gradual?
- What kind of cooperative efforts might you establish with surrounding areas?
- How will your town utilize natural resources sustainably?
- When it gets closer to the five year mark, what will you do with people's appliances, cars, and machines?
- How will you prepare people to supply themselves with shelter, clean water, and food?
- What will people who work in industries that rely on fossil fuels do for work?
- How will you handle transportation issues?
- How will you dispose of waste?
- How will you handle sickness, disease and injury?
- How will you handle any uprisings against your preparations? Will there be increased crime?
- How will you educate and protect your children?
- How will you prevent exploitation of others (people, animals, etc.)?

2. Have the two groups share their results.

3. Hold a discussion around whether or not students feel these scenarios are a real possibility. How can we all take actions in our lives to do the most good and the least harm and prevent further destruction to the planet? What life skills would they like to have that would help them and their families in a situation of planetary crisis?

Activity by Ashley Wightman (M.Ed. Student)