

## APES Summer Assignment 2025-2026

Ms. Nolte

Welcome to APES! I am so excited to get to know each of you and spend the next school year with you!!! AP Environmental Science is designed to cover material that would traditionally be covered in a two-semester college-level introductory environmental science course. In order to be successful, you will need to put in both time and effort. This class is not about simply memorizing information, but you will be asked to think critically, read, and write. We will also do a little bit of math and you will use this information to formulate your own ideas about the living world and the human impact on it over the years. To do well in the class, you need to ask lots of questions and think about what you are learning. Laboratory exercises will be an integral part of the course.

The purpose of the summer assignment is to introduce you to some of the major themes that will be covered in AP Environmental Science. We will draw upon the concepts presented here throughout the year, so it is important that you complete this work before school begins. The more you engage with this material over summer, the more prepared you will be for the class. I look forward to working with you next year! If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [anolte@huffmanisd.net](mailto:anolte@huffmanisd.net).

Your summer assignment has 2 components - the first component (email) will need to be emailed to my school email address before school begins – [anolte@huffmanisd.net](mailto:anolte@huffmanisd.net) and the second component will be submitted by the end of the first week of school. *The second part will also be submitted on Canvas through Turnitin, so your own independent work is expected, and plagiarism will result in a ZERO.* The second part does NOT require using any outside sources – only your main source, the movie. Do not use the Internet for this assignment, except to access the documentaries and/or film to watch. Although this part of the Summer Assignment is not due until the end of the first week of school, I would highly suggest you complete it prior to school starting as you may feel overwhelmed trying to complete it during the school week. I would also encourage you to write your summary in Google Doc so it will save your progress as you go.

### PART 1: Email

I would like to know a little more about you, so your first portion of the summer assignment is to send me an email! Some of you, I already know, but I would like to take this opportunity to get to know you better! Email the questions with the answers BEFORE the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL! Also, please include the question number with each response.

1. What is your full name (and nickname if you go by one)?
2. What do you like to do (hobbies, interests, etc.)?
3. Why are you taking AP Environmental Science? What do you hope to gain?
4. What are your personal strengths when it comes to learning new material? How do you learn best?
5. What causes you to struggle in a course? How do you address that challenge?
6. What is the most effective way for you to prepare for a test?

7. How many AP classes have you taken so far? How many have you passed with a 3 or higher? How many AP classes are you taking this year (please list)?
8. What have you heard about APES?
9. How do you feel about working in groups? Are you more of a leader or a follower? What are your thoughts on group projects?
10. What do you consider a good grade / bad grade in an AP course? How should the grading guidelines and expectations differ from pre-AP/advanced courses?
11. Name an interesting fact about yourself!
12. Give me three academic goals for this year – they don't have to involve just this class.
13. Where are you thinking about doing after graduation – work, military, school? Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
14. What are you most looking forward to in AP Environmental Science this year?
15. Please take this question to tell me anything you would like me to know about health issues, seating, learning needs, job expectations or responsibilities outside of school, etc. If there is anything I can do to help you achieve your goals, I want to be able to do that.

## PART 2: WATCH & WRITE

Watch ONE environmental documentary from the list of nine options below. Full descriptions and links are below. The movies fall into three general categories that will be fundamental in our studies this year: Food, Pollution, and Global Change. I would encourage you to watch at least one trailer from each category. Choose which movie interests you, grab a snack, and enjoy! You will write a paper (see below) on this documentary so take notes where you see fit. Many of the documentaries can be found on YouTube or many streaming networks.

Food, Pollution, & Global Change Documentaries:

- Cowspiracy
- A Plastic Ocean
- Before the Flood
- Food, Inc.
- Plastic Paradise
- Chasing Coral
- GMO OMG
- The True Cost
- Racing Extinction

Compose a paper (~2 typed pages, double-spaced) on the movie you chose that includes a Summary, Environmental Issue, and Anecdotes. Label each part of your paper.

- **Part I - Summary:** Summarize the environmental documentary you watched. Your summary should also include your own personal reflection and opinion of the film.

- **Part II - Environmental Issue**: Describe, with detail, one environmental issue discussed in the movie. Does the film do a good job presenting the issue? Is there a viable solution for the issue presented in the movie? If not, explain why you think a solution was not presented and suggest a possible solution based on what you learned while watching.
- **Part III – Anecdotes**: Documentaries frequently use anecdotes or a story to illuminate a major point, and these can be powerfully illustrative. Describe one story from the movie that you would share if you were discussing this movie with friends. Explain why you feel this example best illustrates or effectively communicates what the documentary is trying to say.

## FILM OPTIONS

You only need to watch ONE movie from the list of nine options. Of course, you are welcome to watch the others if you are interested and have the time. Below are the descriptions (adapted from various internet sources) to help you decide. At the beginning of the year we will meet in groups to discuss the Documentaries.

*Theme: FOOD*

**Cowspiracy** (2014, 1 hr 31 min) Trailer: <http://www.cowspiracy.com>

Synopsis: Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret is a groundbreaking environmental documentary following intrepid filmmaker Kip Andersen as he uncovers the most destructive industry facing the planet today – and investigates why the world’s leading environmental organizations are too afraid to talk about it. Animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation, water consumption and pollution, is responsible for more greenhouse gasses than the transportation industry, and is a primary driver of rainforest destruction, species extinction, habitat loss, topsoil erosion, ocean “dead zones,” and virtually every other environmental ill. Yet it goes on, almost entirely unchallenged.

**Food, Inc.** (2008; 94 minutes) Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rjh5aZKgtSY>

Synopsis: In Food, Inc., filmmaker Robert Kenner lifts the veil on our nation’s food industry, exposing the highly mechanized underbelly that has been hidden from the American consumer with the consent of our government’s regulatory agencies, USDA and FDA. Our nation’s food supply is now controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihood of the American farmer, the safety of workers and our own environment. We have bigger-breasted chickens, the perfect pork chop, herbicide-resistant soybean seeds, even tomatoes that won’t go bad, but we also have new strains of E. coli— the harmful bacteria that causes illness for an estimated 73,000 Americans annually. We are riddled with widespread obesity, particularly among children, and an epidemic level of diabetes among adults.

**GMO OMG** (2013, 85 minutes) Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNyB2fNn8kQ>

Synopsis: Today in the United States, by the simple acts of feeding ourselves, we are unwittingly

participating in the largest experiment ever conducted on human beings. Each of us unknowingly consumes genetically engineered food on a daily basis. The risks and effects to our health and the environment are largely unknown. Yet more and more studies are being conducted around the world, which only provide even more reason for concern. We are the oblivious guinea pigs for wide-scale experimentation of modern biotechnology. GMO OMG tells the story of a father's discovery of GMOs in relation to his 3 young children and the world around him. We still have time to heal the planet, feed the world, and live sustainably. But we have to start now!

*Theme: POLLUTION*

**A Plastic Ocean** (2013, 1 hr 42 min) Trailer: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5203824/>

Synopsis: A PLASTIC OCEAN begins when journalist Craig Leeson, searching for the elusive blue whale, discovers plastic waste in what should be a pristine ocean. In this adventure documentary, Craig teams up with free diver Tanya Streeter and an international team of scientists and researchers, and they travel to twenty locations around the world over the next four years to explore the fragile state of our oceans, uncover alarming truths about plastic pollution, and reveal working solutions that can be put into immediate effect.

**Plastic Paradise** (2013, 57 min) Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90dTRjZioi8>

Synopsis: Every single piece of plastic that has ever been created since the 19th century is still somewhere on our planet. So if it never goes away, where does it go? Thousands of miles away from civilization, Midway Atoll is in one of the most remote places on earth. And yet it's become ground zero for The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, siphoning plastics from three distant continents. In this independent documentary film, journalist/filmmaker Angela Sun travels on a personal journey of discovery to uncover this mysterious phenomenon. Along the way she meets scientists, researchers, influencers, and volunteers who shed light on the effects of our rabid plastic consumption and learns the problem is more insidious than we could have ever imagined. <http://plasticparadisemovie.com>

**The True Cost** (2015, 1 hr 32 min) Trailer: <https://truecostmovie.com>

Synopsis: This is a story about clothing. It's about the clothes we wear, the people who make them, and the impact the industry is having on our world. The price of clothing has been decreasing for decades, while the human and environmental costs have grown dramatically. The True Cost is a groundbreaking documentary film that pulls back the curtain on the untold story and asks us to consider, who really pays the price for our clothing? Filmed in countries all over the world, from the brightest runways to the darkest slums, and featuring interviews with the world's leading influencers including Stella McCartney, Livia Firth and Vandana Shiva, The True Cost is an unprecedented project that invites us on an eye opening journey around the world and into the lives of the many people and places behind our clothes.

*Theme: GLOBAL CHANGE*

**Before the Flood** (2016, 1 hr 36 min) Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9xFFyUOpXo>

Synopsis: Before the Flood, presented by National Geographic, features Leonardo DiCaprio on a journey as a United Nations Messenger of Peace, traveling to five continents and the Arctic to witness climate change firsthand. He goes on expeditions with scientists uncovering the reality of climate change and meets with political leaders fighting against inaction. He also discovers a calculated disinformation campaign orchestrated by powerful special interests working to confuse the public about the urgency of the growing climate crisis. With unprecedented access to thought leaders around the world, DiCaprio searches for hope in a rising tide of catastrophic news. Full movie on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbEnOYtsXHA>

**Chasing Coral** (2017, 1 hr 33 min) Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6fHA9R2cKI>

Synopsis: Coral reefs around the world are vanishing at an unprecedented rate. A team of divers, photographers and scientists set out on a thrilling ocean adventure to discover why and to reveal the underwater mystery to the world. Available on Netflix

**Racing Extinction** (2015, 1 hr 34 min) Trailer: <https://racingextinction.com/film/>

Synopsis: A documentary that follows undercover activists trying to stave off a man-made mass extinction. Utilizing state-of-the-art equipment, Oscar-winner Louie Psihoyos (The Cove) assembles a team of artists and activists intent on showing the world never-before seen images that expose issues of endangered species and mass extinction. Whether infiltrating notorious black markets with guerrilla style tactics or exploring the scientific causes affecting changes to the environment, Racing Extinction will change the way we see the world and our role within it. Full movie on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGGBGcjdjXA>

I hope that you all gain an insightful glimpse into the world of environmental science and gain a better understanding of what to expect this school year. I have had such an amazing time teaching AP Environmental Science this last year and I cannot wait to do it again with all of you! If you already know me, you know that I love having fun with what we do in class. I hope that you all learn to love this science just as much as I do! Please do not let this summer assignment intimidate you, it is supposed to be more entertaining and less daunting – just give yourself enough time to complete it ;)! PS - I did this exact summer assignment when I took this class in high school lol! Anywayssss, I wish you all the best summer ever and I cannot wait to see you in August !!!

