

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Climate Change & Energy Activity

FINDING CLIMATE'S FINGERPRINTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

WEATHER is the face of climate. Look out the nearest window to look it in the eye. How has the climate shaped what you see? What do the plant life, the types of buildings, the weather right now, the vehicles that you see, and the clothes people wear tell you about the climate?

Climate's fingerprints likely cover much of the view out your window. Animals, plants, people, and infrastructure are all adapted to the climate. Any time of year, the area around Syracuse, New York looks very different from the area around San Diego, CA. It doesn't need to be a winter day to be able to tell that a place probably gets below freezing in the winter. Even if it's raining, you might be able to identify a place that doesn't get much rain. What are climate's telltale signs?

“Weather tells you what clothes to wear & climate tells you what clothes to own.”*

A simple definition of climate is the weather averaged over at least 30 years. Climate influences what kinds of plants and animals will survive in an environment, the kinds of buildings people live and work in, how buildings are heated and cooled, the kinds of cars people drive, and more.



CRITICAL THINKING

? What clues in these photos tell you that these places differ in their climates, even though the weather on the day the photos were taken may have been fairly similar?

GUESSING GAME

Where in the United States do you think photos A and B were taken? Answers on the back of this page.

Now, look out a window or go outside. Answer the questions below.

BACKYARD CLIMATES

? List three things you see in your environment that are indicators of your climate, and describe what they tell you about your climate.

SUGGESTIONS: These are some features of your environment that could indicate something about climate and that you might look for.

- WILD PLANTS: TYPES, AND HOW MUCH OF THE GROUND THEY COVER
- LOCAL FOOD
- WILD ANIMALS
- SIGNS OF SEASONALITY (FOR EXAMPLE, CHANGING LEAF COLOR)
- CLOTHING AND SHOES THAT PEOPLE WEAR
- BODIES OF WATER
- SOIL COLOR
- TYPES OF BUILDINGS (FOR EXAMPLE, ARE BUILDING STAIRS AND CORRIDORS INSIDE OR OUTSIDE?)
- HEATING OR COOLING SYSTEMS
- ROAD EQUIPMENT (SNOW PLOWS, ROAD SALT, ETC.)
- PRESENCE OF LARGE AREAS OF SAND

FEATURE IN THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT DOES THIS FEATURE INDICATE ABOUT MY CLIMATE?

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Guess where these photos were taken. Hint: All are in the United States. Answers are below.



Photo: Venture Minimalists (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Photo: Alan Matsuoka



Photo: David Mark



Photo: Frank Ravizza

GUESSING GAME: A. A forest and lake near Buffalo, NY. **B.** Desert near Phoenix, AZ. **C.** Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. **D.** Snoqualmie Falls, near Seattle, WA.

*Haas, D., 2017, Why Teach about Climate Change? Pages 1–8, in: Zabel, I. H. H., D. Duggan-Haas, and R. M. Ross (eds.), 2017, The Teacher-Friendly Guide to Climate Change. Paleontological Research Institution, Ithaca, New York.