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Congaree Sings

The Climate Change Song

By David C. Shelley and Chris Houston

This song is intended as a broad overview / summary of climate change for high school students and adults. This was originally written to be sung to the tune of "Wildwood Flower," an old-time / Southern Appalachian fiddle tune. The entire thing is probably too long and repetitive and repetitive when sung all at once, but it is divided into six parts with three verses each so that folks can select lines or sections as appropriate. The parts include (I) Definitions, (II) Effects, (III) Science, (IV) So Now What?, (V) Start Small, and (VI) Think Big. Apostrophes precede the syllable of the first strong downbeat of each line. A few lines also require triplets to maintain the cadence. Folks may easily adapt the text to other tunes. Please feel free to share any adaptations or performances with david_shelley@nps.gov.

CHORUS

**Climate 'change is real. It's happening around the world today.
Its ef'fects are measured, seen and felt in many different ways.
And no 'matter what we'd like to wish, pretend, or just ignore,
We've got 'lots to learn and do – now hey that's what this song is for.**

Part I: Definitions

Verse 1: So we've 'all heard of climate change, but what now does that mean?
Perhaps ex'plaining terms would be a place to start so it should seem.
You see now 'climate is not weather. Do you know the difference yet?
Mark Twain said, "'Climate is what you expect, and weathers what you get."

Verse 2: Weather 'does describe the scene outside any time of day or night.
Is it 'sunny, cloudy, windy, raining, hot, cold or just right?
Weather 'changes day and night and from each season to the next.
But the 'climate is the natural range of change that you expect.

Verse 3: The limits 'of the climate are outlined by weather extremes,
Things like 'heat waves, cold snaps, droughts and storms of all varieties.
Well, one 'heat wave, by itself, it doesn't mean a thing, my friend.
But now 'nine heat waves in ten years sure do make a climate trend. **CHORUS**

Part II: Effects

Verse 4: Changing 'climate means life's rhythms beat quite unpredictably.
If living 'things can't cope, adapt, or move, then they will die, you see.
So now the 'plants don't know just when to grow green leaves or flowers blue,
And ani'mals must struggle to find new homes and food and water too.

Verse 5: Living 'things don't just adjust to climate change all by themselves.
So the 'landscape, soil, and water cycle must adjust as well.
Because the 'climate drives how rivers rise to flow and shape the ground,
And how 'glaciers melt and sea level does rise the world around.

Verse 6: Climate 'change does also impact humans and society
How our 'populations find resources and security
Public 'health, globalization, infrastructure, public lands,
Poverty, com'merce, and energy and are some issues at hand. **CHORUS**

Part III: Science

Verse 7: Scien'tists who study this methodically use observations –
Satel'lites, tree heights, ships logs, ice cores, bird flights, deforestation...
Also 'coal mine yields and soybean fields, plankton and models, too...
And 'then after they analyze, their work gets peer reviewed.

Verse 8: Now it's 'true that through the Eons climate changes naturally.
But many 'lines of scientific evidence do all agree,
And the 'science clearly shows the recent scope and rate of change
Are nothing 'like Earth has seen before and well beyond the normal range.

Verse 9: This recent 'climate change is caused by burning fossil fuels, yes.
Burning 'gas and oil and coal does make our atmosphere a mess.
Greenhouse 'gasses, largely CO₂, are building up in place.
Trapping 'heat from sun's rays that once was reflected back to space. **CHORUS**

Part IV: So Now What?

Verse 10: Well in 'some ways ain't it great that Mother Nature's not to blame
If we were 'powerless, then all this mess would be a different game.
But if we 'are to blame, then we can change, and act strong in defiance –
Through mitig'ation, adaptation, communication, and good science.

Verse 11: Good science 'means we must support and use good research all around
Data'sets, analysis, and models peer-reviewed and sound
Communi'cation means engaging folks takes thought and work and care
To inform and 'inspire long-term choices that are just and fair

Verse 12: Adap'tation means that for some changes, we must plan to cope
Miti'gation means we reduce fossil fuels around the globe
If climate 'change was sinusitis, if not something more exotic
Adaptation's 'rest and Tylenol, mitigation's the antibiotic. **CHORUS**

Part V: Start Small

Verse 13: Well this 'all may seem quite daunting, and in some ways that is true.
But we've 'got to hope we've still got time to change the things we do.
Things like 'how we choose to use our water, stuff, and energy,
And think a'bout all that we waste and what we throw away, you see.

Verse 14: So main'tain your car, don't drive to far, consolidate your trips.
Weather'ize your house, adjust your thermostat, and fix your drips.
Insu'late your water heater and do turn it down a bit.
Expand the 'margins and use both sides of the paper when you print.

Verse 15: Use e'lectricity efficiently, and unplug things when you're done.
Fill the 'washing machine and dishwasher quite full before they're run.
Think on 'what you buy and where it's from and how it's boxed or wrapped.
To re'duce your trash re-use, recycle, and compost your scraps. **CHORUS**

Part VI: Think Big

Verse 16: Now it's 'true these little things we do add right up from the start
To make a 'total whole that's bigger than the sum of all the parts
But we 'can't just stop...[pause]...right there and grow complacent and lazy
We must think 'bigger yet and get engaged in civics, now, you see.

Verse 17: Find out a'bout your rights and options to contribute and comment
For plans and 'meetings, policy decisions, votes, and documents.
So our long-term health and wealth is truly sustainable, you see,
Through good climate science and climate accountability.

Verse 18: So get out'side, engage yourself, your work, voice, heart, mind, time and hands
Take good 'care of your local community, the people and the land
Doing 'this will cultivate true hope and really show your brilliance
Because 'healthy land and people have true climate change resilience **CHORUS**