

When the earth speaks against us: environmental ethics in Islam

YAOQEEEN™
INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH





Authors

Usman Asrar
Rania Abuisnaine
Sadaf Ahmed
Isra Rafiq
Rozena Raja



Copyright © 2020, YAQEEN INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC RESEARCH

No part of the content of this document may be reproduced in any form or by any means, including electronic storage, reproduction, execution, or transmission without the prior written permission of YAQEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH.

PROPRIETARY NOTICE

This document contains information that is proprietary and confidential to YAQEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH. Any reproduction, disclosure, or other use of this document is expressly prohibited except as YAQEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH may authorize in writing.

CONTACT INFORMATION

YAQEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH
7750 N. MacArthur, Suite 120237, Irving, TX 75063 | info@yaqeeninstitute.org



Contents

Unit overview and objectives **4**

- Unit overview
- Learning objectives
- Content standards

Read before you teach **7**

- Yaqeen publication
 - Additional videos, infographics, etc.
- General FAQs

Instructions and activities

Lesson 1 | The Qur'an's attitude toward the environment **9**

Lesson 2 | Environmental ethics through the big ecological lens **19**

Lesson 3 | Prophetic instruction and personal ethics **27**

References **35**

Student survey **39**



Overview and objectives

The following unit is based on the Yaqeen publication, *“When the Earth Speaks Against Us: Environmental Ethics in Islam.”*

Overview

Prior to the modern environmental crisis, the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ indicated the possibility of human activity altering the physical world. For many of the inhabitants of the modern world, this realization has dawned only recently within the last century or so through empirical study of human activity and environmental change. What we know as 'environmentalism' today is a response that does not necessarily share the same principles and attitudes toward the environment as the Islamic revelation. Likewise, what we know about and what we feel when we hear that term today, as modern humans, is likely informed more by popular discourses and debates than it is by revelation. But, as Muslims, it is revelation that provides a divine account of the reality of things and serves as ultimate guidance connecting this life with the hereafter. This curriculum unit sets out to explore and conceptualize the environment and environmental ethics within a framework based on Qur'anic discourse.

The first lesson begins by looking at how the Qur'an speaks of the environment. When perusing the Qur'an, three distinct themes become clear:

① The Qur'an refers to the environment as a sign (*ayah*) to contemplate and through this contemplation achieve faith and gratitude.

② Allah has subjugated (سَخَّرَ) the environment in a manner that permits humans control over it.

③ The environment is something that has been balanced and ordered by Allah, but can be corrupted by humans. Allah informs us that He has set this balance and warns us from transgressing and disrupting it.

Though the environment has been subjugated for our use and benefit, we are reminded to not exceed the moral limits placed on us whereby our actions may actually constitute corrupting the earth.

Qur'anic verses suggest that human action is both capable of perpetuating and preventing corruption on land and sea—implying an ethical responsibility. This ethical responsibility is further enshrined in other verses in which Allah exclaims that He has placed Man as a steward (*khalifa*) on the earth.

After establishing the Qur'an's attitude toward the environment, the second lesson looks at environmental ethics from a macro level. The Qur'anic language, in fact, invokes macro-phenomena like the subjugation of celestial bodies, setting a natural and cosmic balance, and corrupting the earth. This “30-thousand-foot perspective” (or what some call, “God’s eye-view”) helps us focus on the macro-changes and gives us the big picture of how human actions are capable of corrupting the earth and upsetting the balance. While there is some autonomy and personal choice as to how and what products we consume (i.e., a personal ethic towards the environment), in many ways, our choices are limited and guided according to the dynamics of an ecosystem dominated by the interests of powerful political and economic actors and forces. In this lesson we explore our relationship with the environment through a big ecological lens and examine the role of some of the most powerful and impactful actors on the environment, their interests, the global economic system, and some underlying ideologies, policies,





choices, and actions that affect the ecological balance of our world.

In the final lesson plan, we move the discourse on environmental ethics from the macro to the micro. Just as developed countries and corporations need to change their ways to rectify the environmental crisis, so do our personal habits and psychology. While companies and governments have ways to incentivize and entice us to spend more, we can reassert our personal autonomy by heeding prophetic instruction and recognizing the wisdom and value of the Prophet's individual prescriptions. If we are capable of developing a mindset and attitude based on prophetic instruction we will not only be doing our individual part to help the environment but help force the existing ecosystem to respond to a new dynamic informed by divine revelation and, enjoy living a lifestyle sanctioned by Allah.

Learning objectives

Towards the completion of this unit, students should be able to:

- ① Recall some of the ways in which the Qur'an and Sunnah speak of the environment, especially: ① as a sign to contemplate and achieve faith and gratitude; ② as an object made subservient to humans so that humans may derive utility and enjoyment; ③ as something that is balanced and ordered by Allah and for which He makes humans morally responsible to preserve the balance and warns us from corrupting it. *(cognitive)*
- ② Appreciate and explain that while Allah has subjected the celestial bodies (e.g. the sun, moon, stars, skies) and the Earth, and that which they contain, for our utility and interests, He has made human beings responsible for the care and well-being of these environments. *(cognitive & affective)*
- ③ Understand the importance of exploring the role and the impacts of different entities (e.g. government, corporate), interests (e.g. political, economic), and the economic system (policies, choices, actions) with the ecological balance of the world. *(cognitive)*

TEACHER'S NOTE

The **cognitive** or "thinking" domain refers to ways in which we acquire, process, and use knowledge.

The **affective** or "valuing" domain refers to our attitudes, values, and emotions.

- ④ Recall and apply with positive regard at least three practical instructions of the Prophet as they relate to how Muslims should treat the environment. *(cognitive & affective)*
- ⑤ Feel inclined to consider the environmental impact of their choices and actions. *(affective)*

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.C

Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.A

Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings),



graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Key concepts & vocabulary

Khalīfa

(p. *khulafāʾ*) a steward or leader responsible for the care and preservation of something

Taskhīr

(v. *sakhkhara*) to subject something to the benefit of something else

Transgression

acts that go against a law or rule

Anthropocene

the era of geological time during which human activity is considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate, and ecology of the earth (1964-present)

Corporate lobbying

the act of attempting to influence the actions, policies, and/or decisions of elected government officials using many forms of persuasion

Manufactured demand

an effective marketing technique employed by corporations to persuade consumers to purchase material goods without necessity

Planned obsolescence

a policy in industrial design/economics of producing consumer goods that rapidly become obsolete and so require replacing; this is achieved by frequent changes in design, termination of the supply of spare parts, and the use of nondurable material

Hyper-consumption

an excessive consumption of goods, and the pressure to consume those goods through social expectations and advertisements



Read before you teach

Yaqeen publication



This curriculum unit is based on Afsan Redwan's Yaqeen publication, "When the Earth Speaks Against Us: Environmental Ethics in Islam." In order to gain the full benefits of the lesson plans, teachers are encouraged to read the publication in its entirety. Students are encouraged to read it as well.

ANIMATED VIDEO

This publication includes an animated video that summarizes the publication.



Student survey

After teaching this curriculum unit, please encourage all of your students to fill out our survey to help us enhance our curriculum and provide students with the best learning experience. At the end of this unit, we've provided a page with a QR code directly linking to the survey. Please print the page and make it available to your students. Alternatively, you may display the code on a projector or screen. Students simply need to scan the code through their smartphone cameras to access the survey. You can also provide direct access to the survey through the following [link](#).



General FAQs

How can I navigate a tough discussion?

Expect varying understandings and interpretations of religious content. To offset contestations,

mention varying points beforehand and engage students in the strengths and weaknesses of each argument.

How do I steer tangents?

Express concern and acknowledge the feelings of those who are speaking and the value in



everyone's contributions. Do not assume any student has malicious intent in their comments or tangents, and work towards a solution. Be aware of the tendency to have a "scapegoat" in the group (i.e., a student who questions a lot). Be mindful not to treat them like a black sheep and respect their journey. Use their questions to push the thinking of everyone in the group.

How do I engage a quiet group?

It is important to understand your students and employ engagement strategies to help capture their attention. Here are some general tips that might help:

- Begin the class by mentioning any relevant anecdotes or current events to prompt student interest.
- If time permits, start the discussion with an icebreaker to prompt student conversation.
- Allow students to develop comfort in silence by giving them at least ten seconds to reflect on the question/topic before responding, and rephrase if necessary.
- Employ the think-pair-share strategy in which students are allowed time to process their thoughts and formulate a response independently and with a partner before sharing with a larger group.

How do I respond to a question that I don't know the answer to?

Recognize that there are various types of questions. Many questions are open to individual reflection, and can be answered through personal reflection, discussion and/or engaging the perspectives of others. Other questions can be technical in nature and require specialized knowledge in a subject (e.g., *fiqh* questions). Some questions tie back to the questioner's personal life journey and require individual counseling. Finally, some questions do

not have a clear-cut answer and can serve as a reminder for how limited our knowledge is as humans.

By knowing how to categorize the type of question, you will know how to appropriately respond and have a better sense of when to say, "I do not know, but I can help us find out." Within and beyond Yaqeen, there are many resources to help you facilitate the questioner's journey toward an answer.





Lesson plan 1

The Qur'an's attitude toward the environment

Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

Lesson overview

The first lesson plan in this unit focuses on how the Qur'an speaks of the environment. We begin with the Qur'anic discourse on the environment since it is likely that what we know about and what we feel when we hear that term today is informed by popular discourses and debates, not so much revelation. To listen to the Qur'an is to make a conscious effort at recognizing the possibility that our own views and values may represent static that interferes with the reception of the Divine voice. While modern discourse primarily uses the concept of "environment" to refer to the earth and its atmosphere, the Qur'an seems to employ a broader notion. In fact, the 'environment' in the Qur'an includes the land, sea, winds, sky of the earth (2:164), the sun, moon, stars, and heavens (7:54). The Qur'an refers to these 'environments,' first and foremost, as creations (*khalq*). So while the earth and its atmosphere represent the environment in modern discourses, the Qur'an speaks of a more expansive order that Allah has created and tied to human ethics.

Listening to the Qur'an does not necessarily mean we should or can set aside our own views and interests. It is reasonable that a person passionate about environmental causes will gravitate towards meanings of verses that speak about the natural world. Many of these verses can carry multiple meanings and to interpret them in a manner that relates to modern concerns and notions about the environment is not a tenuous eisegetical exercise but a scriptural interpretive urging cohering well with the plain meaning of the text itself.

When perusing the Qur'an, three distinct themes become clear:

- ❶ The Qur'an refers to the environment as a sign (*ayah*) to contemplate and by way of contemplation achieve faith and gratitude
- ❷ The environment has been subjected to patterns by God and subjugated for our benefit
- ❸ The environment has been balanced and ordered by God and mankind is charged with an ethical responsibility to refrain from causing corruption upon the earth and preserving the balance while deriving utility from it.

In this lesson, students will explore the meanings of verses in the Qur'an related to the environment and the three major themes identified herein. By centering their understanding of the environment on the Qur'an, students can re-conceptualize their beliefs and attitudes and connect it with the words of God that ultimately expands how we see our relationship with the environment as part of a divine order.

Essential questions

- What do we learn about the term "environment" through Revelation?

Learning objectives

Towards the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- ❶ Recall some of the ways in which the Qur'an speaks of the environment, especially: 1) as a sign to



contemplate and achieve faith and gratitude; 2) as an object made subservient to humans so that humans may derive utility and enjoyment; 3) as something that is balanced and ordered by Allah and for which He makes humans morally responsible to preserve the balance and warns us from corrupting it.

(cognitive)

② Appreciate and explain that while Allah has subjected the celestial bodies (e.g., the sun moon, stars, skies) and the Earth, and that which they contain for our utility and interests, He has made human beings responsible for the care and well-being of these environments. *(cognitive & affective)*

Key vocabulary

Khalīfa

(p. *khulafāʾ*) a steward or leader responsible for the care and preservation of something

Taskhīr

(v. *sakhkhara*) to subject something to the benefit of something else

Transgressions

acts that go against a law or rule



Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 60 min

Supplies and equipment

- Lesson plan 1 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/wifi access for videos and presentation
- Printouts of 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 for each student
- Highlighters (one per student)
- Dry erase or chalkboard

Opening activity (5-7 min)

Slide 1

1. Open Lesson plan 1 presentation and go to slide one.
2. After passing out a copy of **1.1 “The Environment”**, ask a student to read the text on the slide aloud: “Environment: What comes to mind when you hear this word? What is your understanding of this word as it is commonly used today?”
3. Instruct students to think silently about these questions and to record their thoughts on **1.1**. If some students finish early, they may record their questions and ideas for “What I want to know.”
4. After a few minutes have passed, call on a handful of students to share their notes with the whole class.
5. Engage students in their responses by asking them to define “environment” (i.e., what is included in the term) and recall specific ways this term is invoked in popular modern discourse. Record their responses on the board.

Teacher takeaway: The purpose of these questions is to prompt students to explore their feelings and preconceived beliefs around the term “environment.” Allow students to share their thoughts freely and

without judgment. Most likely, our understanding of the word “environment” is influenced by popular modern discourse and debates, not revelation. What we consume of news/social media often contributes to the views and values we form around this term.

Learning activity (50-60 min)

Slides 2-3

1. Open slide two. Read the question aloud: “Does the Qur’an speak about the environment?” Call on students to share their reflections.

Teacher takeaway: The purpose of this question is to gauge students’ prior knowledge as to whether or not they believe the Qur’an speaks about the environment. Some students may say yes, while others may say no. It is possible that some students say no because they are simply unfamiliar with the meanings of the Qur’an, while others may say no because they believe that the Qur’an does not speak about the environment in the manner in which it is spoken about in popular modern discourse.

2. Before proceeding to slide three, pose the follow-up question: “How does the Qur’an speak about the environment?”

Teacher takeaway: As humans, our discourse about the environment has evolved throughout the decades. Our definition of the environment and what it encompasses, our understanding of its purpose, and our opinions about our conduct toward it are not fixed; rather, groups of people across time and space continue to develop their own views and values toward the environment and are often influenced by many societal factors. While the term has grown increasingly popular today, we should consider how the Qur’an speaks about the environment and be conscious that our preconceived views and values about the term may interfere with our reception of the Divine voice.



At the same time, it is important to remind students that listening to the Qur'anic attitude toward this topic does not necessarily mean that we dismiss our own personal views about the environment. In fact, as we will see later, many of the verses we consider in this lesson can be interpreted in a manner that relates to modern concerns toward the environment; such interpretations are not far-fetched but in fact cohere well with the plain meaning of the text itself. The objective of this lesson is to examine some of the ways in which the Qur'an speaks about the environment.

3. Proceed to slide three and pass out a copy of **1.2 “Qur'anic verses on the environment”** and a highlighter to each student.

4. Inform students that, in groups and then as a whole class, they are going to study a collection of Qur'anic *ayat* and focus on the words, imagery, and ideas illustrated therein. Then, they will identify distinct themes and/or messages they believe are being communicated.

5. To set up this activity, divide the class into three groups. Assign the groups “Part 1, “Part 2,” or “Part 3.”

6. Note that each part on **1.2** begins with the question, “What are these *ayat* telling us about the environment?” and ends with the question, “What meanings about the environment are you deriving, and what theme ties all of these *ayat* together?” Instruct students to discuss these questions and to record their answers on the handout where it reads “Student reflections.”

7. Set a timer for 15-20 minutes while students complete the activity. Students will share their reflections and partake in a whole class discussion after the time is up.

Modification: If students need prior scaffolding before attempting this activity in small groups, you may model the process using the *ayat* in part one (see slides four and five with the corresponding “Part 1 explanation”). Then, divide the class in half and assign each half either part two or part three of **1.2**.

Teacher takeaway: The purpose of this activity is for students to engage the Qur'anic text and determine meanings and a coherent theme that ties the *ayat* together with little teacher direction. This activity sheet (**1.2 “Qur'anic verses on the environment”**) parallels the objective by dividing the class into three parts so that each group focuses on one particular theme listed in the objective.

- **Part 1** These *ayat* speak of the environment as a sign to contemplate and achieve faith and gratitude.
- **Part 2** These *ayat* speak of the environment as an object made subservient to humans so that humans may derive utility and enjoyment.
- **Part 3** These *ayat* speak of the environment as something that is balanced and ordered by Allah; He makes humans morally responsible to preserve the balance and warns us from corrupting it.

Slides 4-9

The following section is a continuation of the previous exercise, but now guided by you, on the topic of the environment. Slides 4-9 contain some of the *ayat* that are listed in parts one, two, and three on **1.2 “Qur'anic verses on the environment.”** Slides 4-5 correlate with part one; slides 6-7 correlate with part two; slides 8-9 correlate with part three.

1. To facilitate the whole class discussion, ask students to share their reflections from their group study, focusing on the specific words and imagery repeated in the *ayat*. Note that the following thematic analysis of the selected *ayat* is merely one representation of the Qur'anic attitude toward the environment. There are certainly other ways of organizing and deriving meanings and themes from verses of the Qur'an that look different from what is presented in this lesson.

2. You may pose the following questions while displaying the *ayat* on slides 4-9 to provoke student engagement:





- What earthly and celestial objects and phenomena does Allah include in His mention of the environment?
- For what purposes has Allah created the environment?
- What do these *ayat* communicate to us about the relationship we may have with the environment?
- Which words and imagery are repeated in these *ayat*? How do they help us to better understand the role of the environment in our lives and our role toward the environment?

3. For slides four and five, ask the students who studied the *ayat* under part one of the handout to share their reflections; other students may chime in shortly after. You may reference the following notes in the course of the discussion and contribute as necessary:

Part 1 explanation and theme: In the *ayat* under part one, Allah invokes imagery of His largest, most awe-inspiring creations: the celestial objects in our night sky, oceans, and various atmospheric phenomena (e.g., wind, cloud formations, precipitation). First and foremost, Allah refers to these environments as *khalq* (خَلْق), His creations. Our beginning point is to recognize these natural and cosmic entities—this environment—as creations of the Almighty and consequently to defer to revelation for an account of their realities. By studying these *ayat*, we also observe that while the earth and its atmosphere represent the environment in modern discourse, the Qur'an speaks of a more expansive order that includes other celestial bodies and the heavens as well. Students may also notice that the Qur'an repeatedly describes the environment and everything in it—the earthly and celestial objects, the natural processes and phenomena—as *ayat* (signs). The word appears in many parts of the Qur'an and in various forms:

لَا يَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ
وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ

These verses then ask us to contemplate these signs so that we may be guided to faith and

gratitude. We achieve faith when we recognize the magnificence of the natural environment. Observing the vastness of space and the complexity of its systems points us to an All-Capable, All-Powerful Creator.

We then achieve gratitude when we contemplate Allah's creative power in designing a universe so intricate, so fine-tuned, and nurturing to all forms of organic life on earth and human beings in particular. The rising and setting of the sun signals the stages of the day; by its alteration, we organize our worldly lives. The unique landscapes spanning earth lend themselves to a variety of vegetation, animal habitats, and human living conditions. The water cycle especially brings rain to barren lands, giving life to earth after its death. Speaking of the wind system, Allah reminds us that the breeze we feel and the ships we sail over the seas are yet another manifestation of His mercy.

The natural environment contains many signs that guide us toward knowing Allah; consequently, the destruction of the natural world—these *ayat* (signs)—would adversely affect our ability to contemplate over them in the manner Allah intended.

4. After the *ayat* under part one have been discussed, instruct all students to record their final conclusions on 1.2 under “Class conclusion 1.” In their own words, they should record that the Qur'an speaks of the environment as a sign to contemplate in order that we may achieve faith and gratitude.

5. For slides six and seven, ask the students who focused on the *ayat* under part two of the handout to share their reflections; other students may chime in shortly after. You may reference the following notes in the course of the discussion and contribute as necessary:

Part 2 explanation and theme: In these *ayat*, Allah repeatedly employs the verb (سَخَّرَ), “to subjugate” or “to subject.” This verb either appears alone or it is followed by the preposition and pronoun (سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ), “He subjected for you.”

When Allah employs the word alone, He is exclaiming His dominion and power over all things,



as He is the One to not only create, but to subject His creations, such as the moon and sun, to predetermined patterns and courses. This act of subjugation reflects His might and majesty: “Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, [another night] chasing it rapidly; and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, **subjected by His command**. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds.” [7:54]

When the words (سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ) appear, Allah is revealing yet another purpose for the environment’s existence: He subjugated the heavens, the earth, and all they contain to us and for us, in a manner that permits us wide ranging benefits and enjoyment. What sprouts from the soil of crops and vegetation is subjected for our consumption; the sun, moon, and stars travel through paths predetermined so as to accommodate human life on earth. Large animals, too, are subjugated for human utility. Upon examination, the *ayat* where the words (سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ) are used define the environment as Allah’s gift bestowed upon us. We are given the moral license to benefit from the natural world for our utility and enjoyment.

This point may be especially important for contemporary discourses about the environment. Today’s discourse is dominated (and understandably so as we shall see in the next lesson) with the destruction of the environment and our moral duty to restore, preserve, and conserve natural spaces. However, we may lose sight that Allah permits us to derive utility and enjoyment from the environment as well. Therefore while it is important to talk about our ethical obligation of how we can protect the environment, it is equally important to discuss the moral license of how we can responsibly derive utility and enjoyment from the environment.

4. After the *ayat* under part two have been discussed, instruct all students to record their final conclusions on 1.2 under “Class conclusion 2.” In

their own words, they should record that the Qur’an speaks of the environment as an object made subservient to humans so that humans may derive utility and enjoyment.

5. For slides eight and nine, ask students who focused on the *ayat* under part three of the handout to share their reflections; other students may chime in shortly after. You may reference the following notes in the course of the discussion and contribute as necessary:

Part 3 explanation and theme: In these *ayat*, Allah speaks of the environment as something created with precision, order, and balance, with the possibility that our human transgressions can disrupt that order and balance. The juxtaposition of “creating corruption” (فساد) and “setting things aright” (اصلاح) is sometimes explicit in a single *ayah*, such as surat al-A’raf, 7:56, which states, “do not corrupt the earth after it has been set aright” (بعد اصلاحها). On that same theme, Allah also revealed in surat ar-Rahman, “The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation. And the stars and trees prostrate. And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance—that you not transgress within the balance. Weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance” [55:5-9]. We witness this balance (*mizān*) in the natural and cosmic order, in the harmonious ecologies wherein living organisms and landscapes thrive through a process of mutual symbiosis. We also experience this balance (ميزان) in the precise orbits of the celestial bodies adorning our night sky, and the perfect axial tilt of planet earth rendering it habitable. Allah created the environment with this balance, and He warns us against corrupting it with our transgressions.

Also, while the previous set of verses on subjugation of the environment permit humans to utilize and benefit from it, we are reminded not to exceed the moral limits placed on us whereby our actions may actually constitute corrupting the earth.

Interestingly, classical Muslim exegetes interpreted the prohibition of corrupting the earth in many ways that did not necessarily involve the



environment. These “human corruptions” may also include general decadence, injustice, and disobedience to Allah. Many of them argued that corrupting the earth is a general expression that should not be restricted to exclusive manifestations. However, in at least one *ayah*, Allah explicitly links this corruption to the destruction of the natural environment: “When he leaves, he sets out to spread corruption in the land, destroying crops and livestock—God does not like corruption” [2:205]. It is not unreasonable to suggest that wreaking corruption on the earth encompasses many particularities, some of which may relate to the destruction of the physical and natural environment. In another *ayah*, He says, “Corruption has flourished on land and sea as a result of people’s actions, and He will make them taste the consequences of their actions so that they may turn back” [30:31] and “were it not for God’s repelling people, some by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted” [2:251]. These *ayat* resonate powerfully with our experience of the modern environmental crisis. They suggest that human action is both capable of perpetuating and preventing corruption on land and sea, and assert an ethical responsibility, a belief shared most enthusiastically by environmental activists today.

For Muslims, the ethical responsibility implied in the *ayat* is entrusted to us by Allah and is captured most succinctly in the word (خليفة) “*khalifah*”: “And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Certainly, I am placing upon the earth a *khalifah*’” [2:30].

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

This term “*khalifah*” seems to denote a universal responsibility with which Allah has entrusted to mankind. While there is a lengthy discussion among exegetes as to the different meanings of the word ‘*khalifah*’ and the different contexts in which it is used (e.g., successor), in verses 2:30 and 6:165 it appears to denote a universal responsibility that God has entrusted to humans, and thus the term may be translated as “vicegerent” or “responsible leader.”

Part of this responsibility can be inferred from the verses we have already discussed, that is, ensuring that while we can utilize and benefit from all that is

on earth and in the heavens, we do not exceed the limits and transgress the balance and cause corruption in the earth. While the Qur'an lays down these principles, it is our responsibility to determine how these principles are operationalized in concrete settings. Although it is disputable as to how to prioritize and weigh our human interests on one hand and care and well-being of the environment on the other, the Qur'an ensures that we should not ignore these considerations.

6. After the *ayat* under part three have been discussed, instruct students to record their final conclusions on 1.2 under “Class conclusion 3.” In their own words, they should record that the Qur'an speaks of the environment as something that is balanced and ordered by Allah, and that He has made humans morally responsible in preserving the earth's balance and warns us from corrupting it.

Slide 10

1. Proceed to slide ten. Recap the three distinct themes explored in the previous activity.
2. Ask students to share personal and/or real life examples of what these three themes mean to them.

Slides 11-12

1. Proceed to slide eleven and play the embedded video “His Epic Message Will Make You Want to Save the World.”
2. On slide twelve, ask students to consider a few questions while watching it:
 - a. Share: How do you feel after watching this video? What specific words and images resonate with you and why?
 - b. Reflect: What is this video communicating? Draw parallels between the message(s) in this video and the three Qur'anic themes on the environment explored earlier.
3. After the video is played, ask some students to share their responses to the “reflect” questions.



Teacher takeaway: The first set of questions is designed to elicit students' affective responses to the video, especially as they relate to the second objective. Before analyzing the video's content and connecting it to the themes in Qur'an, students may benefit by first making a personal connection to the images and words in the video and appreciating the ethical responsibility we have to the environment.

3. Next, direct students to the table on the last page of their handouts (1.2).

4. Read aloud the second set of questions in the right box and ask students to discuss their responses with an elbow partner. Then, on the table, students should record the parallels they found between the messages in the video and the Qur'anic attitude toward the environment.

5. Call on pairs of students to share the parallels they drew and record their responses on the board. Reference the information below as necessary during the course of student participation:

Theme 1

- We are one in a billion trillion trillion in that we inhabit a planet designed so perfectly to nurture our human needs. No other planet that we are aware of has all of the necessary conditions to accommodate life.
- We are surrounded by marvelous land formations, such as mountains and oceans, that take our breath away.

Theme 2

- We consume foods that grow straight from the land and extract medicine and healing from its vegetation.
- The air around us contains all of the necessary gaseous elements necessary for human existence.
- We travel over large bodies of water that have been subjugated for our transportation.
- We are surrounded by thick forests and jungles whose trees we use to build all kinds of infrastructure.

Theme 3

- We have polluted most of our oceans, endangering many species of marine life.
- Drought, hurricanes, and wildfires are on the rise, mostly due to our high carbon emission and deforestation activity around the world.
- In less than one hundred years, the large animals that commonly appear in children's books will go extinct (e.g., polar bears, tigers, lions, pandas, rhinos, gorillas, elephants, and more).

Teacher takeaway: This activity is designed to highlight the relevance of the Qur'an and its call to ethical practices to our modern societal condition. There are many opinions formed and propagated around today's climate crisis, not all of which align with the Qur'anic attitude. Discourse on the climate crisis is most effective when it considers this Divine voice. When drawing parallels between the Qur'anic themes and the video, students may realize that, while Allah has subjected the celestial bodies (e.g., the sun, moon, stars, sky), the earth, and that which they contain for our utility and interest, He has made human beings morally responsible for the wellbeing of the environments.

Slide 13

1. Proceed to slide twelve. Call on a student to read the quote from the previous video. Explain the significance of this quote using the commentary in the takeaway below.



Teacher takeaway: The quote alludes to something called the Anthropic Principle (also titled “the Goldilocks Principle”). Posited by theoretical astrophysicist Brandon Carter (1973), it states that the conditions of the universe and the natural laws by which they operate are “constrained by the necessity to allow human existence.” This is especially evident in the current age of the universe: were the universe ten percent younger than its current age, the levels of elements built up wouldn’t be enough to sustain human life. Even the axial tilt of the planet and its distance from the sun are such that, had they been a fraction different, humans would cease to exist on earth.

What is interesting about this quote is that the narrator is admitting our irresistible tendency to feel spiritual when reflecting on the beautiful balance and order sustaining the environment, and thus nurturing human life. “I don’t want to get too spiritual,” he says, “but **how are we not a miracle...**” In fact, the *ayat* correlated with the first Qur’anic theme speak of the environment as a display of signs for us to contemplate; reflecting on these signs guides us to achieving faith in and gratitude toward the Creator.

Consolidation (5 min)

Slide 14

1. Proceed to slide thirteen and pose the final question: “How do we interpret our moral responsibility toward the environment enjoined upon us by Allah?”
2. Explain to students that the Qur’an asserts our moral responsibility toward the environment both on an individual and collective level. In fact, most of the prohibitions such as “do not corrupt (*lā tufsidū*) the earth” use the plural form of negation and thus address the collective.

The next lesson explores some of the modern collective actors and factors that affect the ecological balance of our world and the importance of conceptualizing our relationship with

the environment through collective entities and macro-analysis.

Homework (60 min)

Pass out a copy of **1.3 “Homework”** to each student. In this assignment, they will peruse the Qur’an to identify additional *ayat*—not covered under the three themes of this lesson—that may contribute to our discourse on the environment.

name: _____
date: _____

Homework

In class, our brief exploration of the Qur’an led us to three distinct themes about the natural environment. On your own, peruse the Qur’an to identify additional verses not covered in class that may contribute to a fourth theme about the environment.

Surah, Ayah	Explanation

What is a fourth Qur’anic theme regarding the natural environment?

ASSESSMENT 31.3 1



Lesson plan 2

Environmental ethics through the big ecological lens

Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

Lesson overview

As we explored in lesson plan 1, the Qur'an asserts moral responsibility of mankind towards the environment both on an individual and collective level. Most of the prohibitions such as "do not corrupt (*lā tufsidū*) the earth" use the plural form of negation and thus address the collective. Additionally, the Qur'anic language invokes macro-phenomena like the subjugation of celestial bodies, setting a natural and cosmic balance, and corrupting the earth. This "30-thousand-foot perspective (or what some call, "God's eye-view") helps us focus on the macro-changes and gives us the big picture of how human actions are capable of corrupting the earth and upsetting the balance.

In the wake of our global climate crisis, individuals are blamed entirely for pollution, meat consumption, and littering, while a majority of waste production actually occurs at the corporate level. In fact, about 71 percent of gas emissions into the atmosphere are from corporations. Laws that directly or indirectly impact the environment are oftentimes influenced by corporate lobby groups to maximize profit, rather than enhance societal wellbeing. Many consumer products, for example, are designed with short lifespans; companies release new models and introduce product updates every few months, or they terminate the supply of their products' spare parts altogether in order to coerce consumers into buying new products.

In modern societies, our life is surrounded by manufactured plastics, metals, and wood that have a true ecological cost. But we are accustomed to living in this manner and find it difficult to imagine society and life without the conveniences and benefits the

modern ecosystem affords. We actually do not know the true cost we pay for this lifestyle, but as a society we are likely not going to give up our cell phones, cars, computers, clothing, homes, and all the other material aspects of modern life (all of which come with significant environmental costs). To what degree modern life is unsustainable and untenable is a matter of great dispute. The challenge involves, among other things, addressing the needs of society in a sustainable manner while being cognizant of preserving the environmental balance that Allah has ordained.

Clearly, as explained in lesson one, many verses in the Qur'an speak of grand phenomena (e.g. setting the balance, corrupting the earth) and it is not at all clear the significance of these verses if the focus is exclusively on our personal actions and choices.

In this lesson, we explore our relationship with the environment through a big ecological lens and examine the role of some of the most powerful and impactful actors on the environment, their interests, the global economic system, and some underlying ideologies, policies, choices, and actions that affect the ecological balance of our world.

Essential questions

- How can large entities (e.g., governments, corporations) help fulfill the needs of modern societies while maintaining their duties to the environment?
- To what extent are the conveniences of modern societies unsustainable and untenable with our duties to maintaining the environment?



Learning objectives

Towards the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- 1 Understand the importance of exploring the role and the impacts of different entities (e.g., government, corporate), interests (e.g., political, economic), and the economic system (i.e., policies, choices, actions) with the ecological balance of the world. *(cognitive)*

Key vocabulary

Anthropocene

The era of geological time during which human activity is considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate, and ecology of the earth (1964-present)

Corporate lobbying

The act of attempting to influence the actions, policies, and/or decisions of elected government officials using many forms of persuasion

Manufactured demand

An effective marketing technique employed by corporations to persuade consumers to purchase material goods without necessity

Planned obsolescence

A policy in industrial design/economics of producing consumer goods that rapidly become obsolete and so require replacing; this is achieved by frequent changes in design, termination of the supply of spare parts, and the use of nondurable material

TEACHER'S NOTE

The learning plan for this lesson is anchored in three videos through which students will explore the objective. Though detailed explanations are provided for the videos, teachers are encouraged to watch them prior to teaching this lesson. The videos are: "The Life Cycle of a T-shirt" by TED-Ed, as well as "The Story of Electronics" and "The Story of Bottled Water" by The Story of Stuff Project.



Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 60 min

Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 2 presentation
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection for videos and presentation
- Printouts of 2.1 for each student
- Printout of 2.2 for teacher reference
- A cheap, cotton shirt, an old and outdated smartphone, and a plastic bottle (displaying photos of these items is also sufficient)
- Electronic devices with internet access for students

Opening activity (10 min)

Slide 1

1. **Recap & connect:** Open lesson plan 2 presentation and display slide one. Cold call on a few students to quickly summarize three Qur'anic themes about the environment. Encourage them to substantiate their answers with reference to the Qur'an.

- The first theme discussed in lesson one: the environment is a sign for us to observe and contemplate in order that we may achieve faith and gratitude.
- The second theme: the environment is an object subjected by Allah to predetermined patterns and courses, and then made subservient for our utility and enjoyment.
- The third theme: the environment is an object balanced and set aright by Allah with the possibility of this environment being corrupted or preserved through human actions.

Slide 2

1. Proceed to slide two. Select a student to recite verse 2:11 in Arabic and English.

2. Remind students that the Qur'an speaks about the environment as an object created by Allah with balance (*mizan*); as stewards on earth, we are entrusted with the moral obligation of maintaining its balance and avoiding its corruption.

3. Next, place a cheap cotton shirt, an old, outdated smartphone, and a plastic bottle in the front of the classroom where they are visible to all the students.

- Note: If teachers cannot prepare these physical items beforehand, displaying photos of these items is sufficient.



4. **Turn & talk:** While lifting up each item, pose the question: "Can a shirt, an old smartphone, and a plastic bottle **corrupt the environment?**"

5. Allow students a couple of minutes to discuss their thoughts with an elbow partner. Then, ask some of them to share with the whole class. To facilitate a constructive discussion, give the students an opportunity to express their opinions freely and prompt them to provide reasoning to support their stances.

Teacher takeaway: This anticipatory set highlights three everyday objects and, with the Qur'anic verse as a backdrop, provokes students to consider the impact they may have on the environment. These items were specifically chosen because of how quickly they are disposed and their connection to popular modern discourse on waste, individual responsibility, and the climate crisis. When discussing this question, students may respond in two ways or a combination of both:

- a. with a micro-analysis of the issue, focusing exclusively on the single activity of purchasing cheap, disposable material goods, thus limiting the scope of responsibility to the individual (i.e., personal ethics), or



- b. with a macro-analysis of the complex ecosystem within which individuals make their choices. A macro-analysis of the issue considers the impact of large actors (governments, corporations, and corporate lobbyists) and factors (capitalism and economic interests) on the environment, without necessarily negating the role of the individual. In the case of these three material goods, students may recognize that the individual act of consumption is connected to larger, more powerful systems of extraction, production, distribution, etc. of these material goods in a profit-driven economy. The objective of this lesson is to help students examine and conceptualize the relationship between humans and the environment **on this macro level** and not merely reduce environmental ethics to a matter of personal piety and morality.

Learning activity (40 min)

Slide 3

1. After students have shared their thoughts, proceed to slide three.
2. Explain the following three points as they relate to verse 11 in surat al-Baqarah. Because these three points are mentioned briefly on slide three, you may need to elaborate on them in one coherent narrative using the explanation below:

Human activity: First, remind students that the previous lesson taught us that the earth is neither too large nor are humans too small for our activity to impact the environment. Our actions can either maintain the cosmic balance or corrupt it.

Tafsir: Second, ask students who is being addressed in this verse. In his *tafsir* of 2:11, “do not cause corruption upon the earth,” Imam at-Tabari includes the opinion of the companion Salman al-Farisi that the prohibition in 2:11 **addresses a people who have not yet come**. Perhaps Salman al-Farisi felt that way because, at his time, human beings did not possess the wherewithal to cause corruption of which the magnitude would reach a global level.

Anthropocene: Third, from our contemporary point of view, we can appreciate that our individual and collective actions impact the environment in marked ways more so than our predecessors, as alluded to in Salman al-Farisi’s *tafsir*. A verse such as this would then seemingly speak to a reality we are directly experiencing. We live in a unique time (which some call the anthropocene—see definition below) whereupon the ecological macro-effects from our human activity on the environment are more readily perceptible. For example, our use of single-use plastics, such as water bottles and produce bags, has a variegated and cascading effect impacting our environment in ways more so than our predecessors. Corporations and governments are demolishing, clearing, and exploiting vast landscapes with biodiverse habitats to extract natural resources used to sustain and perpetuate modern life. Large factories are pumping high doses of chemicals into bodies of water, thereby increasing the ocean’s acidification and harming marine life (the coral reefs, especially). These are just some of the many ways humans impact the environment.

- The anthropocene is defined as the modern era of time (1964-present day) during which human activity is considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate, and ecology of the earth.

Slide 4

1. Proceed to slide four and pass out a copy of **2.1 “Big actors and factors”** to each student.

2. Ask students to recall the opening discussion about the environmental impact of a shirt, an old smartphone, and a plastic bottle. Inform them that the remainder of this lesson will be spent conducting a macro-analysis of these material goods. So for example, rather than focusing on the singular act of purchasing a cheap t-shirt, students will examine the “behind the scenes” actors and factors that make up a complex ecosystem from extraction to disposal, among other variables, in the life of a t-shirt.





Some of the big actors that affect the environment are governments, corporations, lobbying groups, and the global capitalist economic system. Some of the main factors that have a large impact on the environment are the political and economic interests of these entities as well as consumerism, planned and perceived obsolescence, and manufactured demand. By focusing on the ecosystem and the major actors and factors, students will be able to more clearly understand the dominant role they play and the effect they have on the ecological balance of our world as well as where we fit within it.

TEACHER'S NOTE

Some of the terminology on slide four may elicit confusion among students. If necessary, teachers may elaborate on the terminology using the notes below:

- The capitalist global economic system is the current macro-economic system that transcends nations and ties the economies of a multitude of countries. Still driven by materialism and consumerism, global capitalism generates tremendous amounts of wealth, but the wealth is unevenly accumulated by the elite who control this system and the workers whose labor is essential to the functioning of this system. The global scope of modern capitalism allows the elite access to exponentially more consumers and to ever so cheaper labor (where minimum wage and healthy working conditions can be easily side-stepped) thereby maximizing profits at unprecedented levels.
- Major governments have the power to enact policies and to wage war, often driven by political and economic interest, which includes creating access to natural resources; domestically, they pass legislation regulating how resources are accessed and used.
- Large and powerful corporations are transnational business entities that seek to maximize profits. These corporations are capable of exploiting natural resources across the world and can tap into cheaper labor markets where they do not have to pay workers as much (in some cases, workers are paid less than a few cents an hour). These powerful corporations work closely with governments to ensure continued access to resources among many other interests. Often they hire lobbying groups to push their agenda and influence corporate-friendly legislation. It should also be known that without corporations, the modern lifestyle we are all accustomed to (whether the homes we live in, the transportation we use, and the technological devices we can't seem to get enough of) would be inconceivable.

1. Proceed to slide five and, once again, draw student attention to the cotton t-shirt artifact at the front of the room.

2. Explain to students that the embedded video details the "life cycle of a t-shirt" from extraction to disposal, and the variegating and cascading effects this linear process has on the environment. Before screening the video, ask students to pay close attention to the big actors and factors that are at the center of this linear process.

3. Play the embedded video. When it is complete, draw a blank table on the board and label the left column with the three categories of actors and factors. Ask students to provide detailed information from the video.

4. As they share their observations, record them in the box corresponding to each category. As an example, the content in the right column may include the following information:

Capitalism & Economic Systems

The production of a single t-shirt is connected to a global economic system that begins with cotton farms in the U.S.A., China, and India and ends in the shopping bags of wealthier populations.

Bangladesh, China, India, and Turkey are home to most of the world's textile factories. Powerful corporations exploit the cheap human labor available in these countries to mass-produce shirts at the cheapest cost possible. The individuals employed in this stage of production (some of which are children, most of which are impoverished women) are subject to long labor hours, often in congested, hazardous conditions, paid below minimum wage, and exposed to chemicals linked with cancer and skin-related conditions. The average garment worker in Bangladesh, for example, is paid \$68 USD per month, which is far below the national poverty line.

These shirts travel thousands of miles by ship, train, and truck to be sold in high-income countries, a process that gives cotton an enormous carbon footprint. Textile production accounts for ten percent of global carbon emissions and is considered to be the second largest polluter in the world after oil. It is

Slides 5-6



uncommon that a shirt is produced domestically and then sold to local consumers.

Governments

As the world's third largest cotton producer and the largest cotton exporter, the US government subsidizes (i.e., provides grants, loans, tax exemptions, and financial benefit to) the cotton industry so that the price of cotton remains low for exportation and trade.

Governments control the legislation that often allows corporations to release toxic waste water into oceans and seas without penalty.

Governments and corporations benefit mutually from the perpetuation of this manufactured ecosystem: corporations profit from shirt sales with cheap production costs and governments profit by taxing these shirts imported from Bangladesh, Turkey, India, and China.

Corporations

Annually, two billion t-shirts are sold around the globe. Producing each shirt requires an average of 2,700 liters of water.

Cotton uses more pesticides and insecticides than any other crop in the world; as an ecosystem, there is an interdependence between apparel corporations and chemical corporations. These chemicals are often carcinogenic and harm fieldworkers and nearby natural habitats.

Corporations also treat their cotton fabrics with artificial, chemical-laden dyes. Some of the chemicals in these dyes contain cadmium, lead, chromium, and mercury, which are also cancer-causing and detrimental to the health of humans and the environment.

TEACHER'S NOTE

Engage students by asking them to consider the cotton shirts in their own possession and the complex systems in place that produced each and every one of them. While there is a degree of autonomy and personal choice as to how and what products we consume, in many ways, our choices are limited and guided by a market system facilitated by interdependent stakeholders (e.g., governments and corporations) whose primary objective is higher profits, not the wellbeing of people and the environment, nor God's commandments.

Corporations release this toxic waste water from these dyes into oceans and seas.

5. After the whole-class discussion is complete, proceed to slide six to display a photo of mounting textile waste. Call on a few students to share their thoughts about the image and information.

Slide 7

1. Proceed to slide seven. Holding up the plastic bottle and old smartphone before students, inform them that they will continue their macro-analysis of this complex market system with the examples of bottled water and electronics using **2.1 "Big actors and factors."** Teachers at this time may refer to **2.2 "Big actors and factors: teacher reference"** for detailed notes on both topics.

2. Set up the activity:

- a. First, students should form small groups of 3-4.
- b. Next, each group should gather the necessary supplies:
 - individual copies of **2.1 "Big actors and factors"**
 - writing utensils
 - individual access to an electronic device with internet connection (e.g., smartphones, tablets, or laptops)
- c. Then, each group should select one of the two video options ("The Story of Electronics" or "The Story of Bottled Water" on YouTube) which they will watch independently and discuss as a group to complete the table on **2.1**.
- d. In their discussion, students should identify the big actors and factors in the life cycle of their chosen object, as well as specific practices that may constitute as "corrupting the environment." The whole-group activity conducted earlier about the video "The Life Cycle of a T-Shirt" may be used as a model to help guide students through this exploration.

3. Set the timer to fifteen minutes while the groups begin their work. During this time, check in with students and assist them with the activity as necessary.

Slide 8



TEACHER'S NOTE

To ensure that both videos are addressed in the whole-class discussion, teachers may assign each group a video to watch.

1. Once the time is up, proceed to slide eight.
2. Call on each group to share the video they explored, their general feelings about the video, and two pieces of information from their notes they found to be most insightful.

3. Encourage students to choose information from different categories on their table. Teachers may contribute to the discussion to clarify, explain, and/or fill gaps as necessary using the tables on 2.2 as a reference.

Teacher takeaway: The objective of this video activity is to engage students in a macro-analysis of environmental ethics using the examples of bottled water and electronics. Using 2.1 as a guide, students will trace the specific practices of governments and corporations at each level of the linear materials economy and the environmental damage they cause.

Slides 9-13

1. The concluding activity in this lesson showcases a series of captioned photographs. The objective is to provide students with real-life documentation of some of the large-scale environmental damage explained and sketched in the videos.

2. While displaying the photographs, highlight the role of governments, corporations, and the global capitalist economic system in the perpetuation of this damage. Pose the following question: “If this is the true environmental cost of our modern lifestyle, i.e. large-scale destruction to the environment, how can these large entities fulfill the needs of modern societies while maintaining their duties to the environment? To what degree are the conveniences of modern societies unsustainable?” Encourage students to share their thoughts about this question at the end of each slide.

Teacher takeaway: With this culminating activity, students may develop a better sense of the “bigger picture” behind three common material goods (a

cotton shirt, a smartphone, and a plastic bottle) and their impact on the environment. Remind students that the Qur’an speaks of the environment as a grand phenomenon whose balance and corruption occur on a macro-scale. It is thus necessary to expand our definition of environmental corruption so that the personal act of consumption is just one part of a complex ecosystem involving the big actors and factors examined in this lesson.

Consolidation (5 min)

Slide 14

1. Proceed to slide fourteen. Students will wrap up the lesson with a written reflection synthesizing the content of the videos, photos, and class discussions.

2. Direct students to the second page of 2.1 “**Big actors and factors.**”

3. Read the text: “After engaging in class discussions about the cotton shirt, plastic bottle, and electronics videos, respond to the following question: why is it important to understand the role of these actors and factors in the corruption of the environment?”

4. Allow students a few minutes to review their notes and write their responses. Teachers may choose to collect students’ worksheets as a formative assessment of the lesson’s objective.



Stage 3: Assessment

Formative assessment 2.1

Video exploration: In this lesson, students will complete **2.1 “Big actors and factors”** to explore objective one, the role and the impacts of different entities (e.g. government, corporate), interests (e.g. political, economic), and the economic system (policies, choices, actions) on the ecological balance of the world. You may conduct a formative assessment using this activity worksheet and the students’ responses during the subsequent class discussion. Students’ written reflections from the lesson consolidation may also serve as a formative assessment.

Summative assessment

None.

name: _____
date: _____

The big actors and factors impacting the environment

behind the scenes

Capitalist global economic system <small>based on consumerism and maximizing profits</small>	Major governments <small>International and domestic policies and actions including war, diplomacy, and legislation developed by politicians with political and economic interests</small>	Large and powerful corporations <small>exploit natural resources and provide goods and services to drive consumerism</small>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Exploration: Select one of the two videos to watch with your group: “The Story of Electronics” or “The Story of Bottled Water” (see the QR codes below). Together, identify the big actors and factors mentioned in the video as well as the specific macro-ways in which they impact the environment. Record your observations below.

Capitalism and economic systems	
Governments	
Corporations	

321WORKSHEET
1



Lesson plan 3

Prophetic instruction and personal ethics

Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

Lesson overview

In the previous lesson, students used macro level analysis to explore the breadth and depth of our relationship with the environment. Exploring the issue from a “30,000 foot view” is helpful for not only understanding the range and complexities of the environmental crisis but also appreciating the import of the Qur'anic verses mentioned in lesson one and the overall moral responsibility we shoulder.

In this lesson, students will look at issues in the environment from an individual perspective based on personal ethics. Habits such as hyper-consumption and waste are matters that are within our personal sphere. While companies and governments have ways to incentivize and induce consumer spending and incite our wants and desires, we must reassert our personal autonomy by recognizing the value of the Prophet's ﷺ timeless wisdom regarding both our character and the environment, and by heeding his prophetic instruction.

This lesson aims to develop a mindset and attitude among students based on prophetic traditions. To the extent we are able to develop such a mindset and attitude grounded in the Prophet's instruction, we will not only be living a lifestyle in harmony with divine will (our ultimate aim in this life), but also do our individual part to ameliorate the environmental crisis and in doing so force the existing ecosystem (the actors and factors described in the previous lesson) to respond to a new dynamic.

There are many ways to organize prophetic traditions as they may relate to issues of environmental ethics. For the purpose of this lesson plan, we have selected two types of traditions along two themes. The first set

of prophetic traditions encourage certain attitudes and character traits that have a positive consequential effect on the environment. The second set of prophetic traditions specifically mention the environment and the natural world and contain prophetic instruction relating to our treatment of the environment. By regarding prophetic instruction, students shall feel inclined to consider the environmental impact of their choices and actions and reshape their personal ethics.

Essential questions

- How can the prophetic tradition shape our personal ethics toward the environment?

Learning objectives

Towards the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- 1 Recall and apply with positive regard at least three practical instructions of the Prophet as they relate to how Muslims should treat the environment. *(cognitive & affective)*
- 2 Feel inclined to consider the environmental impact of their choices and actions. *(affective)*

Key concepts and vocabulary

Hyper-consumption

An excessive consumption of goods, and the pressure to consume those goods through social expectations and advertisements



Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 65 minutes

Supplies/Equipment

- Lesson plan 3 presentation
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection for videos and presentation
- Dry erase board/chalkboard
- Single printout of 3.1
- Printouts of 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 for each student
- Post-it notes (five per pair of students)

TEACHER'S NOTE

Before this lesson, print out a copy of 3.1 “**Prophetic tradition**” and hang up the hadith narrations around the classroom where they are visible to all students. You may refer to these hadith narrations in the course of this lesson, especially to emphasize their relevance to and impact on our personal environmental ethics.

Opening activity (10 min)

Slide 1

1. Open Lesson plan 3 presentation and display slide one.
2. **Recap & connect:** Read through the statements on the slide. Remind students that, in the previous lesson, they explored the environmental crisis from a “30,000-foot view” to understand the large, complex system of interdependent governments, economies, and corporations feeding into it. This lesson shifts the focus from the macro to the micro to include personal ethics (i.e., individual responsibility) toward the environment.
3. Inform students that the goal of this lesson is to consider the impact of our individual character, habits, and lifestyle on the environment in light of prophetic instruction (*sunnah*).

Slide 2

1. Proceed to slide two and direct students to the two photos from one of the world’s largest e-waste landfill, also known as “digital dumping grounds.”
2. Read the following caption aloud: “Every year, 50 million tons of electronic waste from first world countries is dumped in Ghana’s Agbogbloshie landfill, where it is managed by children, women, and men for \$2-3 a day. They burn the e-waste to extract copper, brass, and other valuable minerals to sell for livelihood. For these individuals, exposure to these toxins often triggers medical conditions such as heart disease, stomach ulcers, strokes, respiratory illness, lung cancer, persistent nausea, and headaches.”
3. Read the hadith* aloud—“Should you wish to act, ponder well the consequences. If good, carry on. If not, desist”—and ask students the following question: whose actions are responsible for the mounting electronic waste and toxic pollution in these photos?

**This hadith is mentioned in Ibn al-Mubarak’s book, Kitāb az-Zuhd wa ar-Raqā’iq. According to Imam Suyuti, it is considered mursal in which the Successor (tābi’ī) reporting directly from the Prophet omitted the name of the intermediate Companion. While this hadith is not particularly strong (it is being reported by one, Abdullah bin Miswar al-Hashimi, the grandchild of Ja’far ibn Abi Talib, who some considered to have made up reports attributed to the Prophet), Imam Suyuti suggests that there are other reports that corroborate the soundness of its meaning. Furthermore, since this hadith does not concern matters of aqeedah nor shariah, but relays a common value of examining the consequences before acting, we have chosen to include it in this lesson plan.*

4. Allow students to respond to the question openly and without instruction.

Teacher takeaway: The photos on the slide capture the unmanageable waste crisis occurring at the end of the linear materials economy. The digital dumping grounds in countries like China, Ghana, and Nigeria



are born from a global capitalist economy; wealthy Western countries consume new electronics and dispose of the old at alarming rates. When responding to this question, students may recall the role of electronic corporations in mass-producing and marketing new electronics designed with planned obsolescence (i.e. “designed for the dump”). While corporations do shoulder responsibility for this practice, in this lesson, students will examine the role and impact of individual hyper-consumption and waste with regard to the modern environmental crisis.

Learning activity (45 min)

Slide 3

1. Inform students that they are going to watch a four-minute story video. The story is not scripted, so they should pay close attention to the images to derive the messages and lessons from the video. Play the embedded video.
2. **Partner activity:** Ask students to find a partner, grab a stack of post-its, and list all the messages and lessons they can derive from the video (one message/lesson per post-it). Each pair of students should complete at least three post-its.
3. After five minutes, ask students to stay seated with their partners as you pass out copies of **3.2 “Video reflection.”** Instruct them to save their post-its for an upcoming activity.

Teacher takeaway: In this lesson, students will watch the video twice. During the first viewing, students will watch the whole video without interruptions to reflect on and derive the messages/lessons expressed in the video.

Slide 4

1. Proceed to slide four. Explain to students that they are going to watch the middle and the end of the video again (parts two and three) to closely examine the impact individuals have on the environment. After each clip is played, they should work with their partners to title the clip based on its theme and

TEACHER'S NOTE

The breakdown of this “Consumerism” video is intentional and designed to facilitate a discussion around three distinct themes. Part one of the video highlights the macro-activities of powerful and impactful actors necessary for the production of cheap material goods (discussed at some length in the previous lesson). Students will not watch this part again because it is summarized on their video reflection sheet.

Part two captures a subtle yet important dynamic. On the one hand, individual wants and desires create a demand for products that corporations are all too willing to fulfill. Symbiotically, the materialistic culture and system constantly bombard our consciousness with advertising and marketing for more and more material goods and thus help shape the personal psychologies and habits of individuals (including the needs, wants, and desires of the individuals it targets). The consumer in this clip is vulnerable to these advertisements to the point where he is uncontrollably fulfilling his desires.

If we’re not reflective about our own psychologies and habits, including our wants and desires and where they come from, we are vulnerable to being exploited by mass marketing and advertising that seek only to perpetuate hyper-consumption.

Finally, part three incorporates personal accountability toward the environment. It shows an example of a consumer self-reflecting, transforming his mindset, and asserting his personal autonomy in a system that incentivizes consumption and disposal at an unsustainable rate. When facilitating a whole-class discussion about this video, teachers should focus mainly on parts two and three where the subject of individual impact on the environment is most apparent.

respond to its correlating prompt on **3.2 “Video reflection.”**

2. Briefly remind students of part one of the video: it captures the macro-activities of powerful and impactful actors necessary for the mass-production of cheap material goods. In the previous lesson, students learned about this manufactured ecosystem where the primary objective of governments, corporations, and lobby groups is higher profits. The environmental impacts of this ecosystem—environmental degradation, industrial pollution (air, water, and land), deforestation, carbon emission, exploitation of human labor, destruction of natural habitats, etc.—is captured accurately and grotesquely in this first part.



3. Next, play the clip for part two. Then, direct students to **3.2** and allow them 3-4 minutes to give the clip a title and discuss/respond to the prompt: “Describe the man’s attitudes and habits in this clip, and the kinds of societal and cultural pressures that may be shaping them.”

4. Call on a few students to share their responses to the prompt. You may reference the notes below in the course of the whole-class discussion to clarify, contribute, and/or engage the students with the material.

Part 2

Describe the man’s attitudes and habits in this clip, and the kinds of societal and cultural pressures that may be shaping them.

Theme: Hyper-Consumerism & Waste

This clip showcases an individual wrapped in a cycle of hyper-consumption and waste: he compulsively buys more and mindlessly disposes of the old. He seems to hinge his self-worth on a material object and what society deems important and valuable. Disconnected from community and nature, he is subject to streams of advertisements convincing him that possessing “more stuff” will lead to internal satisfaction. But after every purchase, his happiness is shallow and short-lived and he is left invariably unfulfilled. Being far-removed from the devastating environmental consequences of this modern lifestyle, he continues in this cycle until the waste crisis sprawls into his own backyard.

Students should note that this man’s experience is common in today’s hyper-consumption culture. Governments and corporations incentivize consumption and disposal. Often, these pressures affect our personal psychologies (minds) and habits (actions). To explain what is meant by “personal psychologies,” inform students that every individual holds conscious and subconscious mindsets, attitudes, and values that drive behavior. In the video, for example, the man’s habits are influenced by his personal psychology and, in particular, his lack of self-reflection. Instead he compulsively consumes and disposes, tying his personal happiness to buying new stuff. Some examples of the mindsets, attitudes, and values that drive this kind of behavior include:

- “Buying more stuff will make me **happy**.”
- “I am more valuable and worthy when I own more stuff.”
- “This item is only worthy when it’s the newest and most trending item on the market.”
- “Satisfying all of my wants is more important than the impact it may have on the environment.”
- “My purpose in life is to accumulate more stuff.”
- “As long as the environmental and waste crisis isn’t affecting me directly, I don’t have to worry about it.”

5. After the discussion, direct student attention to the hadith narrations posted around the room and call on students to read them aloud (there are seven in total).

6. Students may notice that some hadith explicitly mention the environment so that direct instruction can be derived. Other hadith, on the other hand, do not mention the environment at all and are more implicit in their instruction. Briefly explain that these implicit narrations describe an underlying mindset, attitude, and value system for the Muslim that, when deeply internalized, transform our individual mindsets and habits and consequently have a positive effect on the environment. Below are the hadith narrations:

Implicit hadith narrations

- “Should you wish to act, ponder well the consequences. If good, carry on. If not, desist.” (Ibn al-Mubarak)
- “Fulfillment is not plenty of goods. Rather, it is self-fulfillment.” (Bukhari & Muslim)
- “God does not regard your externals or your riches, but rather your hearts and your deeds.” (Muslim)
- “Abandon desire for this world and God will love you. Abandon desire for others’ goods and people will love you.” (Ibn Majah)
- “If the son of Adam had a valley of gold, then he would still desire a second. And nothing fills his mouth but the dust of the grave.” (Bukhari & Muslim)



Explicit hadith narrations

- “The world is sweet and green, and verily, Allah is going to make you responsible as vicegerents (*mustakhlifukum*) in it in order to see how you act, so be mindful of this world...” (Muslim)
- “Should the Hour of Judgment Day arrive and one of you has a palm shoot in his hand, let him plant it, if he can.” (Ahmad)

7. **Turn & talk:** With their partners, have students make a quick connection between the lessons and themes from the second video clip to one or more of the hadith narrations posted on the wall. Then, call on a few students to share their connections.

Teacher takeaway: The purpose of this turn and talk is to have students begin making connections between the messages in the video clips and Prophetic instruction on personal environmental ethics.

8. Next, play the clip for part three. Then, allow students 3-4 minutes to give the clip a title and discuss/respond to the prompt: “Describe the man’s mindset transformation at the end of the video and what may have caused him to change. What factors from this man’s life may have made this transformation initially difficult?”

9. Call on a few students to share their responses to the prompt. You may reference the notes below in the course of the whole-class discussion to clarify, contribute, and/or engage the students with the material.

Part 3

Describe the man’s mindset transformation at the end of the video and what may have caused him to change. What factors from this man’s life may have made this transformation initially difficult?

Theme: Personal Environmental Ethics

This clip illustrates the man’s mindset transformation after he interacts with the consequences of his actions. Though the manufactured ecosystem of governments, corporations, and capitalist economies persists, he

eventually asserts his personal autonomy by stepping away from his electronics to spend time with friends in nature.

Prior to this, the man did not feel any need to change. His lifestyle habits were the societal norm; the environmental destruction and mounting waste resulting from his hyper-consumption did not personally affect him.

What inspires him to change? Coming in contact with his individual and the collective waste for the first time prompts him to reconsider his hyper-consumption and high-waste lifestyle. He realizes that his purpose, happiness, and self-worth should not be defined by society’s latest consumer trends.

10. **Turn & talk:** After the discussion, have students work again with their partners to make a quick connection between the lessons and themes from the third video clip to one or more of the hadith narrations posted on the wall. Then, call on a few students to share their connections.

Teacher takeaway: This short, animated video demonstrates that, while developed countries and corporations bear heavy responsibility to the environmental crisis, as consumers, our individual attitudes and habits are not impervious to criticism. The video highlights that matters of hyper-consumption and waste are, first and foremost, personal. In the remainder of this lesson, students will revisit prophetic instruction that helps individuals anchor their personal attitudes and habits to higher ethical standards.

Slide 5

1. After wrapping up the video activity, move to each hadith narration posted around the classroom and briefly explain their meanings and their advice on personal environmental ethics. You may choose to reference the notes below:

“Should you wish to act, ponder well the consequences. If good, carry on. If not, desist.”
(Ibn al-Mubārak)



Brief commentary: This hadith asks us to consider the consequences before acting. While this is sage advice in pretty much any context, its import is magnified when considering individual and collective impact on the environment (see the second objective). For example, an individual who internalizes this hadith will desist from compulsively spending on fast fashion wardrobe when he or she considers the carbon emissions, toxic water pollution, and textile waste resulting from this action.

“Fulfillment is not plenty of goods. Rather, it is self-fulfillment.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Brief commentary: This hadith challenges the West’s hyper-consumption culture and the pervasive attitude that “more stuff leads to happiness.” If internalized, an individual may feel driven to pursue a lifestyle that is more meaningful such as service, contribution, faith, and personal growth, and less dependent on the latest consumerism trends.

“God does not regard your externals or your riches, but rather your hearts and your deeds.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Brief commentary: This hadith establishes the superiority of inner-value (pure heart and righteous actions) to material and temporary things, like wealth and beauty. Internalizing this hadith may help an individual orient his or her goals toward cultivating upright character and good manners.

“Abandon desire for this world and God will love you. Abandon desire for others’ goods and people will love you.” (Hadith Ibn Majah)

Brief commentary: Social comparison and envy are two of the things that drive hyper-consumption. Individuals sometimes evaluate their worth and value in relation to what others possess, and may feel envious if they cannot match up. This hadith, when internalized, teaches us to look inward and find satisfaction in whatever possessions Allah has given us.

“If the son of Adam had a valley of gold, then he would still desire a second. And nothing fills his mouth but the dust of the grave.”

(Bukhari & Muslim)

Brief commentary: This hadith points to the strong human inclination to want more. Corporations employ strategies that exploit this part of human nature, often in the form of marketing, branding, and advertisements. Internalizing this hadith reminds individuals that chasing after the latest consumer trends is futile because no amount of material possessions will ever feel “enough.”

“The world is sweet and green, and verily, Allah is going to make you responsible as vicegerents (mustakhlifukum) in it in order to see how you act...” (Muslim)

Brief commentary: This hadith points to the beauty and balance existing all throughout the natural environment, while also reminding us of our personal responsibility to preserve it.

“Should the Hour of Judgment Day arrive and one of you has a palm shoot in his hand, let him plant it, if he can.” (Ahmad)

Brief commentary: This hadith teaches individuals to not belittle even the small acts of care toward the environment.

2. Then, direct students to the slide and the post-its they completed after their initial viewing of the video.

3. Ask the pairs of students to revisit their post-its and determine ways in which the hadith narrations relate to the video’s core messages and lessons. Give students a few minutes to make further connections. The following list includes just some of the messages derived from the video. Students may expand on this list.

- Consuming or purchasing the latest and newest product does not lead to happiness.
- There is more to living than spending money on unnecessary material goods.
- A meaningful existence is made possible by human connection and inner-satisfaction/contentment.
- Hyper-consumption and waste are detrimental to the environment.
- Governments and corporations must demolish



expanses of natural landscapes, extract large quantities of natural resources, and pollute bodies of water at high rates to sustain our modern lifestyle.

- We must practice self-control and avoid falling into marketing traps.

4. Call on a few groups to share their connections with the whole class.

Sample response:

- **Video message:** Consuming or purchasing the latest and newest product does not lead to happiness.
- **Related hadith:** “Fulfillment is not plenty of goods. Rather, it is self-fulfillment” (Bukhari & Muslim).
- **Connection:** As humans, we will never feel fulfilled by continuously chasing after the latest products or by constantly updating what we already have to something newer. Instead, we are most fulfilled when we cultivate inner-satisfaction and happiness independent of our material possessions. This can mean living a life pleasing to Allah and avoiding getting caught up in temporary, worldly things. It does not mean that we cannot experience happiness through our material goods, but rather, our happiness should not depend on them.

Consolidation (10 min)

Slide 6

1. Proceed to slide six. Explain that, as individuals in a hyper-consumptive society, it does not always occur to us to prioritize “environmental impacts” in our decision-making process. This is especially the case when the environmental consequences of our actions (e.g., hyper-consumption and wastefulness) unfold abroad, far-removed from our developed Western neighborhoods. Unlike the man in the video, we do not need to feel the consequences encroach upon our personal lives to change. Our Prophet dispensed ample instruction to help us reorient our personal psychologies and habits to higher personal ethics. When we heed his timeless wisdom, we may begin to see our habits positively

affecting the environment. Ultimately, if we live a life in accordance with Allah’s words and the sunnah of the Prophet, their deep wisdom will conjoin our obedience with a myriad of benefits, for the environment and elsewhere.

2. Next, read the hadith aloud and then pose the following question: “Understanding now the impact of individuals (personal ethics), privately reflect on your own attitudes and habits that may bear consequences on the environment. How can the messages from the video and the prophetic instruction regarding personal environmental ethics apply to you?”

3. Allow students a few minutes to consider specific actions from their lives and the environmental consequences of those actions, and to record their responses on **3.2 “Video reflection.”**

Slide 7

1. Proceed to slide seven and read aloud the following statement by Gus Speth: “I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The *top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy*, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don’t know how to do that.” Ask students to share any final thoughts and/or questions they have about this quote or any part of the lesson.

2. Pass out copies of **3.3 “Homework”** to each student while responding to students’ thoughts and questions.





Stage 3: Assessment

Performance tasks

Formative assessments 3.1 and 3.2

1. The **3.1 “Prophetic advice”** activity connects to the first objective. After learning about the unhealthy individual mindsets, attitudes, values, and habits that negatively impact the environment, students will study the prophetic instruction that, if internalized, inculcates individuals with strong personal ethics toward the environment.
2. In this lesson, students will analyze a video on individual hyper-consumption and waste using **3.2 “Video reflection.”** Teachers may use this activity to assess students’ emotive responses to personal environmental ethics and how inclined they feel to consider their impact on the environment. Student discussions after parts two and three of the video, as well as their “Personal Actions & Consequences” reflections may indicate their internalization of objective two.

Summative assessments 3.3 and 3.4

1. **3.3 “Homework”**: Students will watch a video featuring a story about water wastefulness from the life of the Prophet ﷺ. Following the video, students will reflect on the hadith report and the manner in which the Prophet ﷺ defined extravagance.
2. **3.4 “Extended learning”**: Students will select one of two personal-ethics activities to practice for an entire week: option one is carrying “trash on your back” and option two is “avoiding single-use plastic.” Following their week-long commitment, students will reflect on their effort in minimizing plastic consumption and individual waste.

name: _____ date: _____

Video reflection

Watch the video again and, with your partner, reflect on the three clips individually using the prompts below.


Part 1	Macro-analysis
Briefly relate this part of the video to the previous lesson.	This clip captures the macro-activities of powerful and impactful actors necessary for the mass production of cheap material goods. In the previous lesson, students learned about the manufactured ecosystem where the primary objective of governments, corporations, and lobby groups is higher profits. The environmental impacts of this ecosystem—environmental degradation, industrial pollution (air, water, and land), deforestation, carbon emissions, exploitation of human labor, destruction of natural habitats, etc.—is captured accurately and grotesquely in this clip.
Part 2	Give this clip a title
Describe the man's attitudes and habits in this clip, and the kinds of societal and cultural pressures that may be shaping them.	
Part 3	Give this clip a title
Describe the man's mindset transformation at the end of the video and what may have caused him to change. What factors from his life may have made this transformation initially difficult?	

3.2 VIDEO REFLECTION

name: _____ date: _____

Homework

Use the QR code to watch the three-minute video clip featuring a story about wastefulness.



The Prophet ﷺ once passed by Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas when he was doing *ajdu'*, and he asked Sa'ad, "What is this extravagance, oh Sa'ad?" Confused that the Prophet would attribute extravagance to his use of an abundant natural resource for the intention of worship, Sa'ad inquired, "Can there be any extravagance in *ajdu'*?" He said, "Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river." (Ibn Majah 4/2002)

If there is a reasonable intent in using a natural resource, such as using water for making wudu', would it be considered sinful or excessive if you used more of that resource than needed? Explain.	
If there is an abundance of a natural resource, would it be considered sinful or excessive if we use more of that resource than what is needed? Explain.	
If the intention is neutral and the natural resource is scarce, would it be considered sinful or excessive if we used more of that resource than what is needed? Explain.	

Challenge: For an entire day, attempt to minimize the amount of water you use for *ajdu'* by using the water of a single bottle.

3.3 HOMEWORK

name: _____ date: _____

Extended learning

The background

In this lesson, we learned that habits such as hyper-consumption and waste are first and foremost personal. If we are capable of developing a mindset and attitude based on prophetic instruction, we will not only be doing our individual part to help the environment but will force the macro-systems to respond to a new dynamic.

We have also realized that in modern countries, life is surrounded by manufactured plastics, metals, and wood that come with an ecological cost. Because we are accustomed to this lifestyle, it is difficult to imagine life without these conveniences and benefits, as flawed as they may be. Though we may not be likely to give up our cell phones, cars, computers, clothing, or homes, we can become more cognizant of preserving the environmental balance, and understand the impact of our personal choices on the environment around us.

The challenge

Check one of the options below to implement in your personal life for one week.

☐ **Trash on your back:** carry the trash you produce in a bag that you must have on you at all times. Be mindful of what you put in the bag—avoid items that may not or develop a smell. The experience is meant to help to give you a visual of how much trash you, as an individual, actually produce and dispose of in the environment. To lighten the amount of trash you carry, find ways to reduce the amount of trash you produce from your daily lifestyle.

☐ **Avoiding single-use plastic:** find alternative methods to help you avoid using single-use plastics. Consider alternatives to plastic utensils, bags, packaging wraps, cling wrap, disposable gloves, balloons, cotton swabs, water bottles, to-go cups, lids, take-out containers, etc. For any single-use plastic you end up using, keep it with you for one week to develop an idea of how much plastic you use and think about how it can be avoided.

3.4 EXTENDED LEARNING



References and resources

Qur'anic references

Lesson plan 1

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْمُلُكِ
الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ
مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ
وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason. [Surat al-Baqarah, 2:164].

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ
أَجَاجٌ وَمِنْ كُلِّ تَاكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حُلِيَّةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا
وَتَرَى الْمُلُكَ فِيهِ مَوَازِيرَ لِنَبْتَعُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

And not alike are the two bodies of water. One is fresh and sweet, palatable for drinking, and one is salty and bitter. And from each you eat tender meat and extract ornaments which you wear, and you see the ships plowing through [them] that you might seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful. [Surat Fatir, 35:12]

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فِيُخْطِي بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And of His signs is [that] He shows you lightening, [causing] fear and aspiration, and He sends down rain from the sky by which He brings to life the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who use reason. [Surat ar-Rum, 30:24]

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ
عَلَى جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and what He has dispersed throughout them of creatures. And He is all-capable of gathering them when He wills. [Surat Ash-Shuraa, 42:29]

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ
مِنَ الشَّجَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ (32) وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ وَسَخَّرَ
لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (33) وَأَتَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعْدُوا نِعْمَةَ
اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ

It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain from the sky and produced thereby some fruits as provision for you and subjected for you the ships to sail through the sea by His command and subjected for you the rivers. And He subjected for you the sun and the moon, continuous [in orbit], and subjected for you the night and the day. And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favor of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful. [Surat Ibrahim, 14:32-34]

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمُوتَ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ
الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ

It is Allah who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be certain. [Surat ar-Ra'd, 13:2]



إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشَى اللَّيْلُ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, [another night] chasing it rapidly; and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, subjected by His command. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds. [Surat al-A'raf, 7:54]

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (5) وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ (6) وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بِالْغَيْهِ إِلَّا يَشُقُّ الْأَنْفُسَ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ وَالْحَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ... هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ (11) يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (12)

And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and [numerous] benefits, and from them you eat. And for you in them is [the enjoyment of] beauty when you bring them in [for the evening] and when you send them out [to pasture]. And they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Kind and Merciful. And [He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates that which you do not know. It is He who sends down rain from the sky; from it is drink and from it is foliage in which you pasture [animals]. He causes to grow for you thereby the crops, olives, palm trees, grapevines, and from all the fruits. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought.

[Surat an-Nahl, 16:5-8, 10-11]

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you whatever is on the earth and the ships which run through the sea by His command? And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission. Indeed Allah, to the people, is Kind and Merciful. [Surat al-Hajj, 22:65]

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمُوتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (13)

It is Allah who subjected to you the sea so that ships may sail upon it by His command and that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful. And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought. [Surat al-Jathiyah, 45:12-13]

الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ (5) وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ (6) وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ (7) أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ (8) وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ (9) ... فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (13)

The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation, And the stars and trees prostrate. And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance—that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance [...] So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? [Surat ar-Rahman, 55:5-9, 13]

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And cause not corruption upon the earth after its set aright. And invoke Him in fear and aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good. [Surat al-A'raf, 7:56]

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ

And when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption. [Surat al-Baqarah, 2:205]



وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a khalifah (successive authority)." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know." [Surat al-Baqarah, 2:30]

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]. [Surat ar-Rum, 30:41]

Lesson plan 2

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

And when it is said to them, 'Do not cause corruption on earth,' they say, 'Certainly, we are not but reformers.'" [Surat al-Baqara, 2:11]

Hadith resources

Lesson plan 3

إذا أردت أن تفعل أمرا فتدبر عاقبته. فإن كان خيرا فأمضه؛ وإن كان شرا فانتبه

The Prophet said, "Should you wish to act, ponder well the consequences. If good, carry on. If not, desist." (Ibn al-Mubārak)

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَرَّ بِسَعْدٍ وَهُوَ يَتَوَضَّأُ فَقَالَ: مَا هَذَا السَّرَفُ يَا سَعْدُ؟ قَالَ: أَفِي الْوُضُوءِ سَرَفٌ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، وَإِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى نَهْرٍ جَارٍ

The Prophet (s) once passed by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas when he was doing *wudu*, and he asked

Sa'd, "What is this extravagance, oh Sa'd?" Confused that the Prophet would attribute extravagance to his use of an abundant natural resource for the intention of worship, Sa'd inquired, "Can there be any extravagance in *wudu*?" He said, "Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river." (Ibn Majah & Ahmad)

لَيْسَ الْغِنَى عَنْ كَثْرَةِ الْعَرَضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْغِنَى غِنَى النَّفْسِ

Fulfillment is not plenty of goods. Rather, it is self-fulfillment." (Hadith Bukhari & Muslim)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صَوْرِكُمْ وَ أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَ لَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَ أَعْمَالِكُمْ

God does not regard your externals or your riches, but rather your hearts and your deeds. (Hadith Muslim)

ازهد في الدنيا يُحبَّك الله و ازهد فيما في أيدي الناس يُحبوك

Abandon desire for this world and God will love you. Abandon desire for others' goods and people will love you. (Hadith Ibn Majah)

لَوْ أَنَّ لِابْنِ آدَمَ وَادِيًا مِنْ ذَهَبٍ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَادِيَانِ، وَلَنْ يَمْلَأَ فَاهُ إِلَّا التُّرَابُ

If the son of Adam had a valley of gold, then he would still desire a second. And nothing fills his mouth but the dust of the grave. (Bukhari & Muslim)

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا حُلْوَةٌ خَضِرَةٌ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ فَاتَّقُوا الدُّنْيَا وَاتَّقُوا النَّسَاءَ

The world is sweet and green, and verily, Allah is going to make you responsible as vicegerents (*mustakhlifukum*) in it in order to see how you act. So mindful of this world and be mindful of women. (Muslim)

إِنْ قَامَتْ عَلَى أَحَدِكُمْ الْقِيَامَةُ وَفِي يَدِهِ فَسْلَةٌ فَلْيَغْرِسْهَا

Should the Hour of Judgment Day arrive and one of you has a palm shoot in his hand, let him plant it, if he can. (Hadith Ahmad from Anas bin Malik)



Multimedia resources

Lesson plan 1

His Epic Message Will Make You Want to Save the World: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-nEYsYRIYo>

Lesson plan 2

The Life Cycle of T-Shirt: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiSYoeqb_VY

The Story of Electronics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW_7i6T_H78&t=41s

The Story of Bottled Water: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se12y9hSOM0&t=11s>

Photo 1: Textile Waste: <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/environment-costs-fast-fashion-pollution-waste-sustainability-a8139386.html>

Photo 2: Textile Waste: <https://www.euronews.com/living/2019/10/13/incredible-environmental-photographer-of-the-year-winners-show-raw-impact-of-climate-change>

Photo 3: Fossil Fuel Toxic Waste: <https://www.wired.com/story/germany-acid-sludge/>

Photo 4: Fossil Fuels and Toxic Waste: <https://www.wired.com/story/germany-acid-sludge/>

Photo 5: Exploitation of Natural Resources: <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/nestle-gets-away-pumping-californias-water-next-nothing/>

Photo 6: Mineries: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/13/world/americas/oil-sand-industry-in-canada-tied-to-higher-carcinogen-level.html>

Photo 7: Mountain Top Mining <http://appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/ecology/>

<https://thinkprogress.org/researchers-reveal-scope-of-damage-to-appalachia-from-mountaintop-removal-coal-mining-63642d5001bb/>

<http://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=14-P13-00022&segmentID=3>

Lesson Plan 3

Consumerism Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=v-7v2WGiTe8&feature=emb_logo

Hadith Clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1OB_OidMQc&feature=youtu.be

Photo 1: Electronic Waste: <https://www.wired.com/story/international-electronic-waste-photographs/>

Photo 2: Digital Dumping Ground: <https://www.earthtouchnews.com/conservation/human-impact/agboglobloshie-welcome-to-the-worlds-digital-dumping-ground-part-1/>



Student survey

To access the survey, scan the QR code with a smartphone camera.

