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Quranic verses on the environment

Study the following *ayāt* to understand the divine account of the environment's realities: what is the environment, what is its purpose, and what is its relationship to us as humans?

Highlight relevant words, imagery, and ideas repeated in the *ayat* and then record your conclusions.

Part 1 What are these *ayat* telling us about the environment?

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ 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 أُجَاجٌ وَمِنْ كُلِّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَازِيرَ لِتَبْتَغُوا 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]



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وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمْ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُحْيِي بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And of His signs is [that] He shows you lightning, [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 أَنْ يُرْسِلَ الرِّيَّاحَ مُبَشِّرَاتٍ وَلِيُذِيقَكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

And of His signs is that He sends the wind as bringers of good tidings and to let you taste His mercy, and so the ships may sail at His command, and so you may seek His bounty, and that, perhaps, you may be grateful. [Surat ar-Rum, 30:46]

وَ مِنْ 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]

Student reflection 1 What did you learn about the environment from these verses, and what theme ties all of these *ayat* together?

Class conclusion 1 After discussing part one as a whole class, record your final conclusion here:



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Part 2 What are these *ayat* telling us about the environment?

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْفُلُكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْأَنْهَارَ (32) وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (33) وَأَتَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ (34)

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 السَّمُوتِ 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 رَبَّكُمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ 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]



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وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفٌ وَمَنْافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (5) وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ (6) وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَى بَلَدٍ لَمْ تَكُونُوا بِلِغِيهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ (7) وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (8) وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (9) ... 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 ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ 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 وَالْفُلُوكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

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 الْفُلُوكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (12) وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمُوتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ 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]



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Student reflection 2 What did you learn about the environment from these verses, and what theme ties all of these *ayat* together?

Class conclusion 2 After discussing part one as a whole class, record your final conclusion here:

Part 3 What are these *ayat* telling us about the environment?

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]



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وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى 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 لِلْمَلَأِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۗ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن 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]

Student reflection 3 What did you learn about the environment from these verses, and what theme ties all of these *ayat* together?

Class conclusion 3 After discussing part one as a whole class, record your final conclusion here:



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After deriving three Quranic themes, watch the National Geographic video, “His Epic Message Will Make You Want to Save the World” together in class. Then, find parallels between the messages in this video and the Quranic attitude toward the environment. Record the parallels you find below:

Theme ①	Theme ②	Theme ③
A sign for us to observe and contemplate in order that we may achieve faith and gratitude.	An object created and subjugated to predetermined patterns and courses, and then made subservient for our utility and enjoyment.	An object balanced and “set aright” by Allah with the possibility of corrupting or preserving it through human actions.