

Who's Responsible for Climate Change?

Suggested readings on corporate accountability for climate change

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) is a member-supported 501c3 nonprofit that works on the world's most pressing issues, including climate change. To learn more about the role of fossil fuel companies in the climate crisis and how we can hold them accountable, visit act.ucs.org/polluterposter.

Want to dive deeper? UCS has curated this resource list to cover a range of topics and perspectives related to climate accountability. (Inclusion on the list does not mean UCS endorses all comments, analyses, or solutions put forward by the authors.)

To join UCS in creating a healthy, safe, and just future, visit ucs.org.

Adult Nonfiction

A Strategic Nature: Public Relations and the Politics of American Environmentalism

Melissa Aronczyk and Maria I. Espinoza

This book sheds light on the history and tactics of the public relations industry in laundering corporate environmental and labor abuses. The authors argue that PR has played a key role in shaping and limiting public understanding of the crises we face and their possible solutions.

The Heat Is On: The Climate Crisis, The Cover-Up, The Prescription

Ross Gelbspan

This 1997 work of investigative journalism was an early exposé of the fossil fuel industry's coordinated campaign to spread disinformation and cast doubt on the scientific evidence of climate change.

All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis

Edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson

This collection of essays, all by women at the forefront of the climate movement, reminds us that while there are aspects of life on Earth that are forever altered by fossil-fueled climate devastation, there is still so much left we must fight for. Several essays discuss climate accountability as a key strategy.

Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil in the Niger Delta

Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas

This book traces the toxic history of multinational oil company Shell's extractive activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It describes how the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People campaigned for self-determination and an end to the oil industry's ecological destruction.

Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Climate Change

Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway

This now-classic book outlines how industries from Big Tobacco to Big Oil have manipulated science and used the language of doubt and uncertainty to prevent decisive political action, with dire consequences for public health and the environment.

Angry Weather: Heat Waves, Floods, Storms, and the New Science of Climate Change

Friederike Otto

Authored by a global leader in the field and accessible to a wide audience, this book explains how extreme weather events can be linked to climate change by means of cutting-edge attribution science.

Burning Up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption

Simon Pirani

This book traces the growth of fossil fuel consumption since the 1950s and suggests that technological, social, and economic systems must undergo transformational change to tackle the climate crisis.

Climate Obstruction: A Global Assessment

Edited by J. Timmons Roberts, Carlos R.S. Milani, Jennifer Jacquet, and Christian Downie

This assessment brings together nearly 100 experts to provide a comprehensive primer on how powerful industries and their allies have delayed and obstructed climate action. It also discusses how the spread of climate misinformation has shaped public opinion.

Confronting Climate Coloniality: Decolonizing Pathways for Climate Justice

Edited by Farhana Sultana

This collection brings together interdisciplinary scholarship to examine the role of imperialism, colonialism, and racial capitalism in driving the climate crisis. A section theorizing "fossil imperialism" highlights the role of fossil fuels in colonization, militarism, exploitation, and repression.

The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet

Leah Thomas

This book provides a brief, accessible introduction to the history of the environmental justice movement and the ongoing fight against environmental racism, such as the disproportionate siting of polluting facilities in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World

Robin Wall Kimmerer

This lovely short book envisions an economic model “based on reciprocity rather than accumulation.” ExxonMobil CEO Darren Woods appears as a foil, representing those who know the devastating consequences of ecological destruction and engage in it anyway for their own gain.

Miseducation: How Climate Change Is Taught in America

Katie Worth

Investigative reporter Katie Worth traces how the fossil fuel industry and its political allies have worked to implant inaccurate information and doubt over climate science in US public schools.

Children’s Books

The Magic School Bus and the Climate Challenge

Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen

Ms. Frizzle and her class learn about climate change, renewable energy, and steps kids can take to protect the planet.

We Are Water Protectors

Carole Lindstrom; illustrated by Michaela Goade

This beautifully illustrated book teaches readers about protecting water and the 2016 Indigenous-led struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Alicia and the Hurricane: A Story of Puerto Rico / Alicia y el huracán: Un cuento de Puerto Rico

Lesléa Newman; illustrated by Elizabeth Erazo Baez

This bilingual book follows a young girl named Alicia as she survives Hurricane Maria with her family. Neighbors support each other through mutual aid efforts in the wake of the destructive storm.

Este libro bilingüe narra la historia de Alicia que sobrevive al huracán María junto a su familia y cuenta como los vecinos se apoyan mutuamente tras el paso de la destructiva tormenta.

One Earth: People of Color Protecting Our Planet

Anuradha Rao

This middle-grade book offers short profiles of 20 BIPOC environmental defenders. It includes an account of the struggle against oil extraction causing pollution and illness in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Saving Earth: Climate Change and the Fight for Our Future

Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich; illustrated by Tim Foley

This middle-grade book provides a history of climate policy in the United States, including the role of the fossil fuel industry in delaying climate action. It introduces important concepts of global inequities and environmental racism, and highlights how people around the world are fighting for climate justice.

Our House Is on Fire: Greta Thunberg's Call to Save the Planet

Jeanette Winter

This picture book tells the story of youth climate activist Greta Thunberg, the Fridays for Future school strikes, and the role of children and youth in fighting climate change.

Movies

Gaslit (2026)

Featuring Jane Fonda and many environmental justice leaders from the US Gulf South, this documentary explores the impacts of oil and gas production on communities in Louisiana and Texas.

PBS Frontline: The Power of Big Oil (2022)

This three-part series documents the fossil fuel industry's history of climate deception and obstruction.

Youth v Gov (2020)

This documentary follows the story of 21 youth plaintiffs suing the US government, asserting that its actions contributing to climate change violate young people's constitutional rights.

Merchants of Doubt (2014)

This movie discusses how powerful industries have manipulated science to prevent political action.

Who Killed the Electric Car? (2006)

This film explores the role of industry interests in delaying adoption of lower-emissions vehicles.

Podcasts

Drilled

Amy Westervelt

This podcast by investigative journalist Amy Westervelt provides gripping episodes on topics related to fossil fuel industry disinformation and obstruction.

Ciencia Consciente: El crimen del siglo

Union of Concerned Scientists

Un explosivo informe de la Unión de Científicos Conscientes (UCS, por sus siglas en inglés) llamado 'Décadas de engaños' revela pruebas documentadas de lo que podría llamarse 'el crimen del siglo.' En el podcast en español de UCS, Michelle Rama-Poccia y Felipe Castro les cuentan la historia alucinante basada en el análisis sobre el encubrimiento de hechos sobre el cambio climático que cometieron las compañías de combustibles fósiles durante más de medio siglo.