



The Island President



A complete educational edition DVD is available for purchase at www.firstrunfeatures.com/islandpresident_educational

This 2-DVD package includes two additional lesson plans and three additional video modules, in addition to the complete film and university curriculum.

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Introduction

Group screening of **The Island President** in an educational environment will ignite interest, inspire debate, and prompt further investigation into a variety of topical issues and academic disciplines. This guide was created to empower educators worldwide to maximize the educational value of a classroom or seminar screening and to supplement post-viewing group discussion, further research, and active engagement.

The curriculum was developed for use in middle and high school classrooms, and is aligned with key national standards in language arts, social studies, and science. The guide includes two lesson plans geared toward personal and local discovery, critical thinking, and interpersonal activity.





Film Synopsis

The Island President tells the story of President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives, a man confronting a problem greater than any other world leader has ever faced – the literal survival of his country and everyone in it.

After leading a twenty-year, pro-democracy movement against the brutal regime of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom – surviving repeated imprisonments and torture – Nasheed became president at 41, only to encounter a far more implacable adversary than a dictator: the ocean. Considered the lowest lying country in the world, a rise of a mere three meters in sea level would inundate the Maldives, rendering the country practically unlivable. Unless dramatic changes are made by the larger countries of the world, the Maldives, like a modern Atlantis, will disappear under the waves.

As much as its plight is one-of-a-kind, the Maldives itself is a country like no other. A Shangri-la of breathtakingly beautiful turquoise reefs, beaches, and palm trees, the Maldives is composed of 1200 coral islands off of the Indian sub-continent, of which 200 are inhabited. Arrayed across 400 miles of open sea like necklace-shaped constellations, the Maldives is one of the most geographically dispersed nations on earth.

Democracy came to the Maldives, a Sunni Muslim country, in 2008, in a way that was uncannily similar to the

recent Middle Eastern populist revolts against autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere. What made the Maldives movement different from the ones that have followed it is the existence of a clear opposition party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), which had in its co-founder, Nasheed, a popular and charismatic leader ready to usher his country into democracy. Educated in Sri Lanka and England, Nasheed proved to be an unusually shrewd and sophisticated politician who grasped that the only way he could stand up to the catastrophic issues of climate change facing his country would be to take the Maldives cause to the world stage.

The Island President captures Nasheed's first year of office, a time when he influences the direction of international events in a way that few leaders have ever done, even in countries many times the size of the Maldives. Nasheed's story culminates in his trip to the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, where the film provides a rare glimpse of the political horse-trading that goes on at such a top-level global assembly. Nasheed is unusually candid about revealing his strategies, leveraging the Maldives' underdog position, harnessing the power of media, and overcoming deadlocks through an appeal to unity with other developing nations. Despite his country's dire situation, Nasheed remains cool, pragmatic, and flexible, willing to compromise and try again

another day. When all hope fades for any kind of written accord to be signed, Nasheed makes a stirring speech, which salvages an agreement. While many have judged the Copenhagen Climate Summit as a failure, it marked the first time in history that China, India, and the United States agreed to reduce carbon emissions.

In this age of political consultants and talking points, it is almost unheard of nowadays for filmmakers to get the astonishing degree of access that director Jon Shenk and his filmmaking team secured from Nasheed in **The Island President**. An award-winning cinematographer as well as a director, Shenk suffuses **The Island President** with the unearthly beauty of the Maldives. Seen from the sky, set against the haunting music of Radiohead, the coral islands seem unreal, more like glowing iridescent creatures than geographic areas. The parallel is apt, as the Maldives are like an endangered species – unless strong actions are taken, this magical country could become extinct.



How to Use This Guide

The questions, activities, and resources provided in this guide are meant as suggestions only; educators are encouraged to explore their own means of presenting and following up this material. Much of the content of this guide is designed to inspire critical thinking, compelling debate, and further research into topics that are both critically important and practically controversial; its content is therefore conceptual and (often) ambiguous by nature. Please use discretion in selecting guide content appropriate to your educational setting and objectives.

Each lesson plan consists of a core procedure that is designed to work within one to two 50-minute high school classroom periods. There are also optional extension activities, discussion questions, and research prompts at the end of each procedure to deepen the learning. Relevant subject areas and learning objectives have been highlighted at the start of each lesson.

This entire educational edition package has been developed in alignment with national educational standards in English, Social Studies, and Environmental Science. Educational standards released by the following organizations were reviewed and implemented in preparation of this guide.

- **Common Core: Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**
- **National Council for the Social Studies**
- **National Research Council (National Science Education Standards)**

Watching the film modules in advance of classroom screening is advisable. Please remember to browse some of the questions and exercises in this guide in advance of screening as well. If the film screening is meant to supplement an ongoing topic of classroom study, be sure to identify the points of interest and information that fit your needs most. Please remember all prompts can be adapted into individual writing activities, homework assignments, small group discussions, or classroom seminars, as desired.



Key Concepts/ Buzzwords:

Maldives
 Mohamed Nasheed
 Copenhagen Climate Summit (2009)
 Democracy/Democratization
 Human Rights
 Peaceful Demonstration
 Global Warming/Climate Change
 Grassroots Campaign
 Atmospheric Carbon Concentration
 Greenhouse Gases
 Emissions Reduction
 Diplomacy
 Global Politics
 Developed Nations Vs.
 Developing Nations
 International Cooperation
 Globalization
 Public Relations
 Political Strategy
 International Media/Press
 Disaster Prevention
 Environmental Leadership
 Biographical Documentary
 Topical Documentary
 Malé
 Divehi
 Archipelago

Recommended Subject Areas

Environmental Science (Ecology, Meteorology)
 Social Science (Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology)
 Government
 Media Literacy/Media Studies
 Economics
 Current Events
 World Cultures/History (Asian Studies)
 Language Arts
 Ethics



OVERVIEW

Audience

High School (9–12 grade),
Community College,
Youth Development Organizations

Time

90 minutes + assignments

Subject Areas

Social Studies, Climate Change,
Environmental Science, Biology,
Chemistry, Sociology, Ethics,
Current Events, Meteorology

Purpose Of The Lesson

The Island President documents the story of one national government's reaction to the impending threats of climate change. The Maldivian fight for its survival in the face of a rising sea level is a profound microcosm of the global situation. This lesson examines the factors behind global climate change, its detrimental ecological and cultural effects, and the means by which it can be mitigated, on both local and international levels.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Examine what is meant by the term climate change and what it has in common with global warming
 - Analyze the debate surrounding climate change, consider their feelings about the issue, and discuss why they think there is such a strong reaction to this issue on both sides of the divide
- Understand the link between climate change, political advocacy, and the international political process
- Research the impact of climate change in their community
- Calculate their personal carbon footprint and develop a strategy to decrease their individual and collective carbon footprint over the course of one month

Skills

Discussion and group brainstorm, analyzing media content and interpreting media messages, small group collaboration, research, strategic planning, expository writing, oral presentation

Resources:

- **The Island President** film modules:
 - » Film Module 1 “Climate Politics Strategy Meeting” (2:37 minutes)
 - » Film Module 2 “Underwater Cabinet Meeting” (1:12 minutes)
- Student Handouts:
 - » Student Handout A: Man vs. Nature
 - » Student Handout B: Film Synopsis
- LCD projector or DVD player
- Pens and writing paper
- Whiteboard/blackboard and markers/ chalk
- Computers with internet access
- Assorted art supplies and/or desktop publishing software



Standards

Common Core: Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

• **Writing Standards 6–12**

6. (9–10, 11–12) Use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

• **Speaking and Listening Standards 6–12**

5. (9–10, 11–12) Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

10. CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

An understanding of civic ideals and practices is critical to full participation in society and is an essential component of education for citizenship. This theme enables students to learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizens of a democracy, and to appreciate the importance of active citizenship.

National Science Education Standards

Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

Environmental quality

- 12FSPSP4.2 Materials from human societies affect both physical and chemical cycles of the earth.
- 12FSPSP4.3 Many factors influence environmental quality. Factors that students might investigate include population growth, resource use, population distribution, overconsumption, the capacity of technology to solve problems, poverty, the role of economic, political, and religious views, and the different ways humans view the earth.

PROCEDURES

Pre-Screening Activity 1: Is It Getting Hot in Here?

Time: 30 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, paper, *Student Handout A: Man vs. Nature*, LCD projector or DVD player

Goal: Students will examine what is meant by the term climate change and what it has in common with global warming. They will then analyze the debate surrounding climate change, consider their feelings about the issue, and discuss why they think there is such a strong reaction to this issue on both sides of the divide.

PART 1: WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

- Instruct students to write the words *climate change* the middle of a blank piece of paper.
- Using the style of a crossword puzzle, write all the words they can think of that relate to the issue of climate change, making sure that each word or phrase shares at least one letter with the words “climate change.”
- Let students know that they can also build on the letters from their own words to expand their brainstorming results.
- Invite the students to share their results with the class and record a collective vocabulary of words that relate to climate change on the white/black board.

NOTE: As an alternative, students can work in small groups, each using a large sheet of kraft paper for their brainstorming.

- Using these words as a guide, develop a working definition of climate change.

PART 2: CLIMATE CHANGE VS GLOBAL WARMING

- There is a lot of debate about the changes that are happening to our planet, but sometimes people use the terms global warming and climate change interchangeably. Ask students to consider their definition for climate change and the ways they think it is the same or different than global warming.
- After the discussion, provide them with this definition of the two terms from the Environmental Protection Agency website:
 - » *Global warming* refers to the recent and ongoing rise in global average temperature near Earth’s surface. It is caused mostly by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Global warming is causing climate patterns to change. However, global warming itself represents only one aspect of climate change.
 - » *Climate change* refers to any significant change in the measures of climate lasting for an extended period of time. In other words, climate change includes major changes in temperature, precipitation, or wind patterns (among other effects) that occur over several decades or longer.



PART 3: WHAT'S ALL THE DEBATE ABOUT?

- Divide the class into pairs and distribute *Student Handout A: Man vs. Nature*.
- Instruct each pair to read the summary of the climate change debate and briefly discuss their understanding of the debate and why people might choose to support either side.

“The climate change debate, as it is discussed in the mainstream media, appears to be divided into two major sides. One side argues that the current global warming is caused by human factors, while the other side insists it is occurring because of natural forces. In the latter argument, two natural causes that dominate the conversation are solar changes and changes to the Earth’s orbit.”

“Hundreds of scientists around the world have conducted research that show human activities contribute the most to today’s climate change. We are changing the Earth’s atmosphere by emitting huge amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, most of which comes from the burning of fossil fuels. Other human activities include agriculture and changes in land-use patterns. They all work to tip the Earth’s energy balance by trapping more heat.”

“Even scientists who think human activity is the main cause of climate change don’t deny that natural changes will cause temperature fluctuations on Earth. However, their argument is that in the current cycle of climate change, the impact caused by man is far greater. But there’s no indication that the two sides of the climate change debate will reach any common ground in the near future on what scientific evidence is showing, or what policy decisions should be adopted.”

“The Brookings Institute released a report in April on the public opinion on climate change in the United States and Canada. In a survey of 2,130 people, the report found that there is a progressive decrease in the number of people who think there is ‘solid evidence of global warming’ and an increase in the number who think there is no solid evidence. In the fall of 2008, 17 percent of people did not believe in global warming. In the fall of 2010, that number had increased to 26 percent. Even though the number of climate change believers has decreased, the majority of people still believed that the Earth is undergoing global warming and most of them (61 percent of Americans and 57 percent of Canadians) felt it was a ‘very serious’ problem.”

Excerpted from:

The Climate Change Debate: Man vs. Nature

Anuradha K. Herath, *Astrobiology Magazine*

Date: 05 October 2011 via www.livescience.com



PROCEDURES

Pre-Screening Activity 2: Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

Distribute *Student Handout B: Film Synopsis*. Once the students have reviewed the summary explain that they will watch two brief excerpts from the film. Use the following prompts to guide discussion:

- What do you expect to learn by watching this film? What expectations do you have of the story?
- What is the difference between a narrative and documentary film?
- Have you ever seen a documentary film? If so, what was it about? Do you have a favorite documentary? What do you like about it?
- Who is a world leader (past or present) or political figure that you admire? What about his/her leadership do you like? What questions would you ask of him/her if given the opportunity?
- What do you know about the archipelago nation of the Maldives?
 - » Online Resource: The Maldives–BBC Country Profile and Map:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12651486>
- What do you know about the 2009 Climate Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark?
 - » Online Resources: UN Overview of the Summit and the Secretary General's Summary:
<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/lang/en/pages/2009summit>

SCREENING GUIDE:

Time: 10 minutes

You will need: Module 1: “Climate Politics Strategy Meeting”, Module 2: “Underwater Cabinet Meeting,” pens/pencils, paper, LCD projector or DVD player

- Instruct students to take notes while watching the video module and record quotes that illustrate the debate about global warming and its impact on the Maldives.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY

Time: 50 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, white/black board, computers with internet access

Goal: Students will participate in a guided discussion about **The Island President** and research the impact that climate change is having around the world as well as in their community. They will calculate their carbon footprint and develop a strategy to decrease their individual and collective carbon footprint over the course of one month.



PART 1: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the quotes and notes that the students recorded while watching the film modules and continue the discussion using the following prompts:

- What surprised you most when watching these film modules? Is there any part of the film that stood out for you?
- Mark Lynas, an Oxford environmental researcher states, “All this time that we’ve spent talking and all of these meetings we’ve had in Copenhagen and everywhere else, the temperature’s rising. And I think people forget that.” (Film Module 1: “Climate Politics Strategy Meeting”)
 - » Why do you think the filmmakers chose to include this line by Mr. Lynas? What is rhetorically impactful about the premise of this statement? What is the fallacy of the argument?
 - » The removal of carbon from the atmosphere is one climate change solution that is touched on in this conversation. What methods and technologies currently exist that facilitate this process? Do you believe government investment in climate change mitigation should be devoted to the removal of harmful greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, or a combination of both? Based on your research, which strategy would likely be more efficient?
- Lynas also states, “If the Maldives can do it in 10 years, 100 percent, why is the rest of the world desperately trying to avoid doing 10 percent over 30 years?” (Film Module 1)
 - » What do you think the answer to this question is? Why do so many governments resist committing their nations to a reduction in carbon emissions? What are the political disincentives, if any? Do you agree with Nasheed that many governments simply refuse to believe the science?
- President Mohamed Nasheed: “We need to get India, China, and Brazil.” (Film Module 1)
 - » Why does Nasheed target these three nations in his plans to recruit support for atmospheric carbon reduction worldwide? What challenges do you expect most small nation governments face in pursuing negotiations with large, industrialized nations?
- How would you describe Nasheed’s underwater cabinet meeting (Film Module 2: “Underwater Cabinet Meeting”) and its symbolic or metaphorical significance? What objective do you think Nasheed had in mind? How successful do you think the Nasheed administration was in its first two years of bringing global attention to the Maldives’ unique situation? Do you believe a visual “stunt” such as this can have a more resonant impact on others’ perspectives than mere words? Why or why not?
- What role does the visual news media play in affecting social change, or influencing public opinion on an issue? How can it be manipulated?

*Additional Discussion Questions:*

- President Mohamed Nasheed: “Maldives is a frontline state. We know that Maldives becoming carbon neutral is not going to stop us from annihilation. But at least we can die knowing that we’ve done the right thing.”
 - » How do you feel about this quote from President Nasheed? Do you agree that transitioning to carbon neutrality is “the right thing” morally? How effective do you consider this argument to be? Do you believe that appealing to others’ sense of moral obligation is the best way to achieve foreign support?
- President Mohamed Nasheed also said, “Well, it’s a human right. We cannot not talk about our existence as a country. We’ve been there for the last 3000 years. We have a culture, we have a language, we have a civilization.”
 - » Compare this argument to the one above. Do you believe that rhetorically framing the situation in this way has more or less of an impact? Why? Do you believe that cultural preservation is a human right? Are there other ancient world cultures that are under threat of extinction? What factors imperil them, if not rising sea levels?

PART 2: “WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE JUST MIGHT RUIN”

- Divide the class into pairs or small groups and instruct them to review the Huffington Post article and slideshow, “What Climate Change Just Might Ruin.” Online Resource: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/05/arctic-ice-melt-sea-level-rise_n_1942666.html#slide=1224006
- Ask each group to identify the impact of climate change on everyday life in different areas of the world, including their own.
- Have them identify 2–3 ways that they expect their own lifestyles/habits to be affected by climate change as well as 2–3 ways they expect their school or community will be affected over time. They should discuss the following as a group:
 - » Which of the following do you expect will be affected by climate change and how do you think your life might change as a result?
 - Your favorite foods or beverages
 - Your means of transportation
 - Your medical care
 - Your entertainment
 - Your means of communication



PART 3: WHAT SIZE IS MY CARBON FOOTPRINT?

- Instruct the groups to use the *Zero Footprint Youth Calculator* to calculate their individual carbon footprints. Then, have the students estimate what their group's collective carbon footprint might be.
- Ask the groups to discuss their results and identify:
 - » The top three contributors to their carbon footprint
 - » What they are currently doing that helps to limit their carbon emissions
- Using the *Green Schools Initiative* resources as a guide, instruct each group to develop a plan of action to reduce their collective carbon footprint
- To track their progress, each group should create a chart illustrating their current carbon footprint and their goal to shrink their footprint over the course of one month. Each member of the group should update their chart each week and compare their results at the end.

NOTE: The Cool School Challenge also offers suggestions on how to expand the activity to include the whole school.

Online Resources:

Zero Footprint Youth Calculator:

<http://calc.zerofootprint.net/youth/>

A Student's Guide to Climate Change (EPA):

<http://epa.gov/climatechange/kids/index.html>

Green Schools Initiative:

<http://greenschools.net/article.php?id=271>

Cool Schools Challenge (National Wildlife Federation):

<http://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Become-an-Eco-School/Cool-School-Challenge.aspx>





ACTIVITIES

Teachers may select one or more of the following options:

Explore A Local Ecosystem

- As a class, select a specific ecosystem in your region (or elsewhere). If it's sufficiently accessible, consider visiting as a group.
- Identify its ecological and geological characteristics. What type of plant life inhabits it? What type of animal life? How would you describe its current climate? To what extent are its immediate atmosphere and natural water resources influenced or manipulated by human civilization? What are some distinct ecological effects you anticipate if the average annual temperature of that specific region were to rise by 5 degrees Fahrenheit? 15 degrees Fahrenheit?
- Alternatively, divide into small groups and assign each an ecosystem. Each group will research the specific effects of atmospheric warming on their designated ecosystem and share their findings with the class.
- Some ideas for region types: deserts, forests, coastal, coral reefs, rainforests, lakes/ivers, glacial, etc. Some sample effects: bird migration, species extinction, decline in agricultural yield, disease perpetuation, ice melt, ocean acidification, storm pattern changes, etc.

Start A Climate Change Awareness Campaign

- Divide the class into groups of 3–5 students and instruct each group to select an aspect of the climate change issue to explore for this activity.
- Have each group research their topic and develop an awareness campaign to share with their school community. Suggestions include:
 - » Contact a climate change NGO about partnership opportunities
 - » Conduct a fundraiser on behalf of a climate change NGO
 - » Create a class website devoted to exhibiting the students' climate change studies and projects
 - » Start a print awareness campaign around campus (posters, stickers, etc.)
 - » Host an awareness and/or charity event for families, other classes, or the local community



Improve Your School's Water Conservation

Begin a water conservation initiative on your campus.

- Have students work in groups to calculate their collective water footprints using the online resources listed below
- This can be a multi-day activity that involves raising awareness about the importance and impact of water conservation by creating a multimedia campaign using social networks, posters, blogging, or creating a video PSA.
- It can also be executed as a one-day activity targeted to water conservation in the school community.
- Have each group identify an area where water is being wasted or misused and create posters to raise awareness including posting signs in bathrooms or at drinking fountains.
- Online Resources:
 - » **USGS Drip Calculator:**
<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html>
This calculator helps estimate how many gallons per day and per year are wasted from a leaky faucet. A simple concept, but it all adds up! Students will need to know how many drips per minute and how many leaky faucets they have.
 - » **Water Footprint Calculator for Kids:**
<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/water-footprint-calculator/>
Nearly 95 percent of your water footprint is hidden in the food you eat, energy you use, products you buy, and services you rely on, in addition to the water you drink, bathe, and flush with. Estimate how much water you use with this online calculator.
 - » **WaterFootprint.org**
<http://www.waterfootprint.org/?page=files/YourWaterFootprint>
You can use this quick or extended calculator to look at your personal water footprint, or at the global, national, or corporate water footprints of other entities.

THE ISLAND PRESIDENT

STUDENT HANDOUT A: MAN VS. NATURE

“The climate change debate, as it is discussed in the mainstream media, appears to be divided into two major sides. One side argues that the current global warming is caused by human factors, while the other side insists it is occurring because of natural forces. In the latter argument, two natural causes that dominate the conversation are solar changes and changes to the Earth’s orbit.”

“Hundreds of scientists around the world have conducted research that show human activities contribute the most to today’s climate change. We are changing the Earth’s atmosphere by emitting huge amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, most of which comes from the burning of fossil fuels. Other human activities include agriculture and changes in land-use patterns. They all work to tip the Earth’s energy balance by trapping more heat.”

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Date: 05 October 2011 via www.livescience.com

THE ISLAND PRESIDENT

STUDENT HANDOUT B: FILM SYNOPSIS

The Island President tells the story of President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives, a man confronting a problem greater than any other world leader has ever faced – the literal survival of his country and everyone in it.

After leading a twenty-year, pro-democracy movement against the brutal regime of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, surviving repeated imprisonments and torture, Nasheed became president at 41, only to encounter a far more implacable adversary than a dictator: the ocean. Considered the lowest lying country in the world, a rise of a mere three meters in sea level would inundate the Maldives, rendering the country practically unlivable. Unless dramatic changes are made by the larger countries of the world, the Maldives, like a modern Atlantis, will disappear under the waves.

As much as its plight is one-of-a-kind, the Maldives itself is a country like no other. A Shangri-la of breathtakingly beautiful turquoise reefs, beaches, and palm trees, the Maldives is composed of 1200 coral islands off of the Indian sub-continent, of which 200 are inhabited. Arrayed across 400 miles of open sea like necklace-shaped constellations, the Maldives is one of the most geographically dispersed nations on earth.

Democracy came to the Maldives, a Sunni Muslim country, in 2008, in a way that was uncannily similar to the recent Middle Eastern populist revolts against autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere. What made the Maldives movement different from the ones that have followed it is the existence of a clear opposition party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), which had in its co-founder, Nasheed, a popular and charismatic leader ready to usher his country into democracy. Educated in Sri Lanka and England, Nasheed proved to be an unusually shrewd and sophisticated politician who grasped that the only way he could stand up to the catastrophic issues of climate change facing his country would be to take the Maldives cause to the world stage.

The Island President captures Nasheed's first year of office, a time when he influences the direction of international events in a way that few leaders have ever done, even in countries many times the size of the Maldives. Nasheed's story culminates in his trip to the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, where the film provides a rare glimpse of the political horse-trading that goes on at such a top-level global assembly.



OVERVIEW

Audience

High School (9–12 grade),
Community College,
Youth Development Organizations

Time

90 minutes + assignments

Subject Areas

Social Studies, Human Rights,
World History/Cultures, Government,
Sociology, Ethics, Economy,
Current Events, Language Arts

Purpose Of The Lesson

The opening scenes of **The Island President** chronicle the democratic movement in the Maldives and the human rights violations for which its longstanding autocratic regime was responsible. The Maldivian story is merely the latest of many historical struggles between disenfranchised citizens and abusive governments. This lesson explores the basic premise of human rights, the history of human rights abuse – both legislative and executive/military – and its consequences, human rights in the contemporary media, and the application of human rights issues to modern American life.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand what is meant by a *human right* and create a Declaration of Human Rights using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a guide.
- Understand leadership strategies around human rights advocacy
- Apply critical viewing and note-taking skills
- Examine the role of personal responsibility in protecting human rights
- Develop a strategy to improving human rights around the world and in their communities

Skills

Discussion and group brainstorm, analyzing media content and interpreting media messages, small group collaboration, research, argumentative writing, oral presentation

Resources:

- **The Island President** film module:
 - » Film Module 3 “Maldives Democracy Movement” (15:56 minutes)
- LCD projector or DVD player
- Video production equipment (smart phone video cameras are a viable option)
- Pens and writing paper
- Whiteboard/blackboard and markers/chalk
- Computers with internet access
- Assorted art supplies and/or desktop publishing software

Standards

Common Core: Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

- **Writing Standards 6–12**

4. (9–10, 11–12) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

- **Speaking and Listening Standards 6–12**

1. (9–10, 11–12) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- **5. INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS**

Institutions such as families and civic, educational, governmental, and religious organizations exert a major influence on people's lives. This theme allows students to understand how institutions are formed, maintained, and changed, and to examine their influence.





PROCEDURES

Pre-Screening Activity 1: What Are My Human Rights?

Time: 40 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, paper, Student Handout B: Film Synopsis, LCD projector or DVD player

Online Resources: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Plain Language Version): <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plain.asp>

Human Rights Factsheet: <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/factsheet.asp>

Goal: Examine the concept of human rights through brainstorming and a review of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Using the class discussion as a guide, create a Class Declaration of Human Rights.

PART 1: FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

- Write the following question on the board and give students five minutes to write as many responses as they can:
 - » “What are your human rights?”
- Ask for volunteers to share their responses and record key words or phrases on the board. Discuss the students feedback using the following prompts for guidance:
 - » Does everyone have the same human rights as you?
 - » Should everyone have the same human rights?
 - » Do people in other countries have the same rights that we do? Why or why not?
 - » Who gives us our rights? Are we born with them?
 - » Who protects our rights?
- Next, instruct the students to work in groups and give them 10 minutes to develop a list of five rights that they feel should be available to everyone regardless of their country of origin, race, class, gender, age, or religion.
- Ask each group to share their results and record them in a collective Classroom Declaration of Human Rights.

PART 2: UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Introduce the Plain Language version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Human Rights Factsheet and ask the students to review and discuss with their group using the following question prompts:
 - » How are these rights similar to/different than our classroom’s version of the Declaration of Human Rights?
 - » Is there anything in here that surprises you?
 - » Are there any rights in here that you do not have access to?
 - » Who enforces these rights?



- » Would you like to refine/edit our Classroom's Declaration based on what you have read? If so, what changes would you make?
- Make final revisions to the Declaration and make sure it is displayed where the students can review it. Ask them to keep this activity in mind while viewing the film module.

Activity 2: Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

(NOTE: These are the same pre-screening questions from Lesson 1: Global Climate + The Ethics of Industry)

Distribute *Student Handout: Film Synopsis*. Once the students have reviewed the summary explain that they will watch a brief excerpt from the film. Use the following prompts to guide discussion:

- What do you expect to learn by watching this film? What expectations do you have of the story?
- What is the difference between a narrative and documentary film?
- Have you ever seen a documentary film? If so, what was it about? Do you have a favorite documentary? What do you like about it?
- Who is a world leader (past or present) or political figure that you admire? What about his/her leadership do you like? What questions would you ask of him/her if given the opportunity?
- What do you know about the archipelago nation of the Maldives?
 - » Online Resource: The Maldives—BBC Country Profile and Map: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12651486>

SCREENING GUIDE:

Time: 20 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, writing paper, Film Module 3: “Maldives Democracy Movement,” LCD projector or DVD player

- Instruct students to take notes while watching the video module and record quotes that illustrate the ways that human rights were being violated, fought for, or protected in the Maldives.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY

Time: 50 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, white/black board, writing paper

Goal: Students will participate in a guided discussion about **The Island President** and consider how the human rights discussed in the pre-screening activities have been both violated and protected in the Maldives recent history. They will examine the role of personal responsibility in protecting human rights and how they can contribute to improving human rights around the world and in their communities.



PART 1A: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How would you characterize the Maldivian government prior to Nasheed's democracy movement? To what extent was it democratic, if at all? To what extent was it totalitarian?
- Under what pretense did Maumoon Abdul Gayoom maintain power throughout his 'presidency'?
- What are some ways in which the Gayoom regime was able to perpetuate itself for three decades?
- In what ways did Gayoom use brute force to protect his political interests and control his populace?
- In what ways did Gayoom use education to protect his political interests and indoctrinate his populace?
- In what ways, if any, did the Maldives evolve politically during the Gayoom regime?
- In what ways did the Maldives evolve economically during the Gayoom regime?
- Can you think of another example of a dictatorship that you have studied in one of your classes? How does the situation in the Maldives compare? Are there any important similarities or differences that you can identify?

PART 1B: CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION...

Select two or three questions from each section that are most applicable to your class curriculum goals and areas of study:

Gayoom's Dictatorship

- Ahmed Naseem: "He was like a mafia don." (Module 3)
 - » Discuss this quote. What characteristics does this imply about Gayoom's leadership? How is it reflective of his regime? How would you describe the cinematic trope of the mafia don?
- Based on what we saw in the film, what are some non-violent human rights violations that Gayoom was accused of being responsible for? What are some violent human rights violations that were discussed?
- Why did Gayoom's men arrest Nasheed in the middle of the night? How did Nasheed react? What were the consequences of Nasheed's reaction?
- How does Nasheed describe his time in the corrugated iron cell? How would you describe his word choice and demeanor in this scene?
- How do you think Nasheed's 18 months alone in a remote cell contributed to his personality? What effect, if any, do you suppose his time in solitary had on his political and ideological conviction?
- How did the Gayoom regime respond to the public demonstrations? Do you think this was a good strategy? What impact did the Gayoom response likely have on public opinion?



Nasheed and the Democracy Movement

- After his release, Nasheed makes the decision to form a political party. What risks were involved in this decision? What incentives?
- What challenges were inherent to this decision? By what means did Nasheed rally political support for a dissenting party in the face of a regime that permitted neither assembly nor dissent? What effects did the longstanding suppression of political parties have on the collective perspective of the Maldivian public?
- What event galvanized the democracy movement in the Maldives? By what means did the public become aware of it? To what extent did the democracy movement have foreign support?
- President Maumoon Gayoom: “Calmly and obediently, return to your homes.” (Module 3)
Gayoom: “I’m not saying you are lying, but you are not well-informed.” (Module 3)
 - » What do these two lines say about the character of Gayoom? How does he perceive his leadership role? What are his priorities? What are his values? How would you characterize his relationship with the Maldivian public?
- Why does Nasheed decide to leave the Maldives as he is building his political party? Where does he go? What challenges does pursuing this endeavor abroad present? Does it present any advantages? In what ways is he still able to exert political pressure on the Gayoom regime?
- President Mohamed Nasheed: “The tsunami wiped out 50 percent of GDP in an hour.” (Module 3)
 - » In what ways did the 2004 tsunami, its devastating economic and environmental impact, and the response of the incumbent government to a disaster of such magnitude alter the political landscape in the Maldives? What other factors do you expect were influential in activating a more progressive attitude among Maldivians?
- What was the core message of Mohamed Nasheed's political movement against the Gayoom administration? What about this message was appealing to Maldivians?
- By what means did Nasheed pursue his dissident campaign and political ambitions after returning to the Maldives from exile? What historical precedents exist for his public strategy? In leading efforts to exert pressure on the regime, what specific response was Nasheed seeking from Gayoom?
- **PMN:** “We went into almost every single household, more than 52,000 homes. Even the most hardened of the regimes loyalists in the islands, they would listen.”
 - » By what various means does Nasheed's presidential campaign conduct outreach to the Maldivian electorate? Do you think Nasheed himself is well suited to a door-to-door campaign? Why or why not? In what ways did the Nasheed campaign use the internet to perpetuate its message?
- What were some key tenets of the Nasheed campaign's platform?
- In what ways do you think Nasheed's public persona among Maldivians was influenced by (a) his public demeanor, (b) his foreign credentials, and (c) his personal history with the incumbent regime?



The Maldives and Global and Local Human Rights

- How would you describe the international reaction to Nasheed's victory? How (and to what extent) was it covered in the global and/or American press?
- President Nasheed: "Well, it's a human right. We cannot not talk about our existence as a country. We've been there for the last 3000 years. We have a culture, we have a language, we have a civilization."
 - » Why do you think President Nasheed frames the survival of the Maldives as a human rights issue? What do you think he specifically means by "it"? Is he referring to his people's lives, or their lifestyles?
- In February 2012, Mohamed Nasheed resigned the presidency under threat of violence from forces loyal to the Gayoom regime. What has ensued? What is the governmental status of the Maldives today? Where is Mohamed Nasheed and what is he up to?

PART 2: ACTIVITY - HUMAN RIGHTS START AT HOME

- Until they are enacted and enforced, human rights are just words on a page.
- Instruct your students to work in pairs and read the following quote by Eleanor Roosevelt. Explain that she played a crucial role in developing and championing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- Ask each student to rewrite the quote and express what it means to them in their own words. They will then share with their partner and discuss the questions below:

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." – Eleanor Roosevelt
- Questions for discussion:
 - » Who is responsible for protecting the rights and dignity of individuals?
 - » Roosevelt said, "Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." What did she mean? How can our individual actions have a global impact?
 - » How did the individual actions of the people depicted in **The Island President** give "meaning" to the rights listed in the UDHR?
 - » In the quote Eleanor Roosevelt says that human rights begin "in small places, close to home." What actions can we take every day to preserve the rights and dignity of people in our families, our schools, and our communities?



ASSIGNMENTS

Select one or more of the following assignments:

1. Change the World by Empowering Your Community

What is the human rights landscape in our community, school, state, country? In what ways are the human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration being protected, denied, or violated? Are all the rights that we identified for our Classroom Declaration being enforced where we live or go to school?

Instruct students to work in groups to review the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and identify an issue in your community that could be improved by the enforcement of these rights. Develop a plan of action to raise awareness of this issue and its connection to human rights.

Some campaign ideas include any (or some combination) of the following:

- Contact a human rights NGO about partnership opportunities
- Conduct a fundraiser on behalf of a human rights NGO
- Create a class website devoted to exhibiting the students' human rights studies and projects
- Write individual or class letters to your state and/or federal representatives
- Start a print awareness campaign around campus (posters, stickers, etc.)
- Host an awareness and/or charity event for families, other classes, or the local community

2. Produce a Human Rights PSA Series

- Divide the class into a few small groups and ask each to select a global human rights issue or a nation facing regular human rights abuse.
- Instruct each group to write a brief (30-100 second) video PSA script that addresses the selected topic and delegate roles including performers, narrators, production crew, etc.
- Students can practice their oratory and media production skills while imparting information about their desired nation or issue.
- Upon completion, these PSAs can be shared (or edited together) among the group or beyond; they can even be included in a class presentation, documentary production, or website.



3. Establish a Classroom News Feed

- Sign up for an internet news feed devoted to the national situation(s) or global human rights issue(s) you wish to follow.
- Ask students to review the feed throughout the week and write a journal entry every Friday about a story or issue that had an impact on them.
- Schedule a discussion circle at the end of every month where the students break into groups and discuss an issue from one of their journal entries.

EXTENSIONS

Going Further Part 1: Extension Activities

1) CREATE A HUMAN RIGHTS WORLD MAP

First, as a class, make a list of the most common types of human rights abuses. In what ways are women's rights regularly abused in some nations? In what ways are other minorities' rights violated? Assign each type you identify a different color. Divide into a few small groups, and assign each group a continent. Each group researches the human rights situation in the countries that make up their designated continent. Then, collaborate by filling in a blank world map according to your predetermined color code. Countries where multiple violations are at issue can be striped with multiple colors as necessary. Reflect on the completed map together. How does it compare to your expectations? What surprised you about the information presented? If you could donate millions in human rights support to one nation only, which would you select and why?

2) INTERVIEW A REFUGEE

Find a political (or environmental) refugee in your school or local community to interview. This could be anyone permanently displaced from their home by factors completely outside of their control. In some cases, the relative of such an individual may be more appropriate or available to interview. Invite this individual to be interviewed in a mutually agreeable place. Select a few students to conduct the interview. Collaborate as a class to prepare appropriate questions for the interviewee, pertinent to your educational objectives. Do whatever research you can to help inform your preparation level. Try to ascertain the political, economic, and/or military situation in your subject's home nation and the reasons he/she were in need of refuge. Discuss with your subject the state of civil society in the nation then and now, the overall experience of his/her emigration, and his/her perspective on the premise of human rights.

NOTE: Interviewing refugees about traumatic experiences is sensitive, and must be handled with care. Be sure to set appropriate ground rules with the class prior to taking on this lesson; the following resource can provide guidance:

<http://dartcenter.org/gateway/educators>



Going Further Part 2: Research And Discussion Prompts On Human Rights

1) A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- What are some of the most famous examples of human rights abuse in world history? How would you characterize the governments and individuals that were responsible for these human rights abuses? To what extent were they perpetuated on an “unofficial” basis? To what extent were they legislative in nature?
- How would you characterize American history with regard to human rights?
- To what extent were human rights issues critical to American independence from colonial rule? In what ways has the United States government’s commitment to human rights set a groundbreaking example for other nations?
- What are some historical examples of the United States government sanctioning and/or committing violations of basic human rights? What about the American public? What about U.S. corporations?
- Are human rights legislated differently among different U.S. states? If so, how?
- Compare and contrast the human rights movement in the Maldives with the civil rights movement in the United States. What differences are most notable? What similarities?
- Can you identify any measurable impacts that human rights violations have had on your community? Are there any ethnic minorities in your community with refugee heritage? To what extent do the most egregious U.S. human rights violations (slavery, Asian American internment, segregation) resonate in your community?
- What countries are currently struggling with some form of governmental oppression?
 - » What human rights are being violated?
 - » Among which groups or demographics?
 - » To what extent is international intervention underway, if any?
- What are some ways you can contribute to human rights efforts globally? Research some of the key articles ratified in the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR):
 - Article 2: right to life
 - Article 3: prohibition of torture
 - Article 4: prohibition of slavery
 - Article 5: right to liberty and security
 - Article 6: right to a fair trial
 - Article 8: right to privacy
 - Article 9: freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
 - Article 10: freedom of expression
 - Article 11: freedom of association
 - Article 14: prohibition of discrimination
- What political considerations do you expect impacted the priorities of the European nations who participated in this agreement?



- What historical events were they trying to prevent from recurring in the future?
- What were the perceived threats to global human rights in post-WWII Europe?
- What role did the United States play in these international negotiations? How do these international articles compare to the U.S. Bill of Rights?
- Do you agree that all of the human rights listed previously (or in the complete treaties) belong in a universal agreement? Why or why not? Are there any rights that you believe were wrongly omitted from these treaties? If so, what are they?
- Which of the basic human rights listed previously do you feel the most passionate about? If you had to live in a country where only one or two of these human rights were guaranteed by the government, which two would you choose? Why? Alternatively, which of the listed human rights do you value least? Why?
- In your opinion, what is the best way to combat systemic human rights infractions? Historically, what factors have prevented people from combating governmental oppression? What factors have empowered them to combat the human rights abuse to which they were subjected? What means have proved most successful?
- What have been the key factors driving sovereign nations to pursue agreement on basic human rights laws and to empower international authorities to enforce them? Which instances of mass oppression and genocide were these treaties and conventions a reaction to? To what extent do you think the coincidental advent of mass media technologies contributed to the cultural shift toward a collective acknowledgement of the inherent and imperative nature of human rights? To what extent do you believe scientific progress contributed to this cultural shift in public awareness and governmental transparency?

2) HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, AND THE MALDIVES

- What can you discover about the indigenous history of the Maldives?
- What can you discover about the colonial history of the Maldives? How did the Maldives achieve independence from colonial rule?
- To what extent do the founding documents of the Maldives address human rights?
- How would you describe the first two presidential regimes in post-colonial Maldives? How about their respective records on human rights?
- What did you know about the Maldives prior to watching this film? What did you expect you would learn about the Maldives during the viewing? What did you actually learn?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Amnesty International Educational Resources

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/resources/educators>

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org>

Human Rights Education Association (Europe)

<http://www.hrea.org>

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/default.asp>

Asian Human Rights Commission

<http://www.humanrights.asia>

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies

<http://www.acdhrs.org>

European Convention on Human Rights Wiki

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Convention_on_Human_Rights

Human Rights Resource Center

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat>

Educational materials from the University of Minnesota



THE ISLAND PRESIDENT

STUDENT HANDOUT: FILM SYNOPSIS

The Island President tells the story of President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives, a man confronting a problem greater than any other world leader has ever faced – the literal survival of his country and everyone in it.

After leading a twenty-year, pro-democracy movement against the brutal regime of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, surviving repeated imprisonments and torture, Nasheed became president at 41, only to encounter a far more implacable adversary than a dictator: the ocean. Considered the lowest lying country in the world, a rise of a mere three meters in sea level would inundate the Maldives, rendering the country practically unlivable. Unless dramatic changes are made by the larger countries of the world, the Maldives, like a modern Atlantis, will disappear under the waves.

As much as its plight is one-of-a-kind, the Maldives itself is a country like no other. A Shangri-la of breathtakingly beautiful turquoise reefs, beaches, and palm trees, the Maldives is composed of 1200 coral islands off of the Indian sub-continent, of which 200 are inhabited. Arrayed across 400 miles of open sea like necklace-shaped constellations, the Maldives is one of the most geographically dispersed nations on earth.

Democracy came to the Maldives, a Sunni Muslim country, in 2008, in a way that was uncannily similar to the recent Middle Eastern populist revolts against autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere. What made the Maldives movement different from the ones that have followed it is the existence of a clear opposition party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), which had in its co-founder, Nasheed, a popular and charismatic leader ready to usher his country into democracy. Educated in Sri Lanka and England, Nasheed proved to be an unusually shrewd and sophisticated politician who grasped that the only way he could stand up to the catastrophic issues of climate change facing his country would be to take the Maldives cause to the world stage.

The Island President captures Nasheed's first year of office, a time when he influences the direction of international events in a way that few leaders have ever done, even in countries many times the size of the Maldives. Nasheed's story culminates in his trip to the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, where the film provides a rare glimpse of the political horse-trading that goes on at such a top-level global assembly.



Study Guide Credits

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To purchase the complete Educational Edition Package visit:

www.firstrunfeatures.com/islandpresident_educational.html

Community Classroom

Community Classroom brings innovative media resources to educators in high schools, colleges, and other youth-serving organizations. In tandem with ITVS's national community engagement program Community Cinema, Community Classroom provides educators with access to high quality video content and standards aligned curriculum that supports development of critical thinking and writing skills, media literacy, media creation, and opportunities to engage with local service organizations and take action on today's most compelling social issues.

ITVS

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the internet, and the Emmy® Award-winning series Independent Lens on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Diverse Muslim Voices

Diverse Muslim Voices builds awareness and understanding in the U.S. of the range of Muslim societies and cultures. Advancing the mission of ITVS's Global Perspectives Project, a two-way exchange of independent documentaries, the multiyear project elevates stories about Muslim cultures through multiplatform promotion and distribution and ignites citizen engagement through live events and educational programs. The initiative is funded by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

AfterImage Public Media

AfterImage Public Media is a non-profit company established to produce and distribute educational media that creatively address social, political, historical and cultural subjects. The company produces documentary film and television projects and community engagement programs that raise awareness about matters in the public interest.