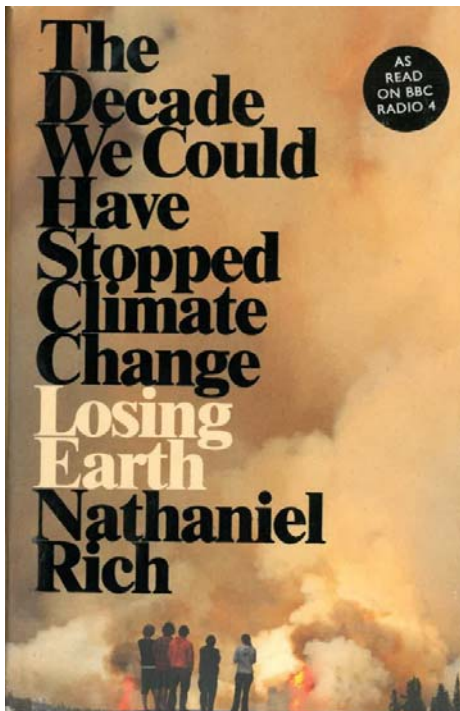


The Literacy Lowdown: Losing Earth



A level geography students, remember, you should:

- undertake wider reading
- use factual texts, discursive / creative material

Summary

Nathaniel identifies the 1970s as a lost decade as we now hurtle towards a warmer, unpredictable climate. The story follows the frustrations of Rafe Pomerance, from meeting the Jaxons who were “[scientific] superheroes...convened by the U.S intelligence apparatus” to the work of NASA’s Jim Hansen on CO₂ and Mirror Worlds.

The 1985 CFC effect on Antarctica and the 1988 senate hearing that “global warming has begun” are small victories in this story of global inaction.

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Specification links

AQA A Level 3.1.1.3 The carbon cycle.

Edexcel A Level 2A.1 The causes of longer and shorter climate change.

OCR A Level 2.3.2 How human activity is responsible for the enhanced greenhouse effect.

WJEC 4.5.6 Impacts of human activities on the atmosphere at local and regional scales.

Key quotes

“A 3-degree warming...is a prescription for short-term disaster: forests spurting in the Arctic. The abandonment of most coastal cities, mass starvation.” (p4)

“It no longer seems rational to assume that humanity, encountering an existential threat, will behave rationally.” (p5)

“‘We might start out with an emotional question’ proposed Thomas Waltz. ‘The question is fundamental to being a human being: do we care?’” (p55)

“A new villain was emerging too: Fred Koomanoff, Reagan’s new director of the Energy Department’s carbon dioxide program, a wolf asked to oversee the henhouse.” (p74)

“By comparing old shipping records with current satellite data, he had found that since the 1930s Antarctica had already lost a band of ice, 180 miles in width.” (p76)

“Bush had promised to combat the greenhouse effect with the Whitehouse effect.” (p141)

“When we speak about things like fuel-efficiency standards or gasoline taxes or methane flaring, we are speaking about nothing less than all we love and all we are.” (p204)