

Beyond the Hype - Teacher's Guide

Activity 1

This activity is meant to introduce the unit by not addressing the topic straight away but directing students' attention to the physical fact of looking and what makes us look in one or another direction.

Here are some hints the teacher may want to share with their students before starting a whole group discussion. At the same time, they could be the scientifically based answer to the questions that may help sparkle and lead the discussion.

Key (possible ideas)

3. Students may come up with answers such as: the answer or their memories are in the sky / in order to unfocus their eyes so that they don't have any visual inputs and they can solely focus their thoughts on what they are trying to remember / they're trying to do a brain scan to see if they can access their memory vault / their brain is going in different directions and the eyes are just a physical reaction to it

7. It is believed that when people are engaged in thought they tend to disengage from the external world by blinking or fixating on an empty portion of the visual field. When people try to respond to difficult questions, they avert their gaze from engaging visual inputs. It helps them to mind wandering, insight in problem solving, memory encoding and search. It appears to favour a shift of attention from external to internal stimuli that benefits creativity and problem solving by reducing the cognitive load and enhancing attention to internally evolving activation. When looking for a creative idea, or the possible solution to a problem, people often mind wander. Of course, mind wandering does not necessarily imply that one is working on a problem or having a creative idea, for example one could be thinking of a past vacation.

We feel like a sort of *withdrawal* from the outer world. The connection is supported by the finding that when people search for (non-visual) information in long-term memory they make multiple eye movements analogous to those made when searching the environment visually, and when they focus on information in long-term memory, they make very few eye movements just as happens when people focus on an object in the visual environment.

It has been demonstrated that eye movements mirror mental images. There is an association between eye movements and thinking. If attention to internal thoughts is increased, attention to the external world will decrease, and vice versa.

Extracted from: REVIEW article Front. Psychol., 15 February 2016

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00161>

Activity 2

Climate Change Warnings

Key

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. lure | 2. conveniences | 3. values | 4. discount | 5. evacuation |
| 6. budge | 7. Slightly | 8. Couch | 9. acting | 10. chance |
| 11.geographically | 12. floods | 13. hit | 14. instability | 15. vulnerable |

Activity 3

Science and the media

Once your students have completed their “*handbook*” you may want to facilitate this list to them by projecting it or simply relating it to their own ideas.

Tips for Effective Science Communication

1. Know your audience:

- ☐ The general public wants to know how your research impacts their lives and their societies. Whether it is a formal presentation or a casual conversation with friends and neighbours.
- ☐ The media wants to know what makes the findings of your research important, including how it's different from what others have done.
- ☐ Potential investors want to know whether your work will provide them with a significant return.

2. Identify the goals of communication: to present your findings and gain support for additional work. to educate, to advocate, to raise awareness, to build trust, to influence policy or research, to encourage change, or to be part of a dialogue.

3. Start with the most important information: Your audience want the key findings first, then the “So what?” that explains why the findings matter, and then the supporting details that led to your key findings.

4. Avoid jargon: stay away from jargon or unfamiliar words and uses terms that make sense to a broader audience

5. Be relatable: One way to avoid scientific jargon is to incorporate analogies and stories into your scientific communication. Storytelling as a way to “humanize” scientific research.

6. Provide visuals: Charts, graphs, images, and other visuals are another way to avoid jargon and make an audience comfortable with a topic. “A picture speaks 1,000 words”

7. Stick to three points: you should add the appropriate level of background information that's relevant for your audience—but you should focus and emphasize those three points throughout your communication.

8. Talk about the scientific process: Instead of focusing solely on the results, be ready to explain how you got there, why you used certain research methods, and what next steps you will take. This can spark curiosity in people without a scientific background.

9. Focus on the bigger impact: Bringing your conversation back to the big-picture impact can help an audience understand why your work is important even if they may not understand the steps of your research

10. Keep it brief: Explain why your research is exciting. Highlight the problem you are trying to solve and tie it back to why your work is relevant. Be persuasive, positive and flexible.

Adapted from <https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/tips-for-effective-science-communication/>

Activity 4

Don't Look Up Listening

Here is the audio script for this activity. Play it in two parts and do the activities with them.

Don't Look Up Is a Primal Scream of a Film

The director Adam McKay believes that his star-studded new Netflix movie is an apocalyptic comedy for our moment.

By [David Sims](#)

In *Don't Look Up*, a planet-killing comet is spotted in space by an astronomy student, Kate Dibiasky (played by Jennifer Lawrence), and her professor, Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio). Their efforts to warn society are met with derision, disinterest, political cowardice, and, eventually, total denial. McKay's script has its knives out for the news's unwillingness to tell hard truths, social media's endless conveyor belt of distractions, and a political class more intent on winning elections than pursuing real solutions.



Niko Tavernise / Netflix December 23, 2021

"You're going to be laughing; you're going to see shocking, absurd changes; and then I wanted ... for all of that to melt away, to end 'real,'" he said. The satire of *Don't Look Up* is anguished and clear to the point of feeling bludgeoning. It's driven by special effects and a star-studded cast that includes Meryl Streep as the president, Jonah Hill as her sycophantic son, and Cate Blanchett and Tyler Perry as simpering talk-show hosts.

Similarly, McKay said of *Don't Look Up*, "the comet idea is perfect because we, as filmgoers, know the routine. We've seen this movie before." The upsetting thrill of the film comes from watching humanity face a fictional threat and then, unlike the heroes of other stories, fail to rise to the challenge. In McKay's movie, the president stalls on taking major action in order to avoid alarm; Dibiasky and Mindy's lack of media training hurt their efforts to sell the gravity of the situation on television; and the rest of the world, uninterested in the notion of total doom, starts to question whether the comet is even a credible threat.

I watched *Don't Look Up* in an otherwise empty screening room while wearing a mask, and I was struck by how bluntly it reflected our current pandemic reality, where the most basic science has become a matter of political debate. McKay intended the film as a climate-change parable, about how society chooses to ignore impending danger. But after he wrote the script and had begun pre-production, he watched with astonishment as a different apocalyptic scenario played out toward similar ends. "The entire time I'm getting emails and texts from our crew, from our cast, saying, 'Oh my God, did you see there's a tax break for millionaires in the COVID package?' That's a beat in the [*Don't Look Up*] script. 'Oh my God, did you see there's people denying COVID exists?' At one point I'm like, we don't make the movie. It happened! We're too late!" When he returned to the script, he had to make it "20 percent crazier, because reality had played out crazier than the script."

One "stranger than fiction" moment that particularly struck McKay was when then-President Donald Trump floated the idea of injecting bleach to kill the coronavirus. "Nothing I had in the script was that crazy," McKay said. "So, I added more comet denial ... 'cause we were seeing that kind of stuff happening ... In the edit room, we had to do this weird straddling of reality versus bonkers." Even the most absurd beats in *Don't Look Up*, like a billionaire tech magnate (Mark Rylance) who wants to mine the comet for rare minerals, have some basis in real life.

Adapted from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2021/12/dont-look-up-adam-mckay-netflix-movie/621104/>

Exercise 1



Play the audio “Don’t Look Up Film Summary” and stop at minute 0:35. Get students to try to fill in the gaps in the following exercise.

In *Don’t Look Up*, a [1] comet is spotted in space by an astronomy student, Kate Dibiasky (played by Jennifer Lawrence), and her professor, Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio). Their efforts to [2] society are met with derision, [3] , political cowardice, and, eventually, total [4] McKay’s script has its knives out for the news’s [5] to tell hard truths, social media’s endless [6] belt of distractions, and a political class more [7] on winning elections than pursuing real solutions.

Key

These are the missing words:

planet-killing - unwillingness - warn – disinterest - denial - conveyor - intent

- Here the main topics dealt with in the film are mentioned. What are they?

Key:

1. The discovery of a comet that will annihilate the whole planet by two low level astronomers.
2. Politicians are incapable of taking the threat seriously prioritising their power games and interests.
3. The media make great efforts to cover the truth, and, thanks to its power, they manage to hide the obvious from their audience by merely telling their followers ‘*don’t look up*’.



Play the rest of the audio now.

Exercise 2

Say if the following statements are True or False

1. The ending of the film is real, not as the shocking changes presented during the film.
2. As soon as the two astronomers appeared on television, the audience believed in the threat of the giant asteroid barreling toward Earth.
3. In the film some people denied that COVID exists.
4. The director included some exaggerated ideas because he thought that reality surpassed fiction.

Key:

1. T 2. F 3. F 4. T

Exercise 3

Vocabulary

- Complete the following collocations mentioned in the text

..... the idea straddling of
meet something with and gloom
star-studded

Key:

float the idea straddling of **reality**

meet something with **derision** **doom** and gloom

star-studded **cast**

- Relate the following words on the left with their synonym or antonym on the right

- | | | |
|----------------|-------|--------------|
| a. cowardice | | 1. hinder |
| b. simpering | | 2. servile |
| c. sycophantic | | 3. pounding |
| d. bludgeoning | | 4. grimacing |
| e. stall on | | 5. courage |
| f. bluntly | | 6. wordily |

Key:

- a. 5 b. 4 c. 2 d. 3 e. 1 f. 6