

# Cinema as Education:

*Using film clips to understand experiences  
with environmental health issues*

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## Facilitation Guide

for clips from

***Erin Brockovich,  
A Civil Action, & An  
Enemy of the People***



**Exchange Project**

BECAUSE OUR ENVIRONMENT AFFECTS OUR HEALTH

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## Introduction

When the environmental health of a community is threatened by some hazard, a number of stakeholders decide how to handle the situation. **Community members** experience the hazard directly and may organize to create change.

**Government officials** contribute to human and environmental health by issuing permits to industry and regulating pollution and waste. **Researchers** investigate and monitor concentration levels and health effects to establish safe exposure limits. **Attorneys** represent clients in legal processes

that seek to stop hazardous production and provide compensation to injured parties. Each group has different priorities and challenges when addressing an environmental health hazard, often complicating resolution efforts.

The Exchange Project exists to help each of these groups see the situation from new perspectives and to increase understanding of how these community and professional groups can work

together more effectively. Established with funding from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Exchange Project is a collaborative effort among researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, community organizations such as the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and North Carolina Fair Share, and attorneys from the Land Loss Prevention Project.

Visit [www.ExchangeProject.unc.edu](http://www.ExchangeProject.unc.edu) to learn about real communities that have been affected by environmental health issues, to download scripts, and to find additional educational materials. More information about The Exchange Project is also found on the website.

### What do we mean by “environment”?

The word “environment” often brings to mind rivers, mountains, and wildlife. However, the environment also includes things that surround us every day, including air, water, soil, and public amenities like sewer and water services.

Patrick Novotny defines the environment as “where we live, work and play” in his book by the same name. The Exchange Project highlights environmental health concerns in those places that we live, work, and play.

## Using the Film Clips

Guided discussion can be an effective tool for exploring environmental ethics and the role of researchers, attorneys, government officials, and community members as they respond to environmental health issues. The Exchange Project compiled several clips from films relevant to environmental health, such as *A Civil Action* and *Erin Brockovich*, that can be used to start group conversations about these topics.

Each film clip is 2 to 5 minutes long and can be used individually or in conjunction with other clips. As the facilitator, you will introduce the goals of the session to the participants and lead the opening discussion. After you introduce and play the selected clip, you will facilitate the discussion about each clip. Your role is to encourage participation by guiding the discussion while simultaneously allowing it to be directed by the ideas and experiences of the participants.

It is recommended that you, the facilitator, view the film clips before the session and select one or more clips for use. Becoming familiar with the characters and storylines of the clips, as well as the specific questions for each clip to be shown to the participants, will help you better lead the discussion of the issues.

This guide includes a number of questions for each film clip trigger. You may find it helpful to use some questions and not others, or you may want to create your own questions based on the discussion participants' experience, background, and interests.



## General Goals for Dialogue

The main goals of the *Exchange Project* film clip experience are for participants to:

1. Increase their awareness of environmental health hazards and the associated effects.
2. Reflect upon and discuss an environmental health issue and its social justice context.
3. Develop a greater sense of respect and empathy for community members, government officials, researchers, and attorneys who often have different perspectives, roles, and challenges regarding the resolution of environmental health concerns.
4. Discuss the institutions and practices that contribute to environmental health issues and thus could be changed to improve environmental health.
5. Empower participants as agents of change and create interest in helping to influence practices and policies that promote health and environmental justice.

### What is dialogue?

In *The Magic of Dialogue*, Daniel Yankelovich describes dialogue as a conversation among equals based on empathy and questioning one's assumptions. We believe that if community residents, researchers, government officials, and attorneys engage in reflection and dialogue with one another, they may find ways to change their interactions in order to foster greater trust and seek solutions based on common interests.

### Target Audience

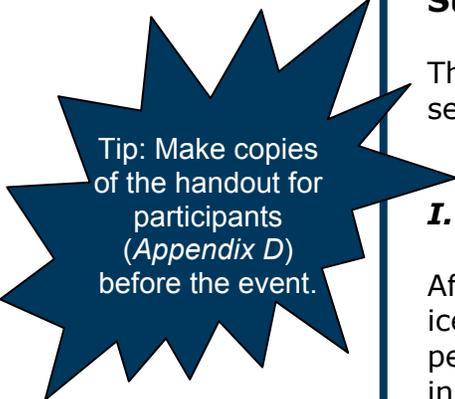
Our target audience includes professionals, community members, and students (upper level high school, undergraduate, and graduate). The format for the Readers' Theater session must be tailored to the specific background, needs, and interests of the group. Therefore, discussion questions may vary from focusing on initial awareness to a discussion of change in policies and practice.

## Facilitating the Event

As the facilitator, your role is to lead an organized, interactive conversation while encouraging participation from the whole group. You do not need to be an expert on the issue. However, learning more about the issue before the event will make you feel more comfortable in guiding the discussion. Ideally, as the facilitator, your own personal comments will only be shared when absolutely necessary.

The film clips were selected to be provocative, and the questions in the facilitator's guide should get the conversation started and assist you in guiding the group in an engaging and thoughtful dialogue. The most important thing is to be able to get the discussion started and then listen carefully to what people are saying so that you are able to follow up with questions that encourage additional comments and deep reflection among participants.

Recommendations for effective group facilitation may be found in *Appendix A*.



Tip: Make copies of the handout for participants (*Appendix D*) before the event.

## **Suggested structure for facilitating the event**

Though each film clip discussion event will be unique, there are several steps that should be consistent across all such events.

### ***I. Introduction and Icebreaker***

After everyone has introduced themselves, you can use an icebreaker at the beginning of a film clip experience to help people relax. Additionally, it offers the chance for each person in the room to say something, thereby making it more likely that they will speak up again later during the discussion. Finally, icebreakers can offer an opportunity for the facilitator to learn more about the participants and their knowledge of the subject material. *Appendix B* provides a few ideas for Icebreakers.

### ***II. Introducing the film clips***

After people feel more comfortable being part of the group, there are some key pieces of information that are useful to share with them, including:

- Purpose of the film clips and background about the *Exchange Project*
- Background about the film clips, including the film title
- Importance of using facilitated discussion to explore the meaning of the film clips
- Value of providing feedback through an evaluation at the end of the discussion

You also may want to briefly establish ground rules for the group discussion, perhaps writing them on a flip chart for easy reference. These rules will bring the group to a similar starting point and emphasize the importance of what is shared. You may want to ask the participants for suggestions, which might include ground rules such as "Make sure everyone gets to speak" or "Respect all the opinions in the room."

*Appendix C* provides a sample introduction to the film clip and discussion session.

Participants may find it helpful to have the handout (*Appendix D*) to guide them through the film clips. The handout also identifies sources of information relevant to the clips and to environmental health issues in general.

### **III. Viewing the film clips**

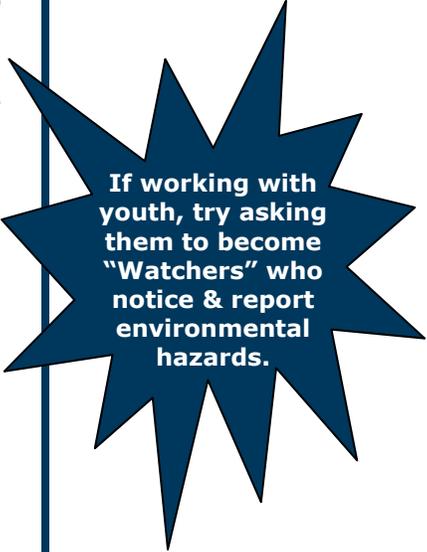
Play one clip from the DVD.

### **IV. Facilitated Discussion**

After viewing the film clip, refer to the facilitator's guide for questions to get the discussion started. An appropriate discussion time is often about 3-4 times the length of the clip (5 minute film clip, 15-20 minute discussion). View and discuss as many clips as are desired. Make sure to keep an eye on the time, and allow a couple of minutes at the end for summarizing key points of the discussion and completing the evaluation! *Appendix A* provides recommendations for facilitating the discussion.

### **V. Evaluation**

A short evaluation at the end of the event is a fantastic way to collect feedback and suggestions for improving future events. Evaluation can be as simple as asking a few questions and counting a show of hands; however, written evaluations are commonly used and provide a good record of the event. Additionally, written evaluations give participants a chance to anonymously express their opinions about the event. The use of a standard form ensures that all participants are asked the same questions. A sample evaluation is found in *Appendix D*.



**If working with youth, try asking them to become "Watchers" who notice & report environmental hazards.**

## Exchange Film Clip Trigger Series

*The Exchange Project* has developed a series of film clip triggers that portrays different perspectives associated with environmental contamination. Though all the clips portray challenges with water contamination, the themes presented could be applied to other environmental health concerns (e.g., air pollution and industrial waste).

The clips can be used in combination with each other in order to improve overall understanding of the different situations. The clips are organized into the following topics for discussion purposes:

- ***Discovery of an Environmental Hazard*** (4 min., 3 sec.) shows the reactions of a researcher and other community members when he finds out the water source for the town is contaminated.
- ***Representing the Community*** (3 min., 15 sec.) follows a legal assistant's efforts as she informs a community member about a hazard and is offered a potential settlement with the responsible industry.
- ***Research Costs and Benefits*** (2 min., 34 sec.) depicts the financial and administrative strain that conducting environmental health research can cause for a law firm.
- ***Politics of Research*** (4 min., 35 sec.) returns to the town from *Discovery of an Environmental Hazard* to examine the reactions of a local politician and other community members to the water contamination.

## ***Discovery of an Environmental Hazard*** **Film Clip from *An Enemy of the People***

**Clip Time:** 4 minutes, 3 seconds

**Film:** *An Enemy of the People*

**Production:** D. Griffiths (Producer), & J. O'Brien (Director). (1990).

Available from Monterey Movie Company.

**The Film:** *An Enemy of the People* was written by Henrik Ibsen in 1882. The film is Arthur Miller's adaptation of this play.

### **Background**

Thomas Stockmann (John Glover) is the doctor of a town in Maine and the scientist at Clearwater Springs, a new health spa built in the town. In Clearwater Springs' first year, a number of visitors became ill for no obvious reason, so Dr. Stockmann decided to investigate the source of the illnesses. Dr. Stockmann receives the results of water testing from a lab and shares them with his family and friends, including an editor of the local newspaper. Morton Kiehl (Robert Symonds), the owner of the tannery that may be polluting the water, challenges him regarding the test results.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

#### **Observations and Reflection**

- What images or sounds remain in your memory from this clip?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have positive reactions?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have negative reactions?

#### **Interpretation**

- Why do you think there was a difference in the ways the characters responded to the test results? How would you have responded in that situation?
- What did you think of Dr. Stockmann's explanation of his research and results?
- How can researchers most effectively communicate their results to community residents and town officials?

#### **Decision and Action**

- What recommendations would you make to the town officials given the situation?
- Who is responsible to discovering contamination in a community?
- Who is responsible for stopping the contamination and improving the environment?
- What does this situation make you want to change about your own life or work?

#### **Wrap Up**

Summarize key points and action steps that arose from the discussion. Thank the audience for their participation! Refer participants to additional resources. Finally, ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event before they leave.

#### ***What happened next?***

Ultimately, Dr. Stockmann's contamination findings and recommendations are ignored. The community members believe he is trying to ruin the town's economy and reputation. Dr. Stockmann loses his job, and he and his family are nearly driven out of the town by the angry residents.

## ***Representing the Community*** **Film Clip from *Erin Brockovich***

**Clip time:** 3 minutes, 15 seconds

**Film:** *Erin Brockovich*

**Production:** D. DeVito, M. Shamberg, S. Sher (Producers), & S. Soderbergh (Director). (2000). Available from Universal Pictures.

**The Film:** *Erin Brockovich* is based on a true story that took place in the early 1990s.

### **Background**

Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts) works for Masry & Vititoe, a law firm, as a filing clerk when she discovers medical information in some of the files indicating that the health problems of the residents of Hinkley, California could be caused by contaminants coming from the nearby Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) plant. Erin speaks to a researcher from a local university and looks at the water records of the town, and then she speaks with resident Donna Jensen (Marg Helgenberger) after collecting evidence of the contamination. PG&E refuses to take responsibility for the contamination of the water and sends an attorney to try to settle the lawsuit brought by the Hinkley citizens.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

#### **Observations and Reflection**

- What images or sounds remain in your memory from this clip?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have positive reactions?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have negative reactions?

#### **Interpretation**

- Whose explanation of the level of risk was more believable? Why?
- Do you think the PG&E attorneys believed their company was not responsible for the residents' health problems?
- Why do you think PG&E was resistant to taking responsibility for the contamination?

#### **Decision and Action**

- What recommendations would you make to community members faced with situations like this one?
- Power plants like PG&E are necessary for providing electricity. Who is responsible for ensuring they minimize their harmful impact on health and the environment?
- What does this situation make you want to change about your own life or work?

#### **Wrap Up**

Summarize key points and action steps that arose from the discussion. Thank the audience for their participation! Refer participants to additional resources. Finally, ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event before they leave.

#### ***What happened next?***

In the end, PG&E was forced to pay \$333 million to the affected residents, clean up the environment, and stop using chromium 6 in its operations.

## **Research Costs and Benefits**

### **Film Clip from *A Civil Action***

**Clip time:** 2 minutes, 34 seconds

**Film:** *A Civil Action*

**Production:** S. Rudin, R. Redford, R. Pfeffer. (Producers) & S. Zaillian (Director). (1998). Available from Buena Vista Home Entertainment.

**The Film:** *A Civil Action* is an adaptation of Jonathan Harr's book of the same name. They are based on a true story from 1986.

### **Background**

Jan Schlichtmann (John Travolta) and his small personal injury law firm have agreed to take on the environmental health case of the residents of Woburn, Massachusetts. Two local factories — John J. Riley Tannery (a subsidiary of Beatrice Foods) and a W.R. Grace & Co. location — are believed to have contaminated the town's water supply, leading to leukemia and other illnesses, especially in children. Research must be conducted before the trial in order to prove in court that the factories are responsible for the contamination and, ultimately, the illnesses and deaths of the Woburn residents. The law firm pays for the costs of this research with the hope that if it wins the case, the firm will receive the money to pay for the research and for their time. Jerome Facher (Robert Duvall), attorney for Beatrice Foods, approaches Schlichtmann about settling the case.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

#### **Observations and Reflection**

- What images or sounds remain in your memory from this clip?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have positive reactions?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have negative reactions?

#### **Interpretation**

- What did you think about the amount of research being done and the cost involved?
- Later in the film, we discover that Schlichtmann's law firm has gone bankrupt as a result of the research needed for this case. In light of that, how would you balance the need for scientific evidence and the high cost of some environmental health research?
- At the end of the clip, the attorney from Beatrice Foods Company offers to pay all the research expenses up to that point in exchange for being released from the litigation. Notice that this might allow Schlichtmann to secure funding for continuing the research against the other company being sued.
  - What is the ethical problem Schlichtmann faces?
  - What should be the basis for his decision?

#### **Decision and Action**

- Who should be responsible for paying for the research needed to pursue an environmental health lawsuit?
- What could be done to make ethical dilemmas like this one easier to resolve?
- What does this situation make you want to change about your own life or work?

## Wrap Up

Summarize key points and action steps that arose from the discussion. Thank the audience for their participation! Refer participants to additional resources. Finally, ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event before they leave.

### ***What happened next?***

- Schlitman ultimately does not take the deal that he is being offered in the film clip.
- At the end of the trial, the jury decides Beatrice is not responsible for the environmental pollution, but W.R. Grace might be. In 1986, W.R. Grace paid \$8 million to settle the lawsuit. The money funded the research costs and lawyers' fees, and the rest was split between the Woburn residents in the case.
- Schlichtmann handed over the research to the EPA to continue pursuing the case. Beatrice, Grace, and UniFirst (not mentioned in the film) paid \$69.4 million to clean up the soil and groundwater of 330 acres in Woburn in 1991.

**The legal battle over toxic dumping in Woburn was very controversial. If you would like to learn more, you might look at these resources:**

- The film was based on a book by Jonathon Harr: *A Civil Action* (1995), available through Random House, New York.
- The role of government regulation and community action to address environmental pollution in Woburn and other communities is discussed in Phil Brown and Edwin Mikkelson's book: *No Safe Place: Toxic Waste, Leukemia, & Community Action*, available through The University California Press (1997)
- Newspaper articles from Woburn during the trial are compiled at <http://home.earthlink.net/~dkennedy56/woburn.html>
- For a detailed explanation of the arguments of each side in the trial, see a Harvard class project at <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/evidence99/woburn/>
- A counterargument from W.R. Grace & Company, the defendant at the trial, is available at <http://www.civil-action.com>.

## ***Politics of Research*** **Film Clip from *An Enemy of the People***

**Film time:** 4 minutes, 35 seconds

**Film:** *An Enemy of the People*

**Production:** D. Griffiths (Producer) & J. O'Brien (Director). (1990).

Available from Monterey Movie Company.

**The Film:** *An Enemy of the People* was written by Henrik Ibsen in 1882. The film is Arthur Miller's adaptation of this play.

### **Background**

Dr. Stockmann's (John Glover) discovery of contaminated water at the town springs was at first enthusiastically received by the editors of the Riverton Daily Progressive, the town's newspaper. Peter Stockmann (George Grizzard) – the mayor, director of the springs, and brother of the doctor – does not want the results of the research published. Dr. Stockmann holds a town meeting one night, and intends to inform the townspeople of the dangers of the springs. By then, the community members have heard the mayor's interpretation of the research, but not the doctor's.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

#### **Observations and Reflection**

- What images or sounds remain in your memory from this clip?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have positive reactions?
- Toward which characters or issues did you have negative reactions?

#### **Interpretation**

- What was the mayor's opinion of the contamination? Why was he opposed to allowing Dr. Stockmann to announce the test results to the community?
- Who did you trust or distrust in this situation? Why?
- What are the conflicting issues that the town must consider in order to resolve the situation?
- In a situation like this, what should be the basis for the decisions?
- If Dr. Stockmann had been able to share the test results, how might it have changed the situation?

#### **Decision and Action**

- How can a researcher gain the trust of a community being studied?
- When research produces findings, who should receive that information?
- If local officials are not serving the best interests of the community, what can communities do with research findings to further their cause?
- What does this situation make you want to change about your own life or work?

#### **Wrap Up**

Summarize key points and action steps that arose from the discussion. Thank the audience for their participation! Refer participants to additional resources. Finally, ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event before they leave.

***What happened next?***

Ultimately, the Dr. Stockmann's contamination findings and recommendations are ignored. The community members believe he is trying to ruin the town's economy and reputation. Dr. Stockmann loses his job, and he and his family are nearly driven out of the town by the angry townspeople.

## Recommendations for Facilitating a Discussion

### 1. Encourage participation

- **Intentional silence** allows group members to formulate their thoughts more fully. It may help to count to 10 in your head so that you wait long enough for participants to speak up.
- To **make space** for quieter members of the group, watch for body language that indicates they want to speak, invite them to speak, and, if it is needed, hold more talkative members back to allow quieter ones to speak.
- **Encourage** people to participate by saying things like, “Is this discussion raising questions for anyone?” or “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken for awhile.”
- **Balance** the conversation by drawing out opinions that may be unexpressed. “We know where three people stand; does anyone else have a different position?” or “Are there other ways of looking at this?” facilitate balancing.

### 2. Clarify

- To let people know they are being heard, **mirror** their statements by repeating their words exactly — either using an entire sentence, or key phrases.
- **Paraphrase** a speaker’s statements to clarify his or her ideas for the benefit of the group and the speaker. Start the paraphrase with something like, “It sounds like what you’re saying is...” or “This is what I’m hearing you say...”
- **Draw people out** to help them clarify their ideas. Begin by paraphrasing, then ask, “Can you say more about that?” or “What do you mean by...?”
- Long or abstract answers might need to be followed up with a request for **specific examples** to shorten the soliloquy and help participants understand the point being made.
- If a participant makes an association that leads the group off topic, **acknowledge** that what they are saying is an important consideration, however not the focus of the discussion. Then **recount** recent comments and either repeat the question at hand or move on to the next question.

### 3. Juggle multiple comments

- If more than one person wants to speak at once, **stacking** can be used to give everyone a chance to speak. This may be done by verbally assigning a speaking order and making sure the order is followed.
- When multiple lines of thought are occurring within a conversation, **track** the different conversations by summarizing them for the group, then ask if those summaries are correct.

If there are disagreements between participants, remind the group about **honoring all perspectives** and then open the discussion up further to see if there are any other viewpoints. Acknowledge the differing opinions and let them stand "side by side."

#### **References:**

Schwarz, R. (1994). *The Skilled Facilitator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. Kaner, S., Lind, L., Toldi, C., Fisk, S., & Berger, D. (1996).

*Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.

## Ideas for Icebreakers

**One word:** Ask each person to share their name and what they think of when you say the word “environment”

**That’s me:** Ask participants to listen as you read a series of statements, and stand up when you read one that is true for them. This icebreaker is a good chance for you as a facilitator to get to know the participants in your group. Sample statements could include:

- I’m somebody who has sisters or brothers
- I’m somebody who has seen a landfill
- I’m somebody who was born in North Carolina
- I’m somebody who has been to a town council meeting
- I’m somebody who has heard of environmental justice

**Line up**<sup>1</sup>: Ask the group to divide into two teams. Tell them that you will ask them to line up in order based on different characteristics, and the team to get in order first will get a point. The team with the greatest number of points at the end could get some kind of prize or just a round of applause.

Use these instructions or add your own:

- Line up in order by shoe size.
- Line up in order by length of arm's reach.
- Line up in order alphabetically by favorite color.
- Line up in order by number of siblings you have.
- Line up in order by age, youngest to oldest.
- Line up in order alphabetically by first name.
- Line up in order alphabetically by last name.
- Line up in order by number of pets owned.
- Line up in order by hair length, longest to shortest.
- Line up in order by the number of bones you have ever broken.

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<sup>1</sup> This icebreaker came from <http://www.businessfundamentals.com/Icebreakers.htm>  
The Exchange Project: Film Clips Facilitation Guide

## Sample Film Clip Introduction

*This introduction is designed to be general enough to be used with various groups. Use all or part of this introduction, selecting whatever feels natural and appropriate for your group.*

Good morning/afternoon/evening, and welcome to the viewing and discussion of film clips developed by The Exchange Project at the UNC School of Public Health. My name is [*insert your name*] and I will be facilitating the event this evening. The film clips we're going to watch today/tonight come from the films [*names of films*].

The Exchange Project was founded by a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to increase awareness of environmental issues across both community and professional groups. Exchange seeks to help government officials, community members, and professionals understand each other's perspectives and gain ideas that will help all involved to work together to improve environmental health.

One method *Exchange* is using to get people engaged in these topics is to use film clips to start guided discussions. You will be a part of one of those discussions today/tonight. Clips that show environmental health dilemmas were taken from full-length films. We have permission from the producers of the films to use the clips. We selected these clips because they were related to issues that professionals and community members told us were important when we interviewed them. We want to use the film clips and discussion to get you thinking about environmental health issues and how community members, government officials, and professionals interact to address these issues. As you take part in this discussion, we hope it will help you see things from new perspectives and allow you to share your experiences with others.

Some statements by the characters in these films may represent controversial beliefs that warrant further examination in discussion sessions. Whenever possible, to further inform the dialogue, the Exchange Project will provide additional information on the issue or links to other sources through their website: [www.ExchangeProject.unc.edu](http://www.ExchangeProject.unc.edu)

Before we get started, it would be a good idea to establish a few ground rules for our conversation. What suggestions do you have for guidelines we should follow? [*It may be helpful to start by giving an example; common suggestions include a commitment to listen respectfully, not dominating the conversation, provide constructive contributions, be honest, keep all comments confidential.*]

After the discussion, we'll be passing out evaluation forms so that you can tell us what you think about this event. Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation. This is one of the best ways that we can learn about your reactions to this experience so that we can improve our future sessions.

Now I'd like to share some background about tonight's film. [*Read background paragraph from the clip that you have selected*]. Now, we present [*insert name of piece*].

## Handout for Participants

### Using Cinema as Education about Environmental Health



**Topic:** Discovering an Environmental Hazard  
**Film:** *An Enemy of the People*  
**Production:** D. Griffiths (Producer) & J. O'Brien (Director). (1990). Available from Monterey Movie Company.

**Background:** Thomas Stockmann is the doctor of a town in Maine and the scientist at Clearwater Springs, a new health spa built in the town. In Clearwater Springs' first year, a number of visitors became ill for no obvious reason, so Dr.

Stockmann decided to investigate the source of the illnesses.

**The Clip:** Dr. Stockmann receives the results of water testing from a lab. Watch when the owner of the tannery confronts the doctor about the test results and tries to convince him to abandon his ethics and reinterpret the data.

**Learn More:** Download the original play for free at the Project Gutenberg website: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2446>

**Topic:** Representing the Community

**Film:** *Erin Brockovich*

**Production:** D. DeVito, M. Shamberg, & S. Sher (Producers), & S. Soderbergh (Director). (2000). Available from Universal Pictures.

**Background:** Erin is working for a law firm as a filing clerk and discovers medical information in some of the files. She suspects that the health problems in Hinkley could be caused by contaminants coming from PG&E. Erin speaks to a researcher and looks at the water records of the town, then speaks with resident Donna Jensen about the contamination.



**The Clip:** The PG&E attorneys present their own ideas about the contamination in a meeting with Erin and her boss. Watch how attorneys use information to prove liability and how that specific use of evidence may not represent the community's lived experience.

**Learn More:** Information about environmental health hazards in Hinkley is available at: [www.lawbuzz.com/famous\\_trials/erin\\_brockovich/erin\\_brockovich\\_ch1.htm](http://www.lawbuzz.com/famous_trials/erin_brockovich/erin_brockovich_ch1.htm).



**Topic:** The Costs and Benefits of Research  
**Film:** A Civil Action  
**Production:** Rudin, S., Redford, R., & Pfeffer, R. (Producers), & Zaillian, S. (Director). (1998). Available from Buena Vista Home Entertainment.

**Background:** Jan Schlichtman and his small law firm have agreed to take on an environmental health case in Woburn, Massachusetts. Two local factories are believed to have contaminated the town's water supply, leading to high morbidity and mortality rates, especially among children. Research must be conducted to prove the factories are responsible.

**The Clip:** Watch one attorney risk financial bankruptcy trying to obtain the scientific evidence needed to win a community's lawsuit against a corporate giant. How can attorneys balance the ethical need to represent clients with the financial realities of litigation?

**Learn More:** The film is based on the 1995 book, *A Civil Action*, by Jonathon Harr. For a detailed explanation of the arguments of each side in the trial, see <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/evidence99/woburn/>. A counterargument from W.R. Grace & Company (the defendant at the trial) is available at <http://www.civil-action.com>.

**Topic:** Politics of Research

**Film:** *An Enemy of the People*

**Production:** D. Griffiths (Producer) & J. O'Brien (Director). (1990). Available from Monterey Movie Company.

**Background:** Dr. Thomas Stockmann's discovery of water contamination was at first enthusiastically received by the editors of the Riverton Daily Progressive, the town's newspaper. Peter Stockmann – the mayor, director of the springs, and brother of Thomas – does not want the results of the research published.

**The Clip:** Dr. Stockmann holds a meeting that night to inform the townspeople of the dangers of the springs. By then, the community members have heard the mayor's interpretation of the research but not the doctor's. His information is not well received.



**Learn More:** Download the original play for free at the Project Gutenberg website: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2446>

For more discussion tools and stories about North Carolina communities, visit [www.ExchangeProject.unc.edu](http://www.ExchangeProject.unc.edu)



**Exchange Project**  
 BECAUSE OUR ENVIRONMENT AFFECTS OUR HEALTH

**Evaluation**

Name of event: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Using a scale of 1-4, please share your impressions of the film clip triggers and discussion. (Please circle a number)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I gained new insight into the environmental justice movement by watching the film clips.	1	2	3	4
The discussion after the film clips increased my understanding of the issue.	1	2	3	4
I would like to participate in other events promoting discussion about environmental justice issues in the future.	1	2	3	4
I can do something to improve the environmental health of my community.	1	2	3	4

2. What did you like about today’s film clip event?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe how we could improve the film clips or the discussion format.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Other questions or comments:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!**

## Resources for classroom activities related to environmental health

**The Hydroville Curriculum Project** leads students to break up into groups to investigate an illness outbreak, taking on the role of physicians, epidemiologists, industrial hygienists, and toxicologists. A product of Oregon State University. Sample curriculum materials are free upon registering with the website; the entire curriculum be purchased on the same website. Activities of particular relevance include the Water Quality series and the Pesticide Spill series.

<http://www.hydroville.org/>

**The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences** maintains a website with environmental health resources for teachers and students (K-12). This includes classroom activities, fact sheets, interviews with scientists and researchers, curriculum materials, and links where students can explore environmental health topics. Some relevant activities include "Toxic Tic-Tac-Toe" (Follow link to EHP Science Education Lessons at <http://www.ehponline.org/science-ed/2006/tictac.pdf>) or "Tackling Toxic Waste" from the 1999 NIEHS Summer Institute binder.

<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/science-education/home.htm>

**The Partnership for Environmental Education and Rural Health** provides environmental health-related activities for science and non-science middle school classrooms. Each lesson explores a historically-based mystery related to environmental health that students must solve in the course of the lesson. Developed by Texas A&M University. Activities relevant to toxic waste and its effects include "Tut's Revenge," about ground water contamination during the construction of King Tut's tomb, and "Hard River Escape," about industrial pollution in the Ukraine. <http://peer.tamu.edu/>

**My Environment, My Health, My Choices** provides lesson plan materials related to issues such as acid rain, environmental health policy, and water pollution. Developed by the University of Rochester. "Dangers Seen and Unseen: Water and Environmental Health" is particularly relevant to the issues discussed here.

<http://www2.envmed.rochester.edu/envmed/ehsc/outreach/curriculum.html>

**Breaking the Mold** is a video and lesson plan that addresses the effects of indoor air pollution on health and leads students through the scientific process. Follow up lesson plans include activities such as conducting an asthma survey or examining sources of pollution in their own environment. Created by Maryland Public Television and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

<http://enviromysteries.thinkport.org/breakingthemold/>

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