[APES Final](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Lq-ChE3XI-euGBXRLOGs5bwh8jecaTFE9qZs-0wnCRc/edit?usp=sharing) - Link to presentation

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| **Made By** |  |
| **Subject** | AP Literature |
| **Timing** | This lesson should be done in a 12th-grade AP Literature class towards the end of the year (for all of May and the beginning of June) because the text is sophisticated and the discussions are complex. |
| **Text** | *Falter* by Bill McKibben explores three existential dangers to humanity: global warming, artificial intelligence, and genetic engineering. McKibben defines this trio as the “human game” and he discusses solutions to address these threats. We feel that this book is an extremely relevant piece of contemporary environmental literature that can be discussed in school. |

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## **Part 1 (Ch. 1-7)**

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| **Lesson Steps** | * Part 1 reinforces the fact that the threat of global warming and climate change has arrived. This part focuses heavily on statistics and case-by-case explorations of the effects of climate change on people and regions * Day 1: Ch. 1-3 * Day 2: Ch. 4-7 * Discussion Questions:   + Part 1: [Questions for Discussion](https://billmckibben.com/eaarth/discussionquestions.html)   + Bill McKibben states in the preface that “global warming is no longer a philosophical threat, no longer a threat at all. It’s our reality.” Can you see this changed reality where you live? Do you notice anything different about your own environment?   + There are a number of statistics in the opening chapter that show how the earth has already been changed—the oceans are more acidic, mosquitoes and dengue fever more widespread, and storms are bigger and more frequent. Were you surprised by these facts? Before reading the book, did you think of global warming as more of a problem for future generations—not yourself? * Case Study Activity:   + Further research one of the events that McKibben references in Part 1 using the videos he cited in the notes from the back of the book   + Present findings to the class or in small groups     - Possible Topics:       * Pollution in Delhi and Lahore       * Extreme water scarcity in South Africa       * Climate change killing Lebanese cedar trees       * Bushfires in Australia       * Increased hurricane activity in the US |

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## **Part 2 (Ch. 8-12)**

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| **Lesson Steps** | * Part 2 asserts that climate change poses an existential threat to humanity. * Discuss how McKibben defines “the human game” * Day 3: Ch. 8-10   + Discussion about the financial implications of climate change + questions     - What do you make of Bill McKibben’s assertion that as of now, growth is an inherent component of our economy? Can you imagine a world where economic growth isn’t sought? What do you think would have to happen for that to be feasible?     - Have you ever before considered the enormity of the financial implications of climate change? Do you think that if it was better understood, people would feel more strongly about making the changes needed to one day get back to 350 ppm? * Day 4: Ch. 11-12   + Discussion about the role of government in fixing environmental issues     - Global warming is affecting everyone, whether they realize it now or not, but none more so than those people living in third-world countries. Given the challenges that lay ahead, what kind of future can those people expect? Do you think that the governments of more prosperous countries will eventually come to their aid?     - Do you agree with the author’s assertion that because we no longer have—or need—a “national project” we also have less of a need for a large, centralized government? Will our federal government turn its attention to maintenance rather than growth? How do you think such a change could come about? |

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## **Part 3 (Ch. 13-19)**

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| **Lesson Steps** | * Part 3 discusses the existential threat that genetic engineering poses to the human game * Day 5: Ch. 13-16   + Discuss McKibben’s specific examples of genetic engineering or genetic engineering alternatives     - Consider the example of the Mayan peasants whose overall food output is 20 tons per acre as a result of extensive intercropping. Why do you think there aren’t more people who farm this way? Is it feasible for only smaller farms? Do you believe that the advantages of this system will eventually lead to the proliferation of small farms, even in the United States? Or are people too wrapped up in the idea that “bigger is better”? * Day 6: Ch. 17-19   + Discuss the overall impacts of genetic engineering     - Bill McKibben states that besides both tasting better and being better for you, eating locally will be a necessary means of coping with climate change. What do you think about that? Can you imagine altering your diet to eat locally—have you already?     - How does McKibben’s argument about this existential threat compare to his first one? |

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## **Part 4 (Ch. 19-23) + Epilogue**

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| **Lesson Steps** | * Part 4 discusses the existential threat that artificial intelligence poses to the human game * Day 7: Ch. 19-20   + Discuss the possible effects of AI     - What are the possible effects of AI on privacy and security? Who is responsible for AI ethics?     - How can we ensure that artificial intelligence systems are designed to be fair and unbiased, and what are the potential consequences if they are not? * Day 8: Ch. 21-22   + Discuss the side effects of AI on systems that we would not consider immediately     - What are the economic effects of AI? For example, what happens when jobs get replaced?     - What ethical considerations should be taken into account when using artificial intelligence in healthcare, particularly in areas such as patient diagnosis and treatment recommendations? * Day 9: Ch. 23   + Discuss overall thoughts on McKibben’s third argument     - Overall, how can AI affect “the human game” that McKibben defines? Is his argument for the existential threat posed by AI sound in comparison to his argument about the other threats? * Day 10: Epilogue   + Discuss overall thoughts and feelings on the book     - Do you agree that becoming more neighborly will help us cope with life on Earth? Do you talk to your neighbors now? Do you wish that you did? How does modernity—as it stands now—limit or enhance our ability to make friends with those around us?     - Think about the author’s predictions for the internet. Do they give you hope for what’s to come? Have your thoughts and feelings about the consequences of global warming changed as a result of reading this book? Do you feel frightened about the future or hopeful? Both? |

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## **Summary Addressed to the English Department**

The APES curriculum includes extensive information on climate change and sustainable practices. If the curriculum in English classes expands to include environmental literature, awareness of environmental issues among students will grow.

Bill McKibben's novel *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* urges us to confront the existential threats to humanity. McKibben explores the intertwined effects of climate change, technological disruption, from AI to genetic modification, and unchecked economic growth. He also reinforces the need for collective action to secure the future of humanity. *Falter* tackles some of the most immediate pressing issues facing humanity. These issues have far-reaching consequences and McKibben’s book offers a rallying cry for the citizens of the world.

Because McKibben is a well-known environmentalist and author, his skills and knowledge of the subject matter make *Falter* an important tool for comprehending the complexities of the current environmental situation. McKibben has a skill of articulating difficult ideas in a way that is potable for all readers, especially students. His easy-to-understand writing style helps everyone understand the urgency of the problem introduced by McKibben.

Overall, *Falter* is an important book because of the way that it sheds light on critical issues facing humanity and also empowers individuals to take meaningful action against these existential threats to humanity. This novel serves as a catalyst for discussion, especially within the groups of change-making students at school. Reading and analyzing this book in a school setting helps to raise awareness and ultimately influence the course of our collective future.

WC: 251