



Engaging young audiences in climate change: moving beyond fear through active science communication

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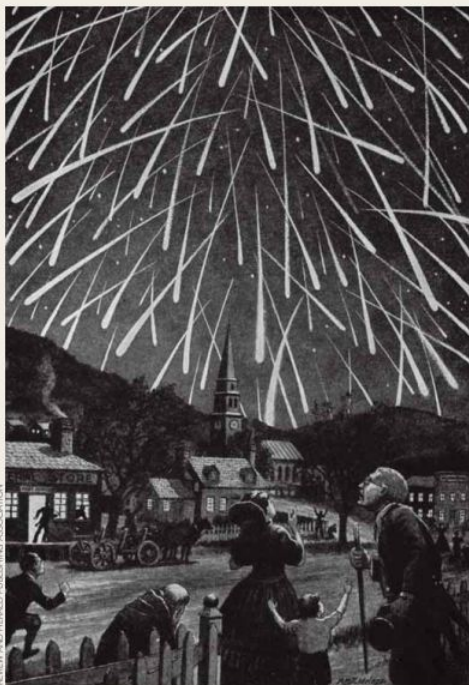
La Stampa, Turin, Italy

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ABE LINCOLN AND THE LEONIDS



REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

The meteor storm of November 12–13, 1833, caused an innkeeper to awaken Abraham Lincoln and exclaim that the “day of judgment” had come. This illustration of the 1833 Leonids by R. M. Eldridge, depicting the shower as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, appeared in an early 20th-century book, *Bible Readings for the Home*. Right: A manuscript page in the handwriting of Walt Whitman preserves Lincoln’s eyewitness description of a great meteor shower — almost certainly the 1833 Leonids.

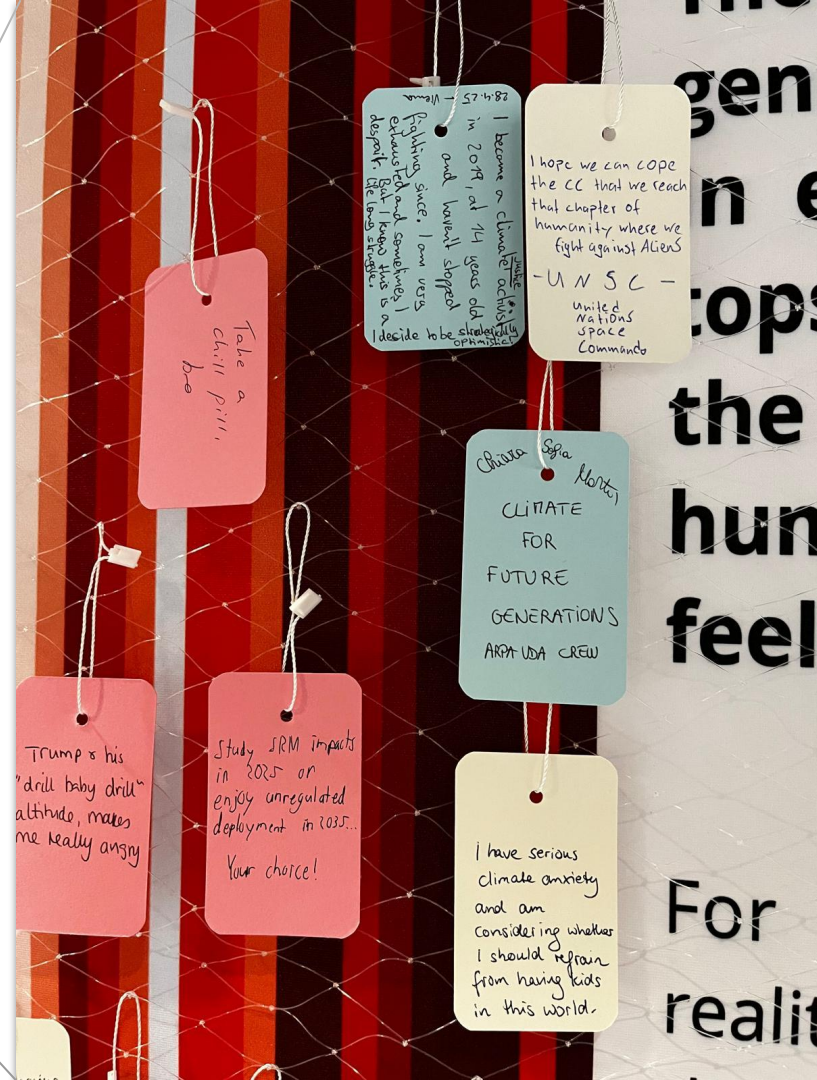
THE GREAT LEONID METEOR STORM ON THE MORNING OF November 13, 1833, dazzled North Americans with a celestial spectacle they would never forget. From Canada to Mexico, the streaks of light filling the sky and the shouting in the streets roused people from their beds to witness what many assumed was the end of the world. Recently we discovered a document indicating that one of the eyewitnesses was a future U.S. president, Abraham Lincoln.

Startled from his slumber early one morning, a young Lincoln beheld the sky filled with falling stars and fireballs. Decades later the battlefield flames of the Civil War rekindled in him a memory of those fiery heavens. During one of the darkest times of the war, President Lincoln related an anecdote about the meteor shower and the fixed stars as a metaphor for the state of the Union. We found this tale not in any biography of Lincoln, but rather in the collected works of the American writer Walt Whitman (1819–92), a contemporary of Lincoln’s who lived in Washington during the Civil War. Whitman eventually published the story under the heading “A Lincoln Remi-

the Union was not beginning to be shaken — whereupon the homely President told a little story. “When I was a young man in Illinois,” said he, “I boarded for a time with a Deacon of the Presbyterian Church. One night I was roused from my sleep by a rap at the door. I heard the Deacon’s voice exclaiming, ‘Bless Abraham! the day of judgment has come! I spring from my bed & rushed to the window and saw the stars fall in great showers! But looking back of them in the heavens I saw all the grand old constellations now & then I was so well acquainted with and over-remembered and true in their places. The gentlemen, the world did not come to an end then, nor will the Union now.’”

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1. Motivation



2. Our Approach

- **Focusing on framing the problem**
- Avoid both misinformation and doomism
- Solution-oriented framework (without solutionism!)
- Replace frontal lectures
with participatory approaches (e.g. roleplay)
- Building trust



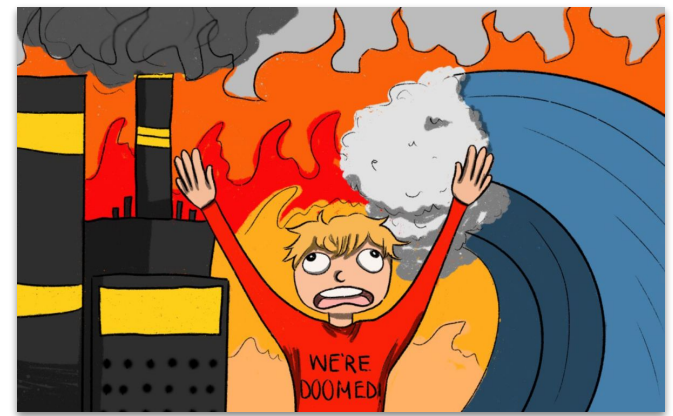
“We are hurtling toward climate chaos”

“We are at the beginning of a grim new chapter for life on Earth”

Ripple et al. 2026

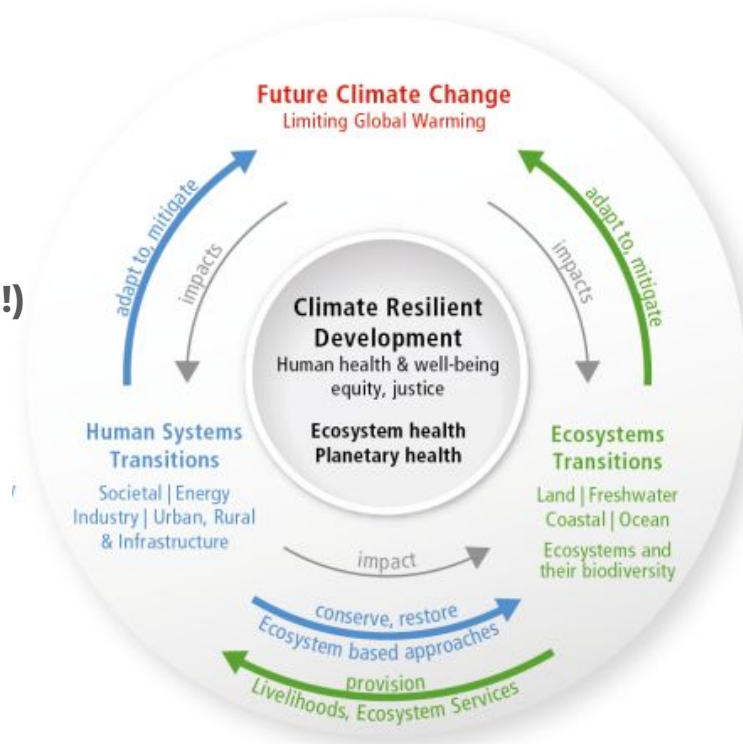
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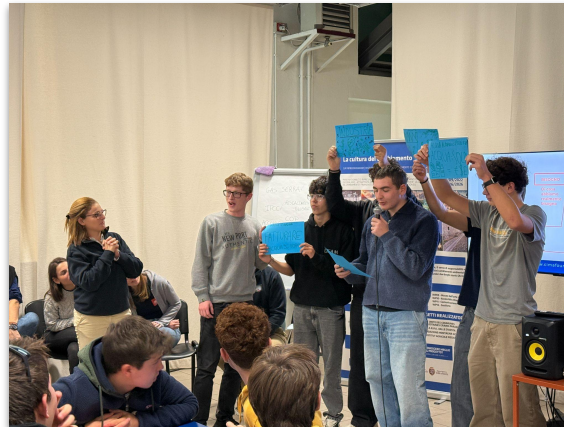
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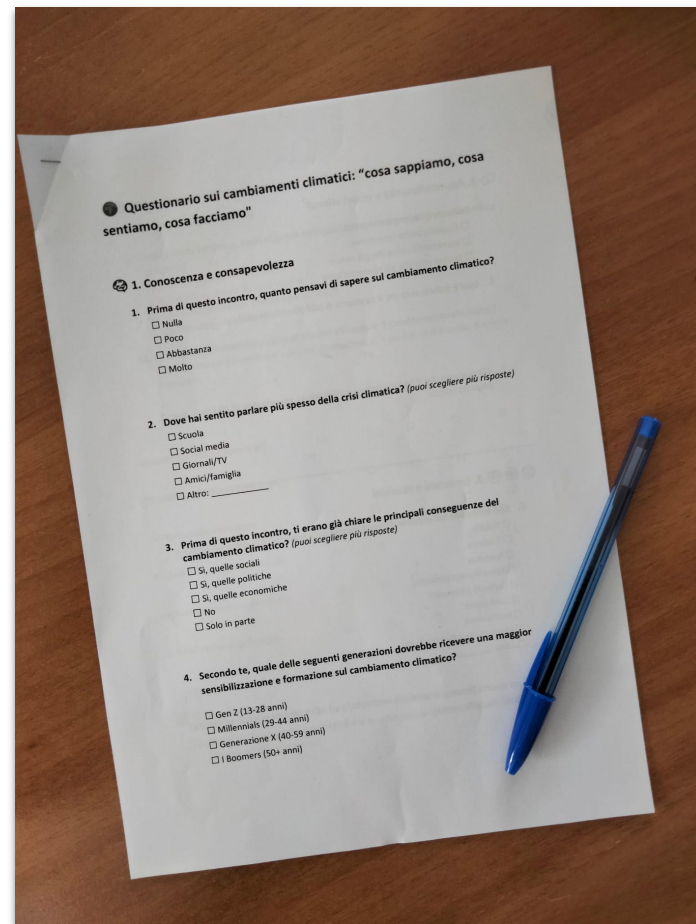


3. Surveys

Over the period 2025-2026 **questionnaires** were delivered **after each event** with a specific focus on students's perception on climate change (12 questions)

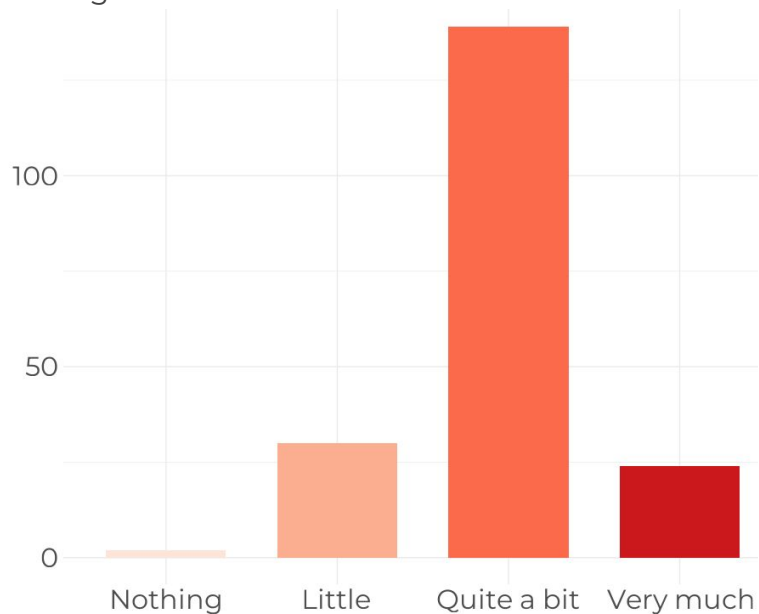
One question about student's **emotions** related to climate change was delivered both **before lesson and after lesson**

198 delivered questionnaires

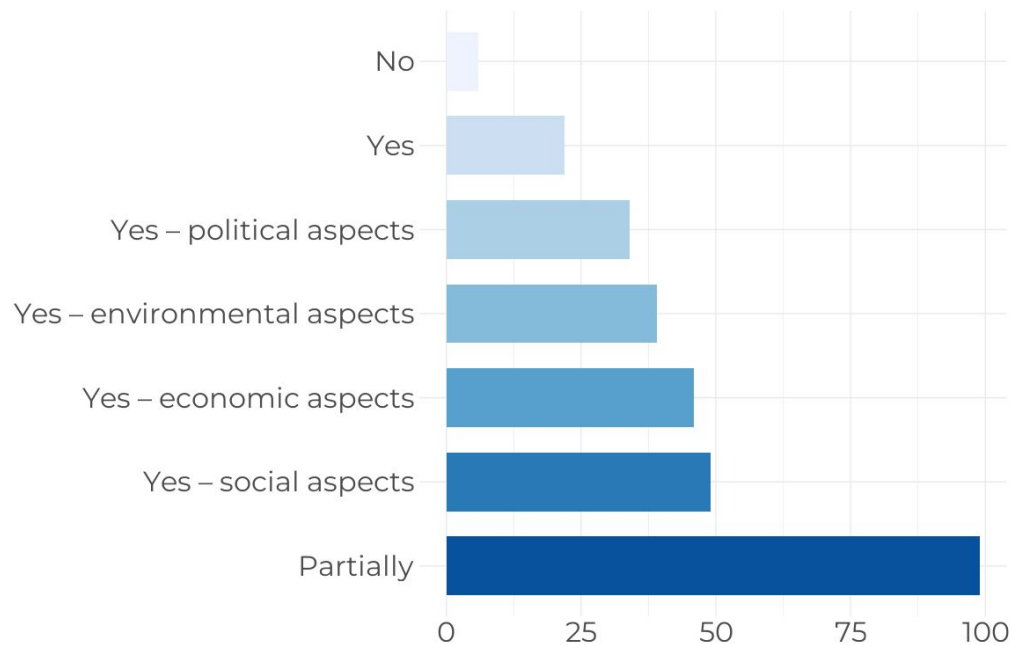


4. Survey Results

Q1: What did you already know about climate change

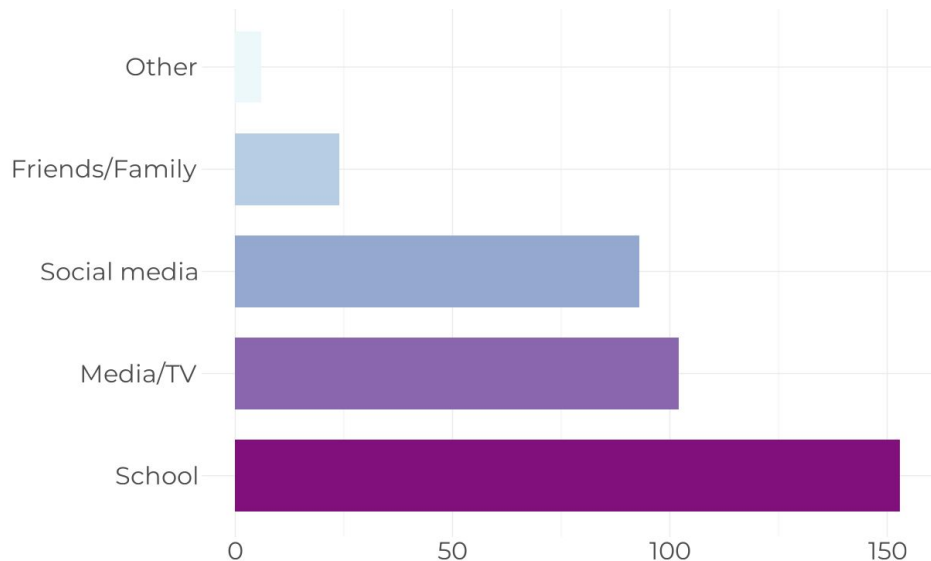


Q2: Did you already know the main consequences of climate change

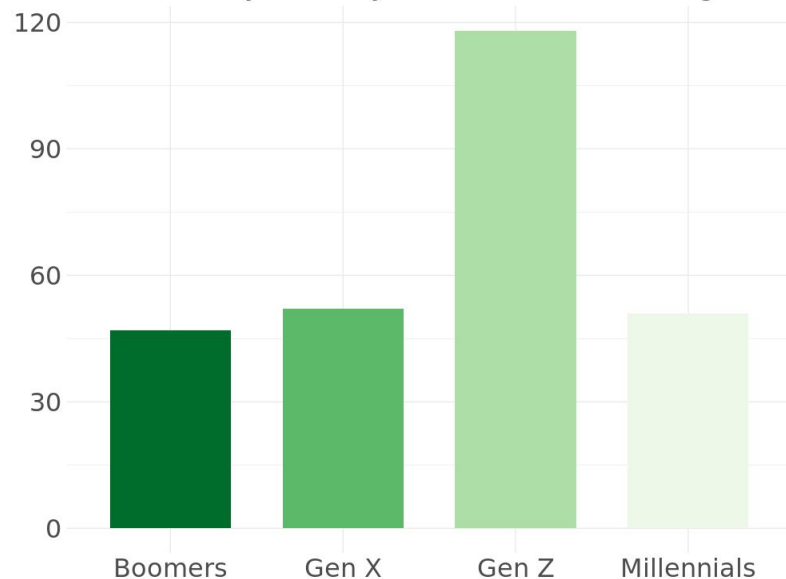


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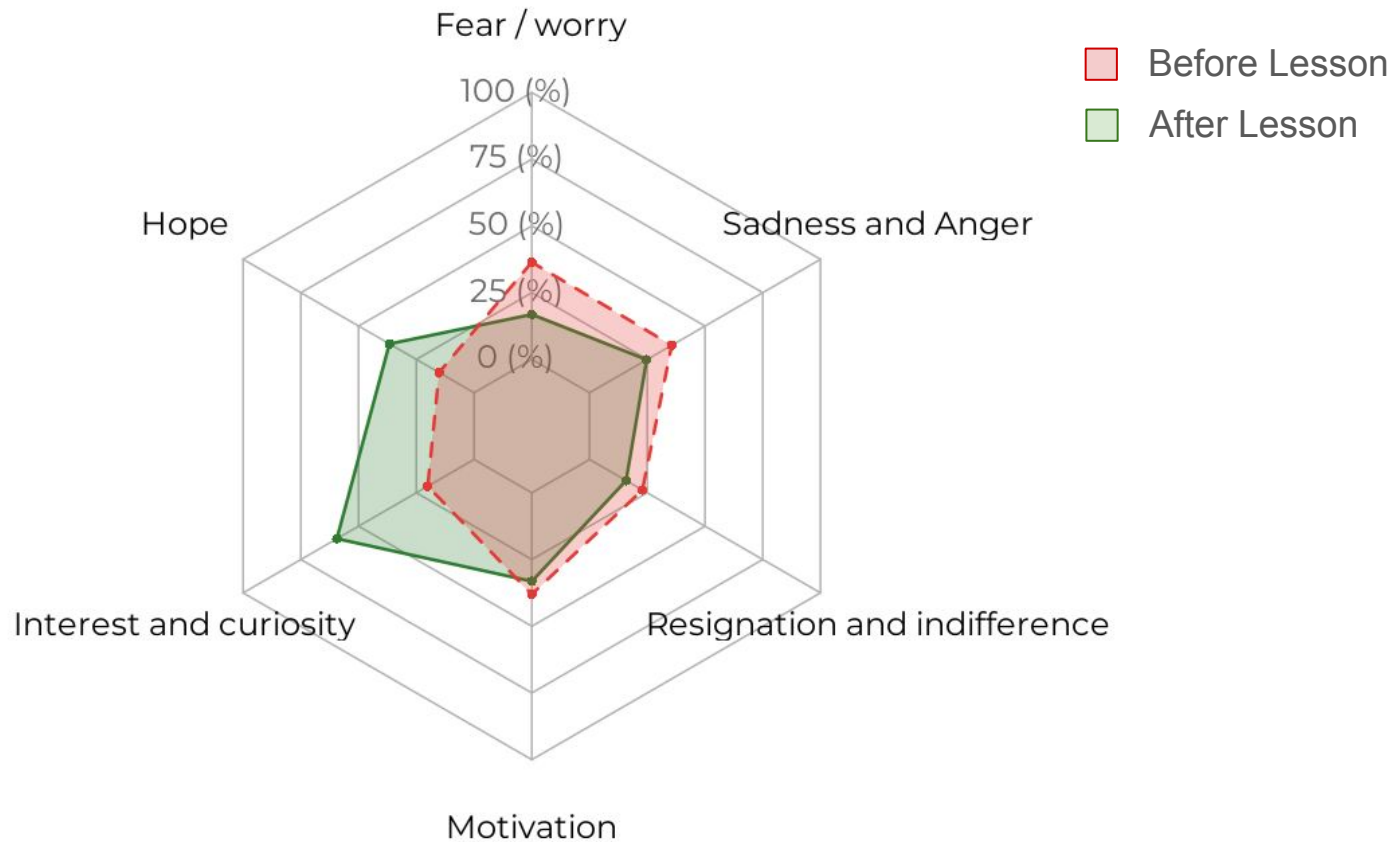
Q3: Where have you most often heard about climate change



Q4: Which generation do you feel is most important to raise awareness among?



4. Survey Results



Take-home reflections



*"Your future hasn't been written yet.
No one's has.
Your future is whatever you make it.
So make it a good one"*

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Take-home reflections

✓ Positive outcomes:

- Collective hope and shared engagement
- Awareness leading to action

"I feel more motivated because I felt involved and part of a motivated group; not feeling isolated brings hope for the future."

"I feel more motivated because this meeting increased my awareness of both challenges and solutions, helping me understand how I can take action."

🎯 Goals still to reach

- Lack of perceived individual impact

"I feel not very motivated to act because the real difference can only be made by large companies and institutions."

😬 Challenges

- Our approach is far from perfect, it is continuously evolving

"We would like fewer theoretical parts"
"Add things we don't already know"
"More information about our city"