

The Day after Tomorrow?

Aim

To discuss the portrayal of climate science in a major Hollywood movie and try to separate fact from fiction

Introduction

The Day After Tomorrow is a major blockbuster movie released in 2004, which deals with the start of a new Ice Age. The plot begins as global warming causes the polar ice caps to melt. This disrupts the Gulf Stream and plunges the Northern Hemisphere back into an intense Ice Age in just a few hours. The plot follows various characters as they try to survive in a frozen New York.

Now watch *The Day After Tomorrow*. Based on what you have learned so far in this session, how likely is it that the events portrayed in the film could really happen? Discuss in groups how much is fact and how much is fiction? In particular think about the following questions:

- (1) Could an Ice Age start in just a few hours or days?
- (2) Would shutting off the Gulf Stream be enough to trigger an Ice Age?
- (3) Given that the Earth's orbit brings it relatively close to the Sun at present, is an Ice Age likely at the moment?
- (4) What other factors (like the make-up of the atmosphere) might determine whether the Earth will slip into another Ice Age in the future?

