

An illustration of a beach scene with significant plastic pollution. In the foreground, there are two large, green, mossy rocks on either side of a sandy beach. On the beach, there is a discarded white plastic bottle and a brown plastic cup. The water is blue with white foam from waves. In the water, there is a large, crumpled white plastic bag, a brown plastic bottle, and several other pieces of plastic debris. The sky is a light blue gradient.

Plastics and the Environment

The Great Debate

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Think and Write

You have one minute to think of as many things as you can which are **not** made from plastic and write them down.

Go!

Start



Exchange ideas with the person beside you. How many are the same?
Did you find that easy or tricky?

The Use of Plastics

Plastics have been in major use for the last seventy years. After the Second World War, many items were made from plastic: toys, furniture, utensils and even jewellery.

Plastic is an extremely useful material. It can be moulded into different shapes, keep things sterile and can look attractive.

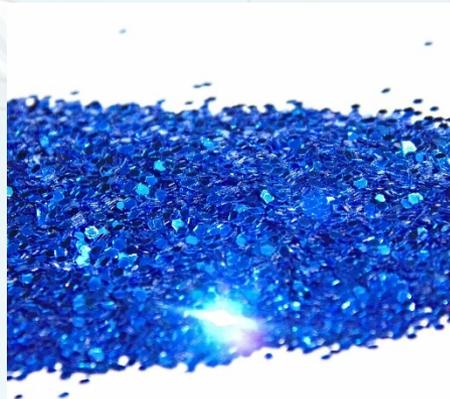


Photo courtesy of (megforce1@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence – attribution

The Environment

Look at these pictures. How do they make you feel?



Get Informed

Use this **Plastics and the Environment Research Sheet** to find out more about the advantages and disadvantages of using plastics.



Plastics and the Environment

Use the Internet or non-fiction books to research the issues around the use of plastic. Remember to include facts and figures as they will make the arguments more persuasive.

The Benefits of Plastics

The Problem with Plastics

Additional Information



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Practical Plastic

Plastics are so useful! Food can be stored in them and kept fresh. Nothing leaks out of them so plastic is great for water, milk, sauces and juice. It's so annoying when you go to the shop and they charge 5p for a bag! How am I going to remember to take a bag with me whenever I pop into the shop? It's a rip off!

Mineral water is supposed to be better for you, isn't it? The plastic water bottles can get recycled anyway! Who drinks tap water these days?



Being Green

When plastic is manufactured, the process damages the air quality. This contributes to global warming.

Most plastics cannot be recycled so they get dumped in landfill sites. Plastics does not completely decompose. Instead it turns into smaller and smaller pieces called microplastics. They get blown into rivers, seas and other natural areas.

If plastic molecules are blown into a river, they can poison plants and it can also injure or kill animals. Many organisms get tangled up in plastic string and bags, which can result in them getting injured or dying.

We can live without plastic if we take time to consider other options.



Letter to Your MP

Use this template to write a formal letter to your MP about the use of plastics and the effect that they have on the environment.

Your address: _____

Date: _____

Dear _____

I am writing to you because _____

I hope to explain that _____

I feel it is very important that _____

If the situation continues as it is, _____

Furthermore, I feel that _____

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and _____

Lastly, I would like to say that _____

Yours sincerely,

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Write to your MP using this activity sheet, about your concerns.

Time to Debate

Get into groups of about three or four. Use the **Great Debate Cards** and discuss the issues around plastics and the environment.

Plastics and the Environment

Consumer 1

You are a consumer who does not want to have to buy bags for 5p or remember to bring a bag. You want food to be packaged in plastic because you worry about hygiene. You like the outdoors but think the council should do more to clean up the area where you live.



Plastics and the Environment

Consumer 2

You are happy to use reusable bags at the shops and recycle your plastic. You think shops should go plastic free and that people should do more to help the environment. You are a keen traveller and feel very unhappy about the amount of a keen traveller and feel very unhappy about the amount of plastic litter you have seen.



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Shop Owner

You have owned a small shop for a number of years. Every day, you sell a lot of goods, particularly food, in plastic packaging. You are aware of how much waste there is, but recycling it all will be expensive. It is easier to put it in the bins. You know that you will have to increase your prices if you are going to buy in recycling contractors.



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Environmental Volunteer

You spend much of your weekend walking along your local beach picking up plastic. It makes you very upset to see so much rubbish and you have often found seabirds in distress, caught up in plastic waste.

While on holiday, you have seen many dead fish that have died due to plastic pollution.

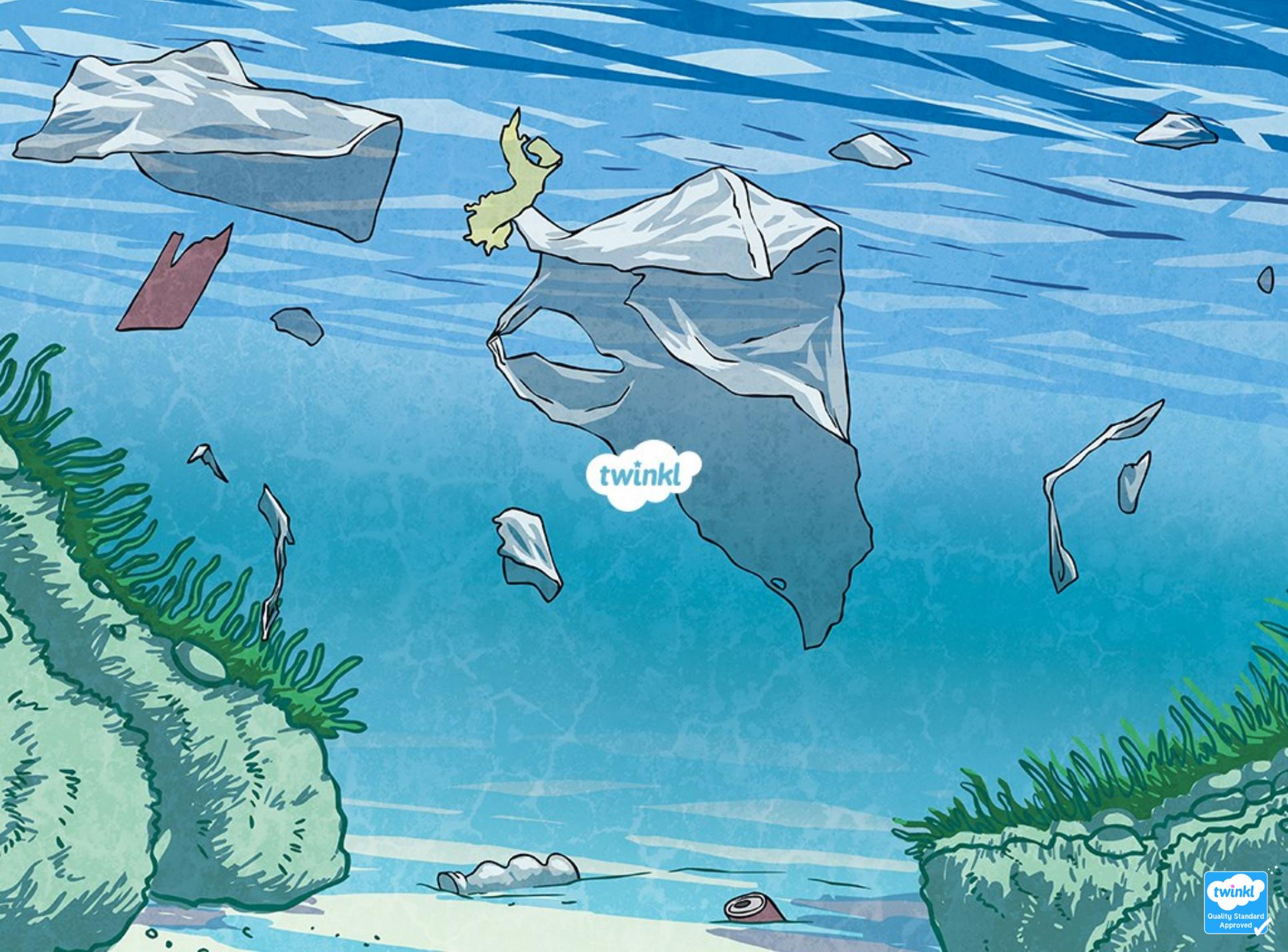


Review

There are many different viewpoints on this subject. It cannot be disputed that the planet is beginning to suffer because of the amount of plastic being manufactured and thrown away.

Design a poster to explain the problems that plastics are causing to the environment.





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