

Plastic Pollution – what can be done?





3. WHAT
IS BEING
DONE TO
TACKLE
THE
PLASTIC
PROBLEM?

Plastic Pollution - recap



The effects of plastic pollution can be very severe. Thousands of seabirds and turtles, seals and fish are killed every year from eating or being caught in plastic. One third of all marine mammal species have been found entangled in plastic litter. Jellyfish have even been known to mistake a plastic bag for another jellyfish!



Scientists believe that there are now up to 50 trillion pieces of plastic in the oceans. More than eight billion tonnes of plastic ends up in the ocean every year. It is estimated that, by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans.

Plastic is so strong and long-lasting that every piece of plastic that has ever been made still exists today.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05q49hq>



Stopping Plastic Pollution

There are things that we can all do to help stop plastic pollution from getting worse.

1. Stop buying single-use plastics, such as drinks bottles, food containers and shampoo. Long-lasting carrier bags, drinks flasks and bars of soap and shampoo are available.
2. Recycle as much plastic as possible.
3. Avoid littering and use bins, especially recycling bins.
4. Only flush toilet paper down the toilet and use a bin for wipes and anything else which does not degrade.

There are some people who believe that businesses and governments should be doing more.

What Could Be Done: The Debate

Most people agree that plastic pollution is not a good thing but many people disagree over what should be done to help.

Restaurants and food companies could stop selling plastic cups, cutlery and straws. These items are all only used once and then thrown away. They are also hard to recycle.

Paper straws do not last as well in liquid and cardboard cups are not very waterproof. People don't always have their own containers and straws available.

Nets made for fishing are usually made of plastic. The fishing industry could slow down to help the oceans to recover. Plastic inside fish could also end up in our food!

Many people around the world eat fish and depend on it for their survival. Many people would lose their jobs and houses if the fishing industry stopped.

Supermarkets now charge money for plastic bags but some say that they should be removed altogether. Plastic bags are light and blow into rivers and oceans. They can suffocate animals.

Paper bags are not as strong as plastic ones and people may choose not to shop in the places where bags are not available. Shops want people to be able to buy more and carry it home.

Some stores have no packaging for their products whatsoever and customers bring their own boxes and bags to fill with rice, pasta, beans and other foods.

People often shop when they don't have containers with them and it is easier to buy food that is pre-packed. Packaging also gives information about the food being bought and often lasts longer in sealed packaging.

What Could Be Done: The Debate

In some countries, such as Thailand, popular beaches and tourist spots have been closed to help the local wildlife to recover from the litter and fishing. More of this should be done.

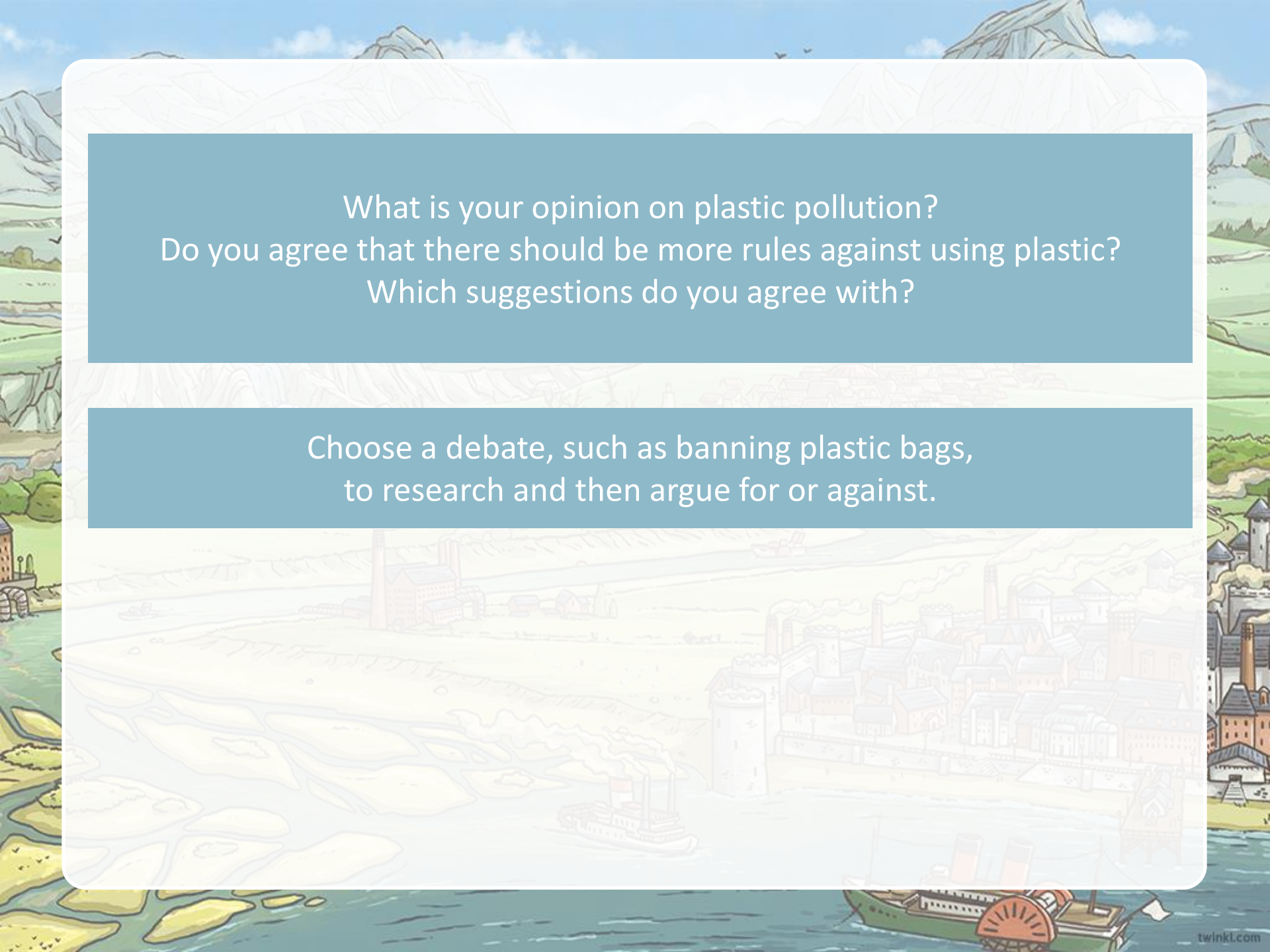
Closing areas of coastline could ruin tourism in the area, closing local businesses and destroying people's livelihoods. People may stop visiting certain countries if their favourite spots are closed off.

Making plastic creates lots of **greenhouse gases**. Companies who make plastic could be stopped or limited.

Plastic is a strong material with lots of useful properties. Many people would lose their jobs and lots of structures which rely on plastic would be lost. Plastics are very important in places like hospitals, as they are easy to clean.

More should be done to recycle the plastic that is currently still in existence around the world, before making more plastic.

The process of recycling plastic is difficult and expensive. When plastic is melted, at least some new plastic needs to be added in order for it to be usable again.



What is your opinion on plastic pollution?
Do you agree that there should be more rules against using plastic?
Which suggestions do you agree with?

Choose a debate, such as banning plastic bags,
to research and then argue for or against.

A number of plastic alternatives are being developed such as corn-based plastic



The first Lego pieces made from a plant-based plastic sourced from sugar cane will be on sale soon



In 2018 forty companies signed up to a pact to cut plastic pollution over the next 7 years



The 5p charge for carrier bags has reduced their use by 80%





Coffee cups are difficult to recycle as they have a mixture of paper and plastic in their inner lining

But companies are now starting to recycle them



Use of compostable cups is growing

But they must be properly disposed of in food waste bins



Large coffee retailers are offering incentives for customers to bring in their own reusable cups

In the UK we use about 13 billion plastic bottles each year but only just over half of these are recycled



The average person in the UK uses 150 bottles of water per year (EAC, 2017)



Many countries have a deposit return scheme for plastic bottles and soon England will too



4. WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?



Plastics are so useful that we can't just stop using them completely but we can **reduce** the amount we throw away and make sure what we have to throw away is **recycled** properly

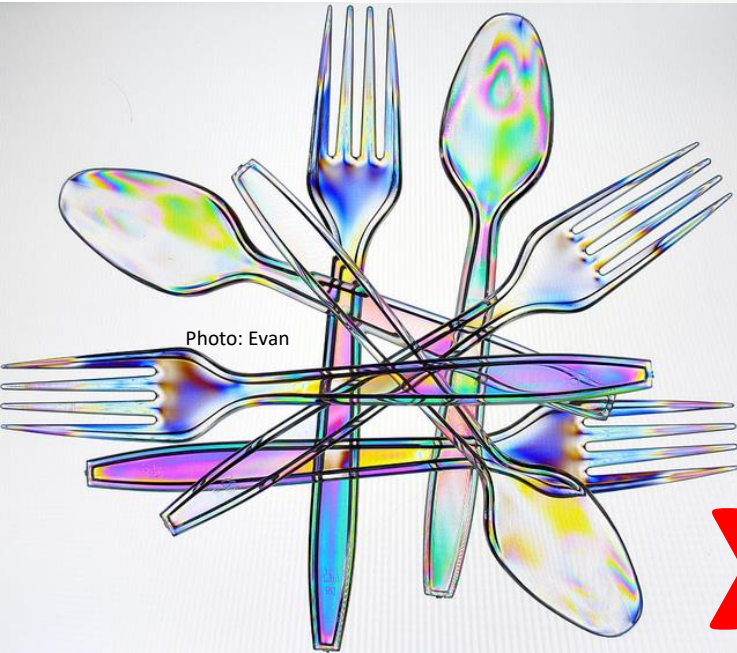


Avoid Single Use Plastics

X



X



X



X

Cut Down On Plastic Food Packaging



Avoid buying food in plastic packaging



Photo: Anna Gregory



Buy fruit and vegetables loose and pack them in a reusable bag



Recycle Plastic Whenever You Can



Most local authorities now offer collection facilities for plastic bottles



Photo: Ludovic Tristan



Photo: Health Gauge

It takes only five 2 litre plastic bottles to make one Extra Large T-shirt!

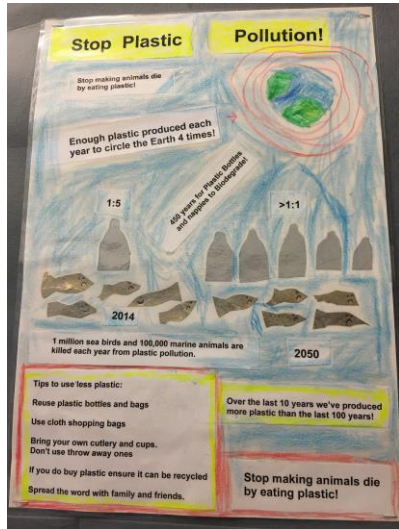
Dispose of plastic responsibly
when you are away from home



Together we can make a difference



Task: to create a persuasive poster advising how we can reduce plastic pollution



Glossary

air pollution	something in the air which poisons or causes damage to living things
biodegradable	able to be broken down by microorganisms
decompose	something natural which breaks down and provides nutrients for living things
durable	long lasting
fossil fuels	materials like coal, gas and oil which have formed over millions of years from plants and animals
global warming	an increase in the earth and ocean temperature
hydrocarbon chemicals	chemicals which exist in fossil fuels
landfill sites	a place for burying things which cannot decompose
microbeads	tiny pieces of plastic
pollution	when the air, land or water is made dirty by chemicals and rubbish
toxic	poisonous and harmful



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