

## Lesson plan

### Plastic in the ocean: What can we do?

#### Lesson description

This lesson aims to help learners understand how single-use plastics can end up in the ocean, the dangers they cause to sea animals and people, and how we can reduce plastic waste.

#### Aims

All learners will:

1. raise awareness of the problem of single-use plastics in the ocean
2. develop reading skills through a story about the journey of a plastic bag
3. use creative and collaborative skills to create an awareness-raising poster
4. practise speaking skills by discussing the story and sharing ideas.

#### Age group and level

8–11; B1+

#### Time

120 minutes (can be done in two 60-minute lessons)

#### Materials

1. Lesson plan
2. Student worksheet
3. Story
4. Presentation
5. Realia – a choice of a plastic bag, bottle, food wrapper, takeaway container, crisp packet, coffee cup, cutlery, toothbrush, plus five reusable or sustainable alternatives such as a cloth bag, metal water bottle, reusable plastic or bamboo lunchbox, reusable coffee cup, paper bag, wooden/bamboo cutlery, bamboo toothbrush
6. Paper and pens/pencils for making a poster

#### Contributed by

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Topic

Oceans and plastic pollution

## Lesson procedure

### Introduction

This lesson begins with a story that helps learners understand how a piece of plastic can travel from everyday life into the ocean and harm sea animals. Through reading and discussion, learners explore how this problem happens and why it matters. They then use this understanding to think about what we can do when we see a problem, including raising awareness. By creating posters or other awareness-raising materials, learners have the opportunity to communicate their ideas and consider how they can make a real-world impact.

### Procedure – Lesson one

#### 1. Lead-in (10 minutes)

- Show Slide 2 or if you're not using slides, draw a simple picture on the board (waves, fish, shells). Ask *What is it?* Elicit vocabulary like *under the sea, the ocean, a turtle, fish*. [You may want to explain the difference between 'sea' and 'ocean'. Oceans are bigger than seas, and there are five oceans in the world. These are the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic and Southern (Antarctic) oceans.]
- Ask learners to work in pairs and think of as many words as they can that relate to the ocean. They can use their home language for any words they don't know.
- Then, get each pair to join another pair to share their ideas. They can help each other to write as many words as they can in English. As you monitor, help with any language needed and write useful words on the board.
- Do some whole-class feedback. (If learners mention pollution or plastic, accept the answer but don't develop it at this point.) Ask each group to share their favourite ocean word. Some possible answers are *shark, whale, dolphin, octopus, crab, plants, seaweed, rocks, stones, shells, coral*. Elicit the following words if learners don't mention them, as they appear in the story: *water, wave, to swim, to float, fish, sea animal, turtle, jellyfish*.

#### 2. Pre-reading task (5 minutes)

- Show Slide 3. Ask learners *What can you see in the picture?* (a plastic bag) *Where is it?* (on the ground, in a park, in the city) *How did it get there?* (someone dropped it; it blew out of a bin).
- Show Slide 4. Ask learners *How can a plastic bag get from a city park into the ocean?*

- Note: If you aren't using the presentation, you can show a plastic bag and draw simple pictures on the board.
- Accept all suggestions at this point, without giving any answers.

### 3. Reading for gist (10 minutes)

- Show Slide 5 (Worksheet Task 1). Tell learners that they're going to read a story about a plastic bag. After they've read the story, they're going to decide which is the best title.
- Give learners a copy of the story or, if that's not possible, show Slide 6 then Slide 7. Tell learners *Don't worry about difficult words – just understand the story.*
- After learners have read the story, ask them to choose the best title with their partner. Note: To help less confident readers, you could pair them with more confident readers, so that they can explain parts of the story in their home language if necessary.
- Check the answer: A long journey. Ask learners *Why is this the best title? Where is the bag at the start? (in a bin) Where is the bag in the end? (in the ocean).* [A journey = when you travel from one place to another place]

### 4. Vocabulary focus (10 minutes)

- Use simple drawings, gestures, explanations or online images to elicit the following vocabulary: *a bin, the wind, a drain, a pipe, a river, a fish caught in a bottle, to harm, an ocean garbage patch.*
- Then show Slide 8 and/or Worksheet Task 2. Ask learners to write the correct word in the gap, then check their answer with a partner.
- Show Slide 9 to check the answers.

### 5. Reading for detail (10 minutes)

- Show Slide 10 (Worksheet Task 3). Tell learners that the sentences are the events in the story, but they are in the wrong order. Ask them to read the story again and when they've finished, put the sentences in the correct order.
- Ask learners to check their answers with their partner.
- Show Slide 11 to check the answers.

### 6. Discussion (5 minutes)

- Show Slide 12 (Worksheet Task 4) or write the following questions on the board: *Why is there so much plastic rubbish in our oceans? Why is plastic in oceans a problem for animals? How could plastic in oceans be a problem for people?* Give learners a minute to read and think about the questions.
- Ask learners to share their thoughts with their partner. They can speak in their home language if necessary.

- Nominate some of the more confident learners to share opinions. Be prepared to guide learners towards answers, especially answers to question three, as this is not mentioned in the text. Some possible answers are: 1. *People use too much plastic. / Not enough plastic is recycled. / Some countries don't recycle enough plastic.* 2. *Plastic is dangerous for animals because they can eat it then get sick or die. / Animals get stuck in plastic rubbish. / 3. The plastic slowly gets smaller and smaller. Fish eat the plastic, and people eat the fish. / Rubbish doesn't look nice for people who spend time at the beach. / They could hurt themselves on sharp pieces of rubbish.*

## 7. Reflection (10 minutes)

- Ask learners *How does the bag feel in the story?* Possible answers: *scared, worried, small, sad, bad.*
- Invite learners to think about how the story made them feel. Ask them to draw the outline of a fish on a piece of paper or cut out the fish on the worksheet. Then ask them to write and complete the following sentence in the fish: 'The story made me feel \_\_\_\_\_ because ...'
- You could show Slide 13 or write some example answers on the board. *The story made me feel worried because there is too much plastic in the ocean. / The story made me feel sad because the plastic bag can't leave the garbage patch. / The story made me feel scared because sea animals are in danger.*

## 8. Optional homework (10 minutes)

- If learners have internet access, you could ask them to research 3–5 ocean facts for homework, for example how much plastic enters the ocean every year; the size of the Great Garbage Patch; how long plastic takes to break down in the ocean; how microplastics get into our food.

## Procedure – Lesson two

### 1. Lead-in (10 minutes)

- Bring five single-use plastic items, such as a plastic bag, bottle, food wrapper, takeaway container, crisp packet, coffee cup, cutlery, toothbrush, **plus** five reusable or sustainable alternatives such as a cloth bag, metal water bottle, reusable plastic or bamboo lunchbox, reusable coffee cup, paper bag, wooden/bamboo cutlery, bamboo toothbrush. Choose your own depending on your context and what you have available.
- Elicit the word for each item. Teach 'single-use plastic' and make sure learners understand the meaning by asking checking questions like *Can we use it lots of times? Do we throw it away after we use it?*

- Show Slide 14. Ask learners, in pairs, to write the vocabulary under the headings 1. Single-use plastic; 2. Reusable/Sustainable (if necessary, explain ‘sustainable’ = causing little or no harm to the environment).
- Check the answers together by sorting the realia into two piles.
- Have a quick whole-class discussion about why things like paper bags and wooden cutlery don’t harm the environment. [They decompose, come from sustainable sources and don’t contain harmful substances.] You may also wish to briefly discuss your own country’s recycling habits.

## 2. Task preparation (15 minutes)

- As a whole class, ask learners to share ideas about how we can help other people understand the problem of plastic in the ocean. Give prompts such as *We can tell people ...*, *People should know ...*, *We can show ...* Ideas for helping to raise awareness are making posters to put up in school or the community, sharing posts on social media, giving talks, making videos, putting on a play, writing poetry ...
- Tell learners that, in groups of three or four, they’re going to make posters to help people understand the problem and what they can do to help. Tell them that their poster should include a main slogan, pictures and text to explain or suggest action.
- Show Slide 15 or write the following headings on the board: Slogan / Picture / Explain / Action, then some examples, e.g. **Slogan:** Stop plastic in the ocean! / Plastic belongs in the bin, not the ocean! **Picture:** A turtle trying to eat a plastic bag / a fish caught in a plastic bottle / **Explain:** Wind and rain can make rubbish go into rivers. Rivers take the rubbish to the ocean. / Plastic can harm fish and other sea creatures. **Action:** Put your rubbish in the bin! / Use a cloth bag, not a plastic bag!
- Ask learners to discuss with their group and choose a slogan, pictures, explanation and action text with their group. As you’re monitoring, make a note of any language you think learners will need.
- Do some quick whole-class feedback. Draw attention to good ideas you heard while monitoring. Elicit and write useful language on the board.

## 3. Creative, collaborative task (20 minutes)

- If possible, give learners large sheets of paper and coloured pens/pencils for making the posters. Explain that they have 20 minutes to create a poster about plastic in the ocean. Remind learners to use the ideas from the previous brainstorming stage (Pictures / Words / Slogans / Actions) and any facts they found for homework. Encourage each group member to contribute according to their strengths: thinking of ideas; drawing pictures; writing slogans or short texts; checking spelling.

- **Alternative if no materials are available:** Ask learners to make a ‘talking poster’. They can describe the pictures, slogans and facts aloud to the class, read out their messages and explain their ideas instead of drawing.

#### **4. Gallery walk – Peer response to posters (10 minutes)**

- Display the posters – either put them on the walls or lay them flat on tables around the room.
- Tell learners that they will move around the room in their groups, look at each poster and write one short message about it. Show Slide 16 with sentence starters to support them. Learners can write their message on sticky notes or on a piece of paper next to the poster. Remind them that their messages should be positive.
- Rotate the groups after three minutes so that they see different posters. Depending on the size of your class and the time available, learners may not see all the posters – the aim is for them to respond to a few different posters. When time is up, ask groups to go back to their own poster and read the comments.
- Note: If you’ve used the ‘talking poster’ version, ask groups to present their talk to the class. Learners listen to the talk and write a short comment after each one. At the end of the talks, messages can be ‘delivered’ to the groups.
- Nominate a few groups to say which comment they are most happy with and why.
- Ask learners which poster, other than their own, they thought was particularly effective in raising awareness about ocean plastic, and what made it effective.

#### **5. Final reflection (5 minutes)**

- Ask learners to come back to the fish they wrote in at the end of Lesson one. Now ask learners to write another sentence, to say what they’re going to do to help the problem. For example, ‘I’m going to tell my family about plastic in the ocean’, ‘I’m going to stop using plastic bags’.

#### **6. Extension/homework activity (30 minutes)**

- Ask learners to retell the story of the plastic bag from Lesson one, using simple pictures and text.