

The Climate Connection



Lesson plan

Buy. Use. Toss.

Shopping and services: responsible consumption

Remote teaching lesson plan

Suitable for use with lower secondary learners of English
CEFR level B1 and above

#TheClimateConnection

www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection

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Topic

This lesson looks at shopping and services, and responsible consumption.

Outcomes

- To highlight the environmental impact of waste on the living planet, especially plastics
- To encourage responsible consumption and responsible activism
- To discuss the causes and consequences behind these issues as well as possible solutions
- To practise the passive voice in the past

Age group and level

Lower secondary students at CEFR level B1

Time

90 minutes approximately or two shorter lessons

Materials

The teacher will need:

- lesson plan (PDF)
- online class presentation.

Introduction

This lesson is part of the Climate Action in Language Teaching series of engaging lessons about the climate emergency and biodiversity loss. It explores different topics connected to the crisis.

In this lesson, learners will be asked to think about what happens to the things we throw away. They categorise some rubbish into 'necessary' and 'luxury' products, then answer questions about the last item they threw away. They read the 'autobiography' of a plastic bottle and write their own story in the same style. Finally, they discuss the extent to which other people's waste is their responsibility and the responsibility of all, and agree on practical ways to reduce plastic waste in the world at three levels: personal, local and national/corporate.

It would be a suitable lesson to supplement a unit in the coursebook on shopping and services, or when practising the passive voice in the past.



Procedure

1. Introduce the topic (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners to go into their kitchen or wherever they keep rubbish and to come back with a few rubbish items from the bin or recycling bin. Ask them to put their items into two groups: 'necessary' items and 'luxury' items. Clarify the meaning by showing items of yours that you consider necessary or luxuries, e.g. an old tube of toothpaste (necessary) and a chocolate box (a luxury?). • Invite learners to show the class their objects and say why they categorised them as they did. Make a distinction between the object and the packaging; for example, water is necessary, but is the plastic bottle holding it also necessary? • Encourage discussion about this and ask learners to think of alternatives to the luxuries, e.g. a reusable water bottle.
2. Answer questions about a recently thrown away item (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell learners to find the last item that they threw away. Show the last item that you threw away as an example. • Display the six questions and answer them for your item. Make it clear that you are making educated guesses about some of the information: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What is it made of? Where is the material from?</i> 2. <i>Where was it manufactured?</i> 3. <i>How did it travel from there to you?</i> 4. <i>How long did you use it for?</i> 5. <i>What did you do with it when you threw it away?</i> 6. <i>What happened to it after that?</i> • Tell learners that they will go into breakout rooms, or the equivalent, in pairs to take turns asking each other the questions about their item. Reassure the class that if they don't know the answer, they can guess. • Put them into breakout rooms. After a few minutes, bring them back to the main room and nominate individuals to talk about their partner's item of rubbish and what they decided about its 'story'.
3. Predict the story (5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display the book cover. Explain that this is the 'autobiography' of a plastic water bottle. Make sure learners know what an autobiography is, and that autobiographies are told in the first person, 'I'. • Display the first line ('The first thing I remember ...'). Tell learners to write in the chat box their guesses about what happens in the story. Tell them they can write things that happen or words they think appear in the story. Accept



	<p>all ideas at this stage, but question why they have written the things they write.</p>
<p>4. Order the events in a story (15 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell learners that the story was mixed up at the printers when they were printing the book, and that they have to put the story back in the correct order from the start of the bottle's 'life' to the end of the story. • Display the jumbled events. Paste the exercise (below) into the chat box or send it to them another way: <p>1 > The first thing I remember is coming out of a very hot machine. I was in a long line of hundreds of bottles the same as me ...</p> <p>> After a few days there, we were taken in another lorry to a supermarket.</p> <p>> Two days later, we were unwrapped and I was put on a shelf in the shop. I wasn't there long before I was quickly put in a shopping basket and bought.</p> <p>> And that's where I am now, and where I will still be in hundreds of years' time. Just floating around.</p> <p>> I didn't get to the person's house. It was a hot day, so they drank my water outside the supermarket. I was thrown away, in a bin in the supermarket car park.</p> <p>> I floated in the water all the way to the sea. After many weeks and months slowly drifting, I ended up in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, with lots of other bottles.</p> <p>> I was filled with water and given a label. I was wrapped in plastic with many other bottles and we were put in a big lorry and went on a very long journey.</p> <p>> On the journey to the rubbish dump, there was a bump! The bag I was in fell out into the road. Then a car hit us and I was thrown into a river. I quickly lost my label in the water.</p> <p>> The next day, I was picked up in the rubbish bag and thrown into a bin lorry.</p> <p>> We were taken to a big building with thousands of other bottles, drinks cans, packets and boxes.</p> • Explain that they should copy and paste the text into an app such as Word and that there they can reorder the story. • Give them five minutes for this. When most learners have finished putting the story in order, display the photos of things from the story. Point to each thing on the screen and ask learners to write the correct word from the story, i.e. (photo 1) a bin lorry, a dump, (photo 2) a shopping basket, (photo 3) a drinks can, (photo 4) rubbish bags, (photo 5) bins, (photo 6) a label.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominate learners to read each part of the story (mics on) in the correct order. Confirm their answers by displaying the correct answers. Answers: 1 = The first thing I remember ... (given); 2 = I was filled ...; 3 = We were taken ...; 4 = After a few days ...; 5 = Two days later ...; 6 = I didn't get ...; 7 = The next day ...; 8 = On the journey ...; 9 = I floated ...; 10 = And that's where ...
5. Focus on past passive structure (5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display this line from the water bottle story on the board: I was filled with water and given a label. Ask learners, 'Who filled the bottle with water?' (Someone at the factory. / We don't know exactly. / It isn't important.) Using the slides highlighting the structure, point out the usefulness of the past passive for this writing task and remind learners of the structure: <i>was/were + past participle</i>.
6. Mini autobiography (15 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain to learners that they are going to write an autobiography of an item of rubbish that they have thrown away. Put learners in pairs in breakout rooms and tell them to choose one of their items to write about. Ask them to work together on the text, using whatever shared online doc they are used to (e.g. Google Docs). Visit the breakout rooms as they write to help with language and ideas. Encourage them to use their imagination to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Make sure both members of each pair have a copy of the story they have helped to write before you bring the class together again.
7. Read and present (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put learners in new groups of three or four. Tell them to read out their stories to one another. Tell them that as they listen to each other's stories they should choose the story they think is the most realistic, personal or emotional, and the most interesting or funniest.
8. Discussion and decision on action (20 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask learners if they know or can guess how long the 'life' of a plastic bottle is (about 400 years). Then ask, 'How much of that time is useful?' (e.g. a few days holding the water, a few minutes in the customer's hands!). Display the discussion questions and tell learners that they are going to go into breakout groups to discuss them. Tell each group to discuss the final question in detail and decide on three areas of action that would be effective. Explain that one area should be at the personal level, i.e. what they can do in their lives; one should be at the local level, i.e. what can change in their school or local community; and one should be at the national, economic or political level, i.e. what they can do to help make bigger changes in society.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit each group and find out about their ideas, helping them with language to express their ideas where necessary. Bring the class together again. Look at each of the three levels in turn, starting with the personal level. Invite spokespeople from each group to summarise their ideas. • Suggested answers for the teacher's reference. Problems caused by plastic in the oceans and in the countryside include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plastic breaking down into small pieces, which are eaten by animals - it can poison the water - plastic bags can choke animals who eat it. Things we can do to reduce plastic include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (at the personal level) refuse to use single-use plastics; use a refillable water bottle; recycle more effectively at home; choose products with paper or card packaging over products with paper packaging; consume less - (at the local level) create a recycling system at school; collect rubbish in the area; organise a clean-up of a park - (at the national, economic or political level) sign petitions to stop plastics; complain at supermarkets about their use of plastic; write to big companies; organise campaigns to stop buying products or supporting irresponsible companies.
9. Make an action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display the 'My action plan' slide. Ask the class to choose one action from their action plans to carry out over the following week. In the next lesson, make sure you follow this up by asking learners what they did, how it went, whether they will carry on, and so on.
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners research how a product such as plastic, tetra Brik™, cardboard for packaging, old electronics, etc. is either produced, recycled or disposed of. Search terms include: 'How is _ made?', 'What happens to recycled _?', 'Where does my rubbish go?'

Contributed by

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