

SHOULD SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BE BANNED?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

WOULD BANNING PLASTIC BOTTLES HELP OR HURT THE PLANET

Above The Noise | September 15, 2019 | Video
7:34 minutes

Myles Bess, host of *Above the Noise*, takes us through the pros and cons of banning plastic bottles - one kind of single-use plastic.

- Around the world, humans use 1 million plastic bottles per minute. Fewer than half the bottles used were collected for recycling, and only 7% of bottles collected for recycling were actually turned into new bottles. Instead, most bottles end up in a landfill or in the ocean.
- Plastic has been around since the mid-1800s, but after WWII, plastic became a huge consumer good and continues today. Humans have created an estimated 8 billion tons of plastic, and since plastic doesn't break down or biodegrade, it just breaks down into smaller pieces which eventually make their way into the oceans and into ocean wildlife.
- 70% of plastic bottles in the United States are not recyclable, and almost all plastic bottles are made from fossil fuels like oil.
- Several cities, states, and countries have passed laws banning single-use plastics like Styrofoam, plastic bags, and straws. For six years, the National Park Service banned the sale of single-use plastic water bottles in dozens of parks.
- In many parts of the world, and in some parts of the United States, clean, safe, drinking water isn't available, so using a reusable water bottle isn't an option.

STONINGTON PONDERES PLASTIC BAG, STRAW BAN

WNPR | July 10, 2018 | Audio
5:04 minutes

WNPR reporter Frankie Graziano heads to a Connecticut beach town to talk to residents who want to ban single-use plastic bags and straws, and some who are against a ban.

- The CT Food Association says that over 1 billion single use bags were given out by Connecticut retailers every year. Wayne Pesch, President of the CT Food Association, says the group supports reducing how many plastic bags are given out but doesn't support an outright ban. He says that a 5 or 10 cent charge on a plastic bag would help change consumer behavior and limit how many bags are actually given out. (On August 1, 2019, a [10 cent tax was imposed on single-use plastic bags](#) statewide.)
- In Suffolk County, NY, a 5-cent bag fee went into effect in 2018. Legislator William Spencer says that the county's reusable bag use has gone from 5% to 50%, and that the usage of single-use bags went down from 70% to 35%.
- While some support the ban, some say that alternatives just aren't working. Andrew Field, co-owner of Noah's Restaurant in Stonington says that paper straws don't hold up and disintegrate as they sit in a drink.
- Kathy Flaherty says that disability rights groups are worried that some people with disabilities need plastic straws because alternatives, like stainless steel straws, are hard to keep clean and can cause injury and other options just don't work.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

CANADA WANTS TO BAN SINGLE-USE PLASTICS. WOULD IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

PBS NewsHour | June 13, 2019 | Article

865 words

PBS NewsHour's Vicky Stein looks at Canada's proposed single-use plastics ban and if it would make a difference in combating the large amount of plastic that's available to consumers and ending up in landfills, recycling centers, and in the environment.

- Canada's proposed ban would go into effect as early as 2021 and would help reduce litter and cut nearly 2 million tons of carbon pollution. Officials also say that the ban would create 42,000 jobs.
- Recycling can repurpose plastic materials. Fewer than 10% of plastics are actually recycled, and a large amount of plastic waste was previously sent to countries in Asia - but as countries refuse plastic waste shipments, it's starting to pile up.
- Max Liboiron, a scientist at Memorial University in Newfoundland, says she's skeptical of the science behind the ban. She says that plastic bags make up less than 1% of the plastics her research team has collected on shores, and plates, drink stirrers, and cutlery aren't the culprits. Liboiron's team found a large amount of the plastics that wash up are from fishing gear and "microplastics," tiny particles of plastic from cosmetics, manufacturing, and synthetic fabrics. She says that it's hard for researchers to track the origins of microplastics found in the ocean.
- While some plastics can be ditched, some are just too important to lose. Items like plastic sterile gloves, research supplies, and emergency food and water would be exempt from the ban. Some disability activists say that banning plastics would be a step back in the fight for better accessibility.
- Data does exist on the effectiveness of bans - in San Jose, CA, plastic litter found in storm drains was reduced by 89%. Morton Barlaz, an environmental engineer, says that bans might not be as effective as charging consumers money for single-use plastics. He says that biodegradable plastics are often expensive and difficult to recycle, so plastic alternatives can be just as much of a problem.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Single-use
- Microplastics
- Petroleum
- Accessibility

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

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DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.