



Teacher Resource

Plastic Waste Problem

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. Summarise the BTN Plastic Waste Problem story using your own words.
2. How much plastic waste does the world produce each year?
 - a. 4 million tonnes
 - b. 40 million tonnes
 - c. 400 million tonnes
3. What percentage of plastics are recycled in Australia?
4. Why did REDcycle stop recycling soft plastics from supermarkets?
5. What is the meaning of International Plastic Overshoot Day?

Activity: What do you know?

Before watching the BTN Plastic Waste Problem story, use the following questions to guide a class discussion:

- What do you know about the plastic waste problem?
- How much plastic waste does your household produce each week? Make an estimation.
- Have you got any soft plastics or other plastic packaging in your lunchbox? Record what you see.
- How could you reduce your plastic waste consumption?
- What questions do you have after watching the BTN story?



Language and Vocabulary

Single-use plastics, microplastics, landfill, short-life plastic, non-biodegradable, upcycling, recycling, sustainable packaging.

EPISODE 20

1st August 2023

KEY LEARNING

Students will investigate the plastic waste problem and take action to reduce their consumption of plastic.

CURRICULUM

Geography – Year 4

The use and management of natural resources and waste, and the different views on how to do this sustainably.

HASS – Year 4

Reflect on learning to propose actions in response to an issue or challenge and consider possible effects of proposed actions.

Science – Year 4

Science knowledge helps people to understand the effect of their actions.

Science – Years 5 & 6

Scientific knowledge is used to solve problems and inform personal and community decisions.

Science – Year 7

Scientific knowledge has changed peoples' understanding of the world and is refined as new evidence becomes available.

Activity: Six Hat Thinking

As a class, use Edward De Bono's Six Hat Thinking to explore the issues raised in the BTN Plastic Waste Problem story. Make your own coloured hat cut outs and place on the floor. Students will take it in turns answering questions in relation to what they already know about the issue, what they have learned from the story and what they want to learn further about the topic. Ask students to respond to the following questions:

- How did the BTN Plastic Waste Problem story make you feel?
- What do you know about plastic waste?
- What have you learnt from the story?
- Were there any positives from the story? If so, what were they?
- What are some of the negatives or challenges that you learnt from the story?
- Why is it important to find out more about the plastic waste problem?
- What questions were raised during this activity? Think of three questions you would like to ask about the story.
- What do you want to learn further about this topic?



Reflection

After this activity, ask students to reflect on what they have learnt and the questions they have about the plastic waste problem. Students can include details about how their thinking on this issue has changed.

Activity: Research project

Discuss the information raised in the BTN Plastic Waste Problem story. What questions were raised in the discussion and what are the gaps in students' knowledge? The following KWLH organiser provides students with a framework to explore their knowledge on this topic.

What do I know ?	What do I want to know?	What have I learnt ?	How will I find out?

Students will develop their own question/s to research or choose one or more of the questions below.

- What are some examples of soft plastics and other plastics that you use daily? Conduct a plastic waste bin audit over one week either at home or school.

- What percentage of plastic gets recycled in Australia? Investigate the percentage of recycling for other materials (e.g., metal, glass, paper, electronics). Plot your findings on a graph.
- What are recycling companies turning plastic waste into?
- What is the history of plastic? Explore the history and development of plastic and plot your findings on a timeline.
- Who invented plastic? Create a biography.
- What happens to the soft plastic you throw away? Explore the journey of soft plastic from production, to landfill and its impact on the environment.
- Why can't soft plastics be put in your home recycling bin?
- Should there be incentives for people who reduce, reuse, and recycle? What do you think the incentives should be?
- How do you think our plastic consumption affects the environment?

Activity: Take Action

Discuss with students what their school already does to reduce waste. For example, their school might have recycling programs, rubbish audits, or clean up days. Does your school have an Environmental Management Plan or team? In small groups, ask students to brainstorm how their school could improve what it already does to reduce waste.

- Make a list of new ways that your school could reduce the amount of waste it creates and new ways that you can deal with the waste it creates.
- Share and compare your ideas with the class.
- Choose 1 of your ideas to present to your SRC or the school leadership team.



Here are some suggestions:

- Nude food days.
- Run a workshop to learn how to make reusable beeswax food wrappers.
- Audit rubbish created in one day. How much plastic waste is there?
- Contact your local council or other schools to find out what they are doing to reduce waste.
- Hold your own school's clean-up day.
- Start a school compost or worm farm.
- Hold a zero-waste day.

Reflection

- What did you find interesting?
- What was challenging?
- What did you enjoy about this activity?
- What worked well and what would you do differently next time?

Activity: Visual literacy

In this activity students will analyse the image below which illustrates the soft plastics problem we are facing and the impact it has on our environment. Students will analyse the image and respond to the following:

- What is happening in the image?
Create a caption.
- What do you think the image is trying to tell us?
- What does the plastic bag represent?
- How does the image make you feel?
- What questions do you have about what you see in the image?



[Clean Up Australia](#)

Activity: Choose a project

Individually or in small groups, students will choose one of the following projects to work on and then present their findings to the class.

Write a Letter

Write a letter to your local member of parliament, expressing your concerns about the plastic waste problem. What can local government do to help the problem?

Plastic Waste Audit

Do you know how plastic you throw out each day? Think of all the times you used plastic in one day. How can you reduce your plastic waste?

Persuasive writing

How can we convince people to reduce their plastic waste? Think of creative ways to raise awareness about the issues raised in the BTN story.

Tips and tricks

How can we reduce our use of soft plastics? Write a list of tips and tricks to help people reduce their use of soft plastics. Think of a creative way to share your information.

Useful Websites

- [Australia's plastic mismanagement to mount as researchers warn of ongoing pollution crisis](#) – ABC News
- [War on Waste](#) – ABC iView
- [Plastic Pact](#) – BTN
- [Soft Plastics Recycling](#) – BTN