

Should plastic bags be banned? Text Set

Articles:

- “Bag-Ban Debate” (By Jennifer Dignan, *Scholastic News*, April 14, 2009)
<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3751739>
- “Plastic Bags: Convenient and Cruel” (article from *Storyworks Magazine*, April 2014)
- “Fact Sheet” (from Bag the Ban)
http://www.bagtheban.com/assets/content/media/TruthAboutPlasticBags_web.pdf
- “Bagging Plastic” (article from *Upfront Magazine*, March 2014)
- “Putting Plastic In Its Place” (from *Junior Scholastic*, April 2014)
- “Floating Junkyard” (By Britt Norlander, *Scholastic News*, April 19, 2010)
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/magazines/scienceworld/pdfs/SW-041910-PLASTIC.pdf>
- “The City Council’s plan to promote E.coli” (By Brad Gertsman, *New York Post*, July 31, 2014)
<http://nypost.com/2014/07/31/the-city-councils-plan-to-promote-e-coli/>
- Learn the facts.
***may be one that you want to steer students toward during Session 12 “Who Said What? Studying Perspective”**
<http://www.bagtheban.com/learn-the-facts>
- “Are Reusable Bags Dangerous?” (*Time for Kids*)
- A petition against the bag ban
(*this is a real petition and students will see places where people can sign. You will want to make sure to print out copies of this petition, not show it to students on the actual website)
<http://www.bagtheban.com/take-action/petition/>
- NYC’s Grocery Bags: Myth vs. Fact (from Bag the Ban)
<http://www.bagtheban.com/learn-the-facts/NYC-myths-vs-facts>
- Toronto Bans Plastic Shopping Bags
<http://teachingkidsnews.com/2012/06/07/toronto-bans-plastic-shopping-bags/>
- Environment (from Bag the Ban)
http://www.bagtheban.com/assets/content/Bag_the_Ban_Fact_Sheet_-_Environment.pdf

- Jobs and the Economy (from Bag the Ban)
<http://www.bagtheban.com/learn-the-facts/jobs-economy>

Books:

- *The Down-to-Earth Guide to Global Warming* by Laurie David and Cambria Gordon
- *Human Footprint: Everything You Will Eat, Use, Wear, Buy, and Throw Out in Your Lifetime* (National Geographic Kids) by Ellen Kirk
- *Garbage and Recycling: Environmental Facts and Experiments* (Young Discoverers: Environmental Facts and Experiments) by Rosie Harlow
- *Too Much Trash! (Rookie Read-Aloud Science)* by Fay Robinson (L)
- *Recycle!: A Handbook for Kids* by Gail Gibbons (M)
- *Recycling (A True Book)* by Rhonda Lucas Donald (N)
- *Plastic, Ahoy!: Investigating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch* By: Patricia Newman
- *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion* By Loree Griffin Burns (W)

Multimedia:

- “Edward Norton: Bag the Bag”
<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/norton-bag-env>
- “Bag the Ban Rally” (video clip created by Bag The Ban)
<http://www.bagtheban.com/multimedia/item/bag-the-ban-rally>
- “The Bay Vs. The Bag” (PSA from Save the Bay April 13, 2009)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSD21zp89zM&list=FLIbLgHP5qWXHVAwARUnw-oQ>
- California: The Inconvenient Truth Behind Banning Plastic Bags
<http://www.bagtheban.com/multimedia/item/california-truth-behind-efforts-to-ban-plastic-bags>
- “California’s Bag Ban Hurting the Job Market” (video from Fox News interviewing American Progressive Bag Alliance Chairman Mark Daniels.) (0–1:38); (2:40–3:09).
<http://video.foxbusiness.com/v/3823712949001/californias-bag-ban-hurting-the-job-market/#sp=show-clips>

Plastic Bags: Convenient and Cruel

They come in handy for carrying your groceries—or your lunch or your dirty sneakers. But are they worth it?

By Lauren Magaziner

Plastic bags are on the loose: They're floating through oceans, tumbling across deserts, and sliding along city streets. Humans use an estimated 1 trillion plastic bags every year. That's about 10 times the number of stars in the MilkyWay galaxy!

Yes, plastic bags are useful, but experts say they are wreaking havoc on the environment. Already, cities like San Francisco and Washington, D.C., have placed restrictions on the use of plastic bags.

Is it time to ban them for good?

Poisonous Plastic

Most things you throw away—like food or paper—are **biodegradable**. Plastic, a material made by humans, is not. Though plastic bags will disintegrate over several decades, minuscule pieces of plastic remain.

In other words, plastic bags never really go away.

So where do the bags end up?

Some people put used plastic bags in the garbage to be taken to **landfills**. Other people mistakenly place them in general plastic **recycling** bins, and the bags end up damaging expensive machinery. (Plastic bags can't be recycled with other plastic items, like bottles and containers.) Most often, though, plastic bags blow away and get swept out to sea. And that is where they cause the most trouble.

In the ocean, marine animals mistake floating bags for food. Just one nibble can be deadly. Plastic bags can block the digestive tract, causing a slow and agonizing death.

Plastic bags can threaten the world's marine animals.



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Other animals are strangled when bags wrap around their bodies. In all, thousands of marine animals—including sea turtles, seals, seabirds, dolphins, whales, and sharks—die each year because of plastic bags.

But marine animals aren't the only ones eating plastic. When the harmful chemicals in plastic **leach** into the ground or are ingested by land or sea animals, the chemicals become part

of our **food chain**. That means you may have unknowingly swallowed a bit of a plastic bag too.

So if plastic bags are so terrible, how did they end up in every store?

Good Intentions

In 1977, when plastic bags were first introduced to shoppers, they seemed like a huge

Debate

What Do You Think?

Should we ban plastic bags? Use evidence from the article to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.

YES Plastic bags are the worst.	NO Plastic bags aren't all bad.
1. Plastic bags don't biodegrade.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide if plastic bags should be banned. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an argument essay.

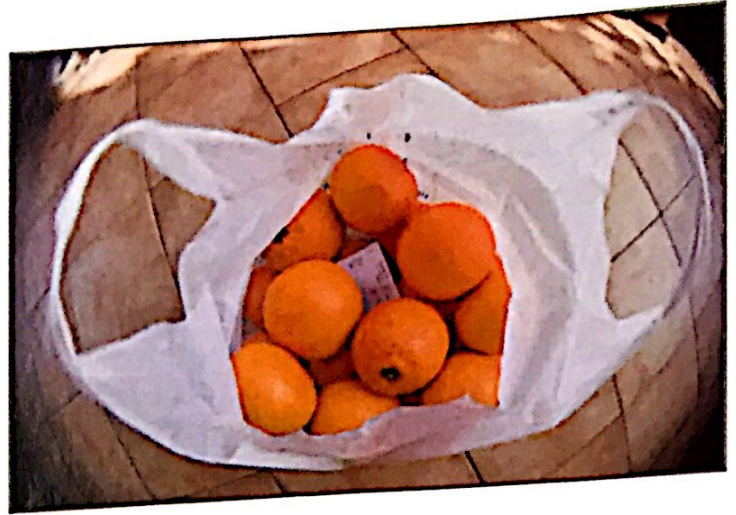
improvement over paper bags. They were cheaper to produce and less prone to break.

Plus, they seemed to be better for the environment. Paper bags are made by heating woodchips in a chemical solution. This process causes 70 percent more air pollution and 50 times more water pollution than the process used to make plastic bags.

Plastic bags are also more sanitary than reusable cotton or canvas bags, which can harbor harmful germs from raw meat and produce. A recent study showed that about 1 in every 10 reusable grocery bags contains bacteria that can make humans sick. (Supporters of a plastic bag ban are quick to point out that the solution is to wash reusable bags more often.)

Rather than banning plastic bags, some argue for limiting their use. Charging a fee per bag at the checkout counter, for instance, might encourage shoppers to use fewer bags. Stores could also offer bags made of more Earth-friendly materials, such as corn.

And why ban bags when we can reuse them? Ninety percent of Americans reuse their



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The average American uses 500 plastic bags a year.

plastic bags at home for everything from lining trash cans to picking up dog poop.

It's clear that we love our plastic bags. But do they do more harm than good?

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Waste In The Water: How Long Till It's Gone?

WAXED MILK CARTON

3 months

PLASTIC BAG

10–20 years

FOAM-PLASTIC CUP

50 years

ALUMINUM CAN

80–200 years

DISPOSABLE DIAPER

450 years

PLASTIC BEVERAGE BOTTLE

450 years

PLASTIC FISHING LINE

600 years

Manufacturers and recyclers of plastic bags think the bans are misguided. They say that the bags can be recycled, and that 9 out of 10

Americans reuse them for things like packing lunch, lining trash cans, and picking up after their dogs. They also point out that more than 30,000 people across the U.S. have jobs related to plastic bag manufacturing and recycling. Bans jeopardize those jobs.

Some people worry that in focusing on plastic bags, we'll lose sight of the bigger picture—the many other ways we pollute the planet.

Even so, Seattle resident Robb Krehbiel thinks his city's plastic bag ban is a good idea. "It's not going to be a silver bullet that solves all our environmental problems," he says. "But my thinking is you do what you can, when you can, where you can."

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