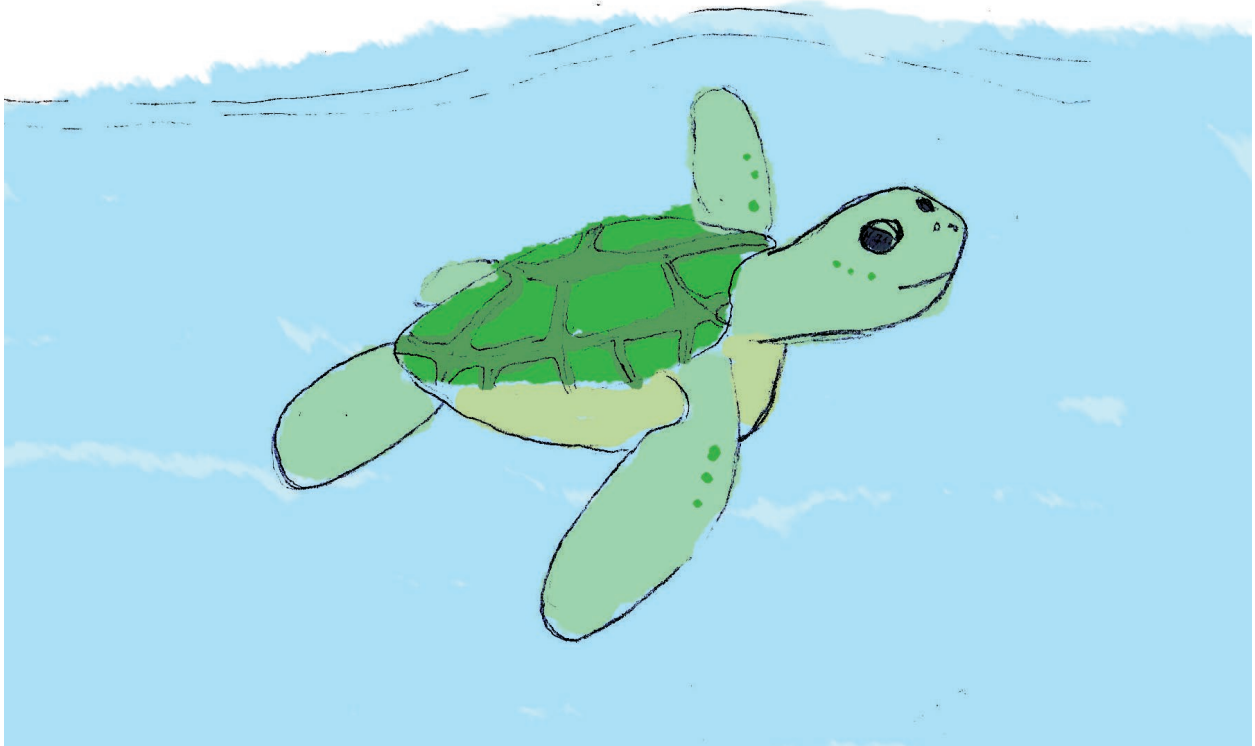


WILDLIFE OVER WASTE



Myrtle the Turtle Reading & Plastic Waste Discussion



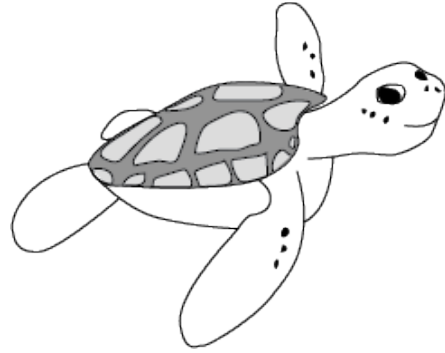
OVERVIEW

Ages: 5-10 years

Reading: 5 minutes

Discussion: 10 -15 minutes

Activities (optional): 10 - 25 minutes



Myrtle the Turtle readings should be followed by a discussion about plastic waste and how individuals and their families can reduce their plastic footprint. We create plastic waste constantly without thought for where it goes after it leaves our hands. The goal of the post-Myrtle discussion is to encourage kids to be conscious of their own choices and to think of the environment and our wildlife as a priority. The idea of reducing rather than recycling should be emphasized.

We want kids to look at a polystyrene cup (commonly known as Styrofoam) and recognize the harm it could do if it were to end up in the ocean. We want kids to make bringing their reusable cup a daily habit. We want kids to lead by example by refusing unnecessary plastic whenever possible.

Questions about reducing and plastic waste? See the FAQ sheet for common questions or visit:

<https://environmentoregon.org/feature/ore/wildlife-over-waste>

Main points of discussion to reinforce:

1. *Nothing we use once should pollute our environment for hundreds of years*
2. *Reducing is the best way to address plastic waste*
3. *Kids have the power to help the ocean by showing their friends and family*

Materials:

- Email sign up list for sending handouts post-discussion
- Plastic examples (i.e. shampoo bottle, plastic Ziploc bag, snack wrappers, plastic cutlery, take-out containers, disposable water bottle)
- Myrtle the Turtle book
- Other activity materials (see activities for specific materials)

Plastic Waste Lesson and Reading

INTRODUCTION: OUR WILDLIFE AND PLASTIC

As an introduction, ask kids to name their favorite marine animal.

“We want to keep our marine animals safe. Sometimes marine animals can get hurt by humans and human choices.”

Have common plastic items displayed in a line so all kids can see. Lay out at least four items. Ask kids if they can guess what all these items have in common.

- A. “All of these items are made out of plastic. Plastic is a material that makes up a lot of the things we use in our daily lives. Who can name something that might be made out of plastic?”
 - a. If kids can’t think of any, provide a couple examples:
 - i. I.e.: “Who here has ever eaten yogurt? Who likes fruit snacks? What do you think these items are packaged in?”
 - ii. “Can you think of other snacks that might be wrapped in plastic?”
- B. “Plastic might not seem so bad when we use it. Sometimes it makes life much easier because we can just throw it away when we’re done. But when we throw or even recycle plastic, it doesn’t just go away. Plastic sticks around for a long time and can harm wildlife.”

NOTE: the connection to wildlife is important. We want kids to think of wildlife when they are making daily decisions about plastic waste.

READ MYRTLE THE TURTLE

Ask kids for initial thoughts from the reading. Guide them to realize the issue Myrtle is talking about: Humans create too much plastic waste and it harms our wildlife

WHERE DOES PLASTIC GO AFTER WE USE IT?

POINT TO GET ACROSS: Most kids and adults don’t think beyond their house garbage or recycling. **Every time we throw something away, it doesn’t just go away.**

- A. “So we use a lot of plastic. Where does that plastic go after we use it?”

There are three places plastic can go: landfill, recycling, or on the ground if people litter. Kids will usually either answer “trash” or “recycling.” Discuss the consequences of each

Recycling:

- a. Ask: How many of you have recycling at home?
- b. Recycling is good because it means that the plastic will get reused. But recycling doesn't get rid of plastic.
- c. Only 9% of plastic or plastics are recycled. That means for every 10 pieces of plastic waste we produce, only one of those will be recycled
- d. Not every plastic is recyclable, and sometimes, items we recycle don't actually get recycled if a batch has too many items that are actually garbage.
- e.

Trash:

- a. Plastics that go to the trash don't go away - instead they sit in a landfill. A big pile of garbage. When plastics go to the landfill, they can often fly away during transport if they're light.
- b. Ask kids to guess which items might fly away of the plastic items on display. Get them to note the plastic bag, which Myrtle came across in the reading.
- c. Plastic items that blow away, like plastic bags, often end up in the ocean, and animals like myrtle can mistake them for food.

Reuse:

- a. Some kids might say they reuse their plastic. Encourage reusing, as multi-use plastic is better than single-use plastic.

HOW LONG DOES PLASTIC LAST? / WHY IS PLASTIC BAD?

- A. Give the kids a scenario: Let's say this plastic bag gets blown into the ocean. How long do you think this plastic bag would stick around until it breaks down or biodegrades?
- B. Plastics don't biodegrade, which is when tiny organisms and bacteria break it down. If a banana was buried in the ground, those tiny little organisms would break down that bananas in just a couple months. But those organisms can't break down plastics. Instead, plastics just turn into tiny little pieces called micro-plastics. We can't see micro-plastics, but fish and other animals eat on accident. When these plastics get into their stomach, it stay inside their organs and make them think they're not hungry. If the plastic pieces are big, they can choke on them and die.
- C. Plastic stick around for a long time, especially when they're in landfills.

Ask kids to guess how long it would take for a given plastic item to biodegrade or "go away" in a landfill. Examples found here.

- i. Plastic bag = 10 to 20 years
- ii. Plastic straw = 200 years
- iii. Plastic bottle = 450 years
- iv. Foam plastic cups = 50 - 80 years
- v. Styrofoam = never
- vi. [Source](#)

WHAT CAN YOU DO? (REDUCE!)

- A. So what can we do to help Myrtle the Turtle and all her friends? Bring up the 3 R's, and see if they can guess which one is the best.
- B. **Reducing our plastic use is the best way to keep plastic out of the ocean.**
- C. A lot of the plastic we use is single-use plastic, which means it's something that we use just one time and then throw away.
 - a. Ask kids to name which of the plastic items on hand are single use.
 - b. Ask if they can think of other alternative for certain plastic items
- C. Empower kids to make a difference on their own.
 - a. If you do the best you can to say no to plastic you don't need, other people will see what you're doing and want to do the same.
 - b. Now you know how plastic can harm wildlife, but not everybody knows that. It's up to you guys to tell your friends and your family to choose wildlife over waste. Animals like Myrtle can't tell us that we're hurting their environment, so it's up to use to speak for the turtles and all the other see animals.
 - c. Think about what you're buying and what it's made out of. Think to yourself, is there another option that isn't wrapped in plastic? Do you really need it?
 - d. Remind them of the wildlife they mentioned before and to protect them from our own actions.

At the end of the discussion or activities, parents can be sent home with handouts of the FAQ, "Keep the Sea Plastic Free" tip sheet, and/or Myrtle the Turtle Bingo (an activity that challenges kids to reduce their plastic use). Or, a copy of the email sign up sheet can be printed and the handouts can be emailed.

Possible Activities to Pair with Lesson

1). DIY Plastic-Free Shampoo Workshop

Summary: Kids/families make their own shampoo, soap or lotion in plastic-free containers. This activity is designed to bring awareness to the amount of items that come packaged in plastic and empower kids and families to create their own plastic-free alternatives. The teacher should discuss how many items we use daily come pack will be sent home with instructions on how to do it at home.

Goal:

Create awareness around the packaging of daily items we purchase
Instill plastic-free consumer habits in families

Materials:

- Shampoo bottle (for demonstration)
- Shampoo Ingredients (canned coconut milk, castile soap, essential oils, olive oil)
 - ¼ cup canned coconut milk
 - ¼ cup pure castile soap
 - 20 drops of essential oils
 - 1 teaspoon olive oil (optional)
- Containers (i.e. mason jars or old shampoo containers brought from home)
- Measuring cups (or mark ¼ cup and ½ on mason jars)
- Paper towels for clean up

Instructions:

1. Set out ingredients on table
 - a. If materials are available, the ingredients can be pre-measured and poured into small paper cups for each participant
 - b. Or, materials can be passed around and each participant can take turns putting the ingredients into their jars
2. Pass out a jar to each participant
3. Display the recipe or walk the participants through each ingredient step by step
4. Have each kid/family pour all ingredients into the mason jar and seal and shake to mix

2). Reusable Tote Decorating

Summary: Kids will decorate reusable canvas totes (plastic-free!) in order to reduce the need for plastic bags. Oregon voted to ban retailers and grocery stores from providing single-use plastic bags in June 2019, so families will need to be prepared with their own bags! Encourage kids to decorate their bag with their favorite sea animals to remind them to reduce their plastic use.

Goal:

Get kids to feel a sense of responsibility in bringing their own decorated bag when they go grocery shopping with their parents.

Materials:

- Markers / Sharpies / Fabric paint
- Canvas Bags (find them [here](#))

NOTE: any other sustainable crafts that result in a plastic alternative are good to pair with the reading.

3). Myrtle the Turtle Bingo

Summary: Kids/families can be sent home with Myrtle the Turtle Bingo sheet. The bingo sheet challenges families to reduce plastic in small actions.

Materials:

- Myrtle the Turtle Bingo Sheet

Instructions:

1. Distribute bingo sheet to kids to take home.
2. OPTIONAL: if materials are available, kids can be incentivized to complete and turn in their bingo sheet to the organization or individual presenting the lesson. Possible prizes can be stickers, vouchers, etc.

FAQ:

How does plastic get to the ocean?

Plastic that is carelessly left on the ground is very likely to end up in the ocean. Showers and storms can wash plastic into our waterways and then into our oceans. Plastic can also end up in the ocean even if we're sure we put it in the trash or recycling. Plastic film, such as snack wrappers and plastic bags, are light and often blow away when trash is in transportation.

What are micro-plastics?

Micro-plastics are pieces of plastic that are smaller than 5 mm. These pieces are broken down from larger macro-plastics. Materials made out of paper biodegrade fairly quickly in the environment, but plastic materials often [never biodegrade](#). Bacteria and small organisms can't break down the synthetic material. Instead, plastics just break down into smaller and smaller pieces. Polystyrene, or raised plastic foam, never biodegrades. It is what our coffee cups and packaging padding is made of.

What's wrong with recycling?

Normally when we think of the issue of plastic waste, many think of recycling as a solution. Recycling is a great alternative to sending things straight to the landfill, and recycled products are a great way to avoid the need to create new plastic products. However, recycling is not a solution; it's merely a way to slow down the growing amount of plastic waste created.

- a. What's recyclable and what's not depends on a given city or county. Many don't check the recycling guide, which results in [wishful recycling](#). This can be harmful because if a batch of recycling has too many recyclable items, it could be sent straight to the landfill.
- b. Not all plastic is recyclable. The main reason for this is that there is not a large market for all [recycled plastic](#), meaning there's few places that recycling companies can send recycled plastic to.

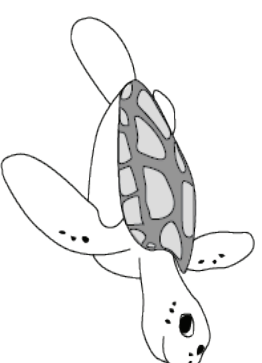
While recycling is good, reducing plastic waste is better.

Myrtle The Turtle's PLASTIC-FREE BINGO

NAME: _____

Scientist's say by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean. When we throw away

plastic, it sometimes gets in our water system and ends up in the ocean. Animals like Myrtle can mistake plastic for food and can choke on our waste. Choose Wildlife Over Waste!



**YOU CAN
COLOR THIS
BINGO SHEET!**

For 1 day, count how many plastic items you throw away. Can you throw away less the next day?

Visit the Oregon coast and promise to keep the sea plastic-free!

Ask your parents to buy a snack from the bulk section instead of a snack with plastic packaging



Bring a reusable bag to the store **THREE** times

Use a reusable water bottle consistently for a whole week!



When you order a drink, say, **"No Thanks!"** to a straw or use a reusable straw

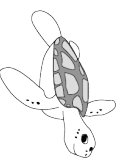
Pick up a piece of trash off the ground - this will help keep trash from getting to the ocean!



Go to your local farmers market - items there don't have to be shipped with plastic

Tell a friend or a family member about how reducing is better than recycling.

FREE



Ask your parents to check the local recycling guide - remember, not all plastic is recyclable!

Go one whole day without creating any plastic waste. **CHALLENGE:** go plastic-free one day every week

Pack a snack or lunch that's entirely plastic-free (That means no wrappers! Use containers)

**WILDLIFE
OVER WASTE**



KEEP THE SEA PLASTIC FREE

1

It's all about a mindset! The first thing we all have to do is put the environment and our wildlife first in our minds. Recognizing when you're inviting plastic into your life is an important step to take because plastic has become such a norm that we don't think twice about what happens after we use it.

2

Sometimes you have to sacrifice convenience in order to protect our wildlife. Maybe you skip coffee one day if you forget your reusable mug. Maybe you wait until you get home to eat instead of getting take out. Small sacrifices add up once they become a habit.

3

Next time you need to replace something plastic, like a toothbrush or a sponge, try to replace it with a plastic-free alternative. It's costly and unrealistic to expect everyone to quit all plastics immediately. But it's easy to transition if you slowly replace those items as the end of their lifeline approaches.

4

Don't know where to start? Start by reducing your plastic use in one area. At your work-place, in your kitchen, on your shopping trip, on your coffee run, or even in your back-to-school checklist. Or, commit to reducing or eliminating one specific item, like zip-seal bags or plastic coffee cups.

5

Be prepared! Plastic is usually tied with convenience. But you can eliminate the need for single-use plastics if you are prepared. Keep a set of utensils, a water bottle and/or a straw in your bag or your car so you're ready if hunger strikes on the go.

6

Share your habits! The best way to lead is by example. If someone sees you always carrying a reusable tote bag or using beeswax wraps instead of cling wrap, they may question where you got your plastic alternative and want to follow your lead. Social media is a great tool to share your habits and inspire others to follow suit.

7

It's time to stop thinking of recycling as a solution. There is always confusion around what is recyclable and what is not, and that's because recycling varies depending on your city or county. Only 9% of all plastics made are actually recycled. The focus should be on reducing the plastic we invite into our lives, instead of relying on whether it's recyclable or not.

