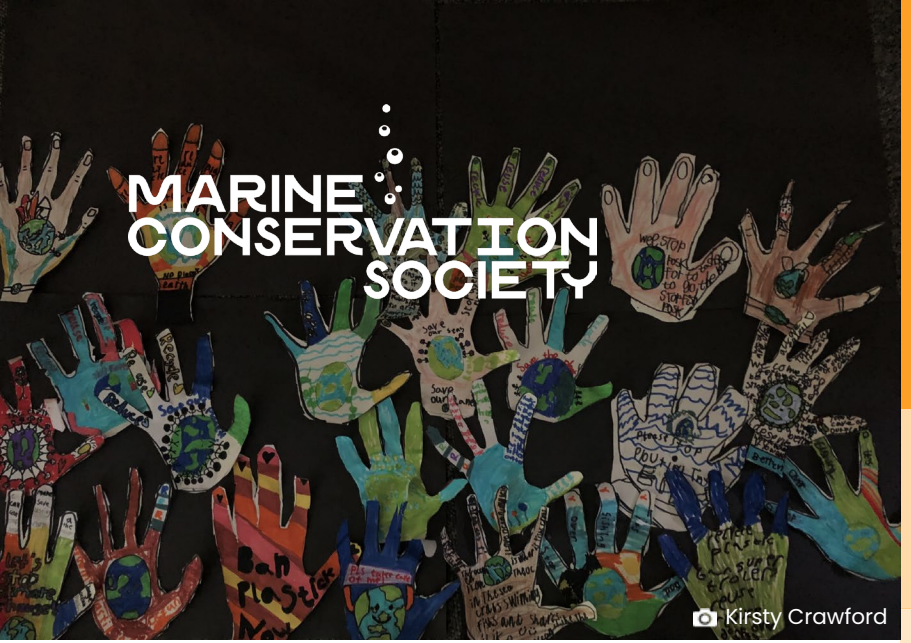


Artivism

Subject links:
Art, Science, Citizenship

Ages 5-11

Curriculum key words:
Human impact, topical issues, creativity, critical thinking, group work, sustainability

Ocean Literacy Principles:
6. The ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected

Learning objectives:
- To evaluate and analyse creative artwork using the language of art, craft and design
- To learn about various artists and designers and describe similarities and difference between practices and disciplines
- To explore the connection between art and sustainability
- To be able to share ideas, experiences and imagination
- To use a range of materials creatively to design and make a product

Sustainability Goals:

Resources provided:
- Marine Litter Fact File
- Artivism presentation
- Evaluating artivism worksheet

Extra resources needed:
- Litter items from home
- Additional recycled materials collected at school
- Craft materials including glue, tape and string

Step 1 Background

Litter reaches the ocean in a number of ways: it's washed in from our rivers, it's left on our beaches, or it's cast overboard from boats. It not only makes the marine environment look unpleasant, but it impacts the health of thousands of marine animals every year, usually by ingestion, entanglement or suffocation. Chemicals used in, and absorbed, by plastics also negatively impact animals' health. For an overview, complete one of the other lessons in the Marine Litter series for ages 5-7 and ages 7-11 first.

Artivism is activism through art – using art to raise awareness of current issues and inspire change. For this lesson, ask pupils to collect at least three waste items from home and bring them to school. These could be items that are going to be thrown in the bin or recycled, but they must be clean!

Step 2 Set the scene

10 minutes – Marine litter review

Gather pupils' litter items at the front of the class to use as a visual aid. Check their knowledge by asking how litter can reach the sea, what problems this causes for the environment, and how long it takes to degrade. Pupils should discuss in pairs before a group discussion. Explain that you're going to look at some examples of how people have used art to raise awareness of environmental issues.

Step 3 Activities

Activity 1: 20 minutes – What is artivism?

Use the artivism presentation to introduce the term and explore the examples of different artwork and campaigns. There are notes included about each art piece.

Activity 2: 15 minutes – Evaluating artivism

Display or print out the last slide of the presentation showing images of each artwork. Encourage pupils to think about which is their favourite piece and why, and then complete the evaluation worksheet.

Activity 2: 1-2 hours – Creating artivism

Using the presentation for inspiration, pupils should create their own art piece using the litter items brought into school.

Working in small groups (or individually), they should decide on the message they want to show and what type of artwork they want to create. The litter items could be used to make a large 3D sculpture or series of sculptures, used as subjects for photography, or as part of a dance, drama or music piece. It's up to you! Pupils should start by writing down their thoughts and sketching out their ideas. They could decide to make a whole class art piece or make a series of smaller pieces.

Finish this project by showcasing the completed artwork in your school or community to help raise awareness of marine litter and the problems it causes for our ocean.

Step 4 Extend

30-40 minutes – Sharing your artwork

Pupils could create information posters to go alongside their artwork, including what they've been researching (e.g. plastic pollution), how they created their piece using sketches and planning sheets, and what they hope their final piece will achieve, like raising awareness or influencing action. Be sure to take photos throughout the project to include in the posters.

We would love to see your final piece! Share it with us at education@mcsuk.org.

Step 5 Reflect

5 minutes

Discuss the pupils' hopes for the artivism piece as a class. What do they hope people will do after seeing or experiencing it?

Step 6 Follow up

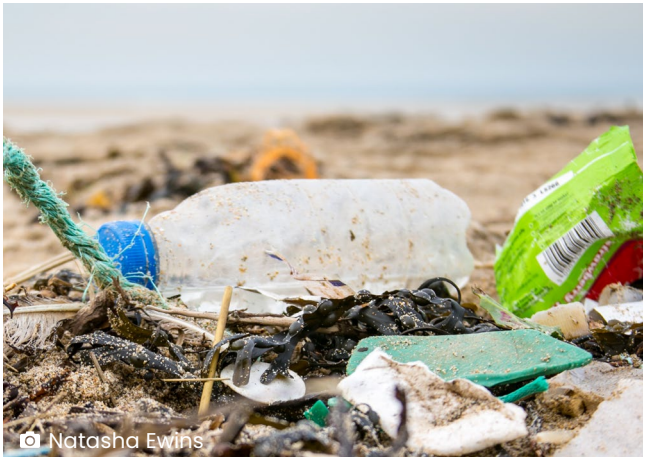
Did you know that this project could form part of your Ocean-Friendly Schools Award? The free award is all about empowering young people to take action for the ocean from their classroom. Check out our FAQs for more information and register now!

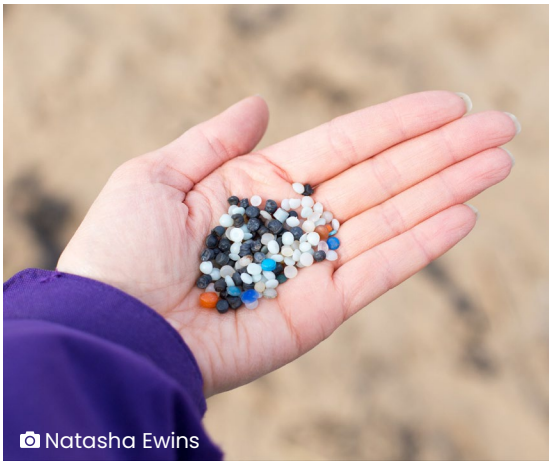
Marine Litter Fact File

From source to sea

It is estimated that 11 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the sea worldwide each year (1), and that 80% of litter found in the sea is from inland sources (2).

Sources on land can include intentional and accidental littering, items flushed down toilets, sinks and drains, windblown litter from bins and landfills, and litter carried by rainwater into drains, rivers and eventually the sea. Litter is also a problem at sea, with sources like fishing, sailing, speed boats, commercial ships and container spills causing litter pollution.





Litter timeline

Litter in the ocean takes longer to degrade than litter on land, but will eventually start to break up due to wave action, currents, saltwater and sunlight. Degradation time varies greatly depending on the properties of the litter.

Microplastics are a serious environmental issue. They are plastics that have broken up into pieces less than 5mm. However, some plastics enter the environment this size already - like microfibres and plastic nurdles. Nurdles are the small plastic pellets used in the production of plastic products.

1. Pew, 2020
2. Europa, 2016

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Marine Litter Fact File

Marine life and litter

Litter items can cause harm to all sorts of marine life, from tiny plankton to huge whales.

Animals can become entangled in litter, causing injury, reduced mobility and even death. Ingestion of litter, particularly plastic, is very problematic for marine life as they are unable to digest it. Large amounts of plastic ingestion can lead to starvation, as there is no room left for food. One study found 100% of turtles sampled to have plastic in their stomach (3). In some areas, the extreme amount of plastic on the sea floor can suffocate the animals and plants living there.

Invasive species
Ocean currents can move plastics around the world. Small animals and plants can hitch a ride on the surface of plastic and travel with the currents, introducing non-native species to new areas. The introduction of non-native species could cause harm to the ecosystem.

Plastic chemicals
Several chemicals used in the production of plastic materials are carcinogenic. Toxic contaminants can also accumulate on the surface of plastic materials that have broken up and been underwater for a long time. When marine animals ingest plastic accidentally, these toxic contaminants enter their digestive systems and could build up in the food web over time.

Gannet carrying fishing rope
📷 JHS Archer-Thomson

Microplastic pieces within seaweed
📷 Natasha Ewins

3. Duncan *et al.*, 2018

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Marine Litter Fact File

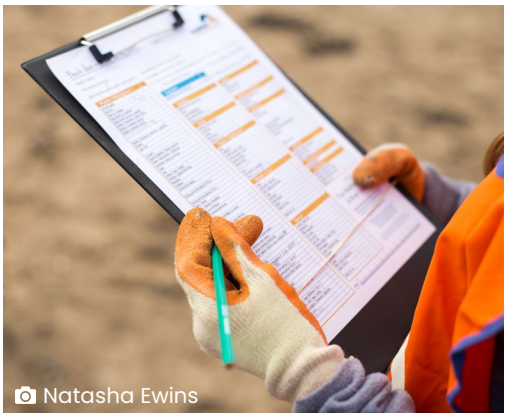
Litter surveys

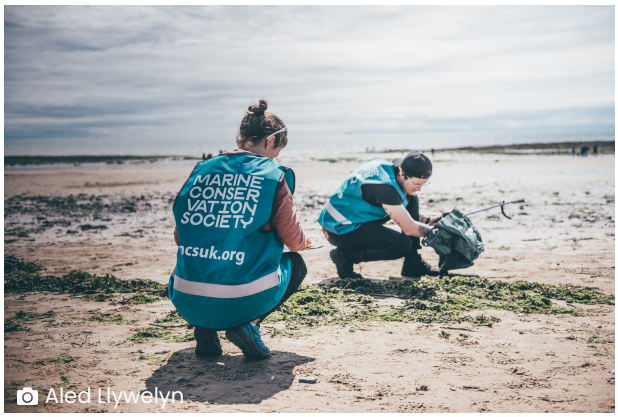
Litter surveys are not only important for clearing rubbish, but also for gathering data on the types of litter polluting our environment. Beachwatch is our national beach clean and survey initiative, and has been running for nearly 30 years. Our brilliant volunteers head out to beaches across the UK to clean and survey our coastline, collecting and recording the rubbish they find within a 100m stretch of beach. This litter data helps inform our campaigns and lobby government, and has led to influential changes like the UK-wide carrier bag charge, microbead bans and changes to wet wipe packaging.

We also use the data to determine the sources of litter. For example, if a significant amount of sewage-related debris (SRD) is found in an area, we work with local sewage treatment companies to try to improve treatment plants, and with communities to raise awareness of what should and shouldn't be flushed down the toilet.

Reducing litter

We all need to do our bit to reduce litter in the environment. By rethinking how we shop and what we use in our daily lives, we can all make a difference. Refusing unnecessary plastic and other materials, reducing the amount of products we consume, and repairing rather than replacing are all important actions we can take. Through education, we can help raise awareness, encourage positive consumer behaviour, and campaign for change from businesses and the government.


Natasha Ewins



Aled Llywelyn

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Marine Litter Fact File

Recycling

Even if we reduce the number of items we use, we will still need to throw some away. This is where efficient recycling is key. Download a guide from your local council to help students understand what can be recycled at home and at school. Many items can be recycled, but if your local council has limited recycling options check out Terracycle's website for local drop-off points.

Plastics can only be recycled at best 2-3 times before they lose their strength, so we still need to move away from plastics to materials that can be recycled time and time again. We need to change how products are recycled, and how we incentivise best practice to ensure materials and resources are valued. This could include redesigning products or calling for economic incentives like Deposit Return Schemes (DRS), where a small deposit is paid when consumers buy a single-use drinks container and is refunded when they return it to a store or dedicated recycling point.

Circular economy

We currently have an economy which is linear, which means we make, use and dispose of products using up finite resources. It's estimated that only 9% of all plastic ever made has been recycled (4), so we know that recycling alone isn't the solution. Instead we need to move towards a circular economy, where products are designed to be used time and again, repairable, or re-purposed as new products. The whole life cycle of the product has been considered, so very little ends up in landfill.

Litter collected at a beach clean
Natasha Ewins

Single-use plastic straws
Natasha Ewins

4. Geyer *et al.*, 2017

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Name:

Evaluating Artivism

What was your favourite artivism piece?

What did you like about this artwork?

How do you think the artwork could be improved?

What do you think this artwork was trying to show the audience?

Draw a sketch of your favourite artwork