

Plastic: A Toxic Love Story by Susan Freinkel

Plastic built the modern world

Try to imagine the world without pacemakers, polyester, computers, cell phones, sneakers or chewing gum. (Plastic in gum? Yep!) It would be like going back in time.

Plastic has been part of our day-to-day life for over a hundred years, but after a century of living with plastic, we're starting to realize it's not so healthy. We use fossil fuels to make plastic. The process releases harmful chemicals into the environment. We litter our landscapes with plastic waste, and it is slowly destroying marine life. And yet each year we use and consume more and more. We've produced as much plastic in the past decade as we did in the entire twentieth century. We can't live with it, we can't live without it. We've reached a crisis point.

In her book, Freinkel takes us through the history and science of plastic. She explores the role of plastic in the global economy and assesses the real impact of plastic in our lives. She tells her story through eight familiar plastic objects: the comb, dental floss, Frisbee, IV bag or drip, disposable lighter, bag, water bottle and credit card. Each object shows us a different aspect of our synthetic world, and together they help us take a new look at a substance that has become such an important part of our age.

And what is Freinkel's conclusion? We cannot continue like this. And we don't have to. In *Plastic*, Freinkel offers a solution, a new and creative way of living with the material we love to hate but can't seem to live without.

a  Work in pairs. Read the description again and choose the best summary of the main message of the book.

- 1 We need to stop using plastic altogether.
- 2 We need to rethink how we use plastic.
- 3 There's nothing wrong with the way we use plastic.

b Answer the questions.

- 1 According to the writer, what damage does plastic do?
- 2 Why does the writer say we have reached a "crisis point"?
- 3 What do the eight objects represent?