

Reading and speaking

Our plastic planet

1 The article you are going to read talks about '*the infinite number of plastic products that fill our lives*'.

In groups, make a list of all the plastic products you use in a typical day. Share your list with the whole class.

2 Here are some more lines from the article. What do you think they are talking about?

I realized the sandy beach was being transformed into a plastic beach.

Twice the size of France, the Garbage Patch is like a plastic soup in the sea.

They are being gobbled up by small fish, which in turn are eaten by larger fish – which in turn are eaten by us.

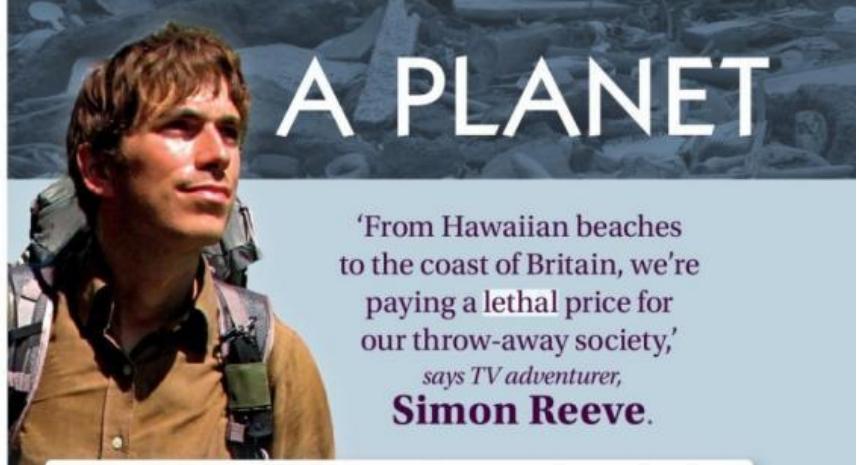
We need to spurn and reject the main culprits.

3 Read through the article quickly. Answer the questions.

- 1 Who is Simon Reeve?
- 2 Which products from your list in 1 are mentioned?
- 3 Which of your ideas about the lines in 2 were correct? Which were not?
- 4 Which places in the world are mentioned?
- 5 What are 'nurdles'?

4 Read the article again. Are these statements true ✓ or false ✗? Correct the false ones.

- 1 Hawaii is protected from rubbish because of its position in the Pacific Ocean.
- 2 Volunteers clear the nurdles from the beaches.
- 3 The sea makes the nurdles smaller and smaller.
- 4 By 2025, 600,000 tons of plastic rubbish will be polluting our seas.
- 5 Factories are reducing the amount of plastics they produce.
- 6 There are three major ways that plastic is ruining our planet.
- 7 Most of the plastic garbage is made up of plastic bags, bottles and packaging.
- 8 Bangladesh and Modbury have something in common.



'From Hawaiian beaches to the coast of Britain, we're paying a lethal price for our throw-away society,' says TV adventurer, **Simon Reeve**.

Hawaii is generally considered to be one place in the world where you should be able to guarantee finding paradise. The beautiful tropical islands have been used as the setting for countless TV series and films, ranging from *Lost* to *Jurassic Park*. Isolated in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, distance alone should protect Hawaii's spectacular landscapes and turquoise sea from the environmental problems facing the rest of the planet.

So when I arrived in Hawaii, I was staggered to discover beaches covered in plastic rubbish washed up from around the world. Pristine sand was covered by old plastic toothbrushes, combs, shoes, belts and mouldings. Sam Gon, a Hawaiian conservationist, took me to one beach where 70 local volunteers were doing their best to remove tons of garbage. But as soon as it was cleaned, the waves dumped another mountain of rubbish.

The larger pieces of waste can be collected by hand. But when Sam and I dropped to our knees, I could see the surface of the beach was covered with millions of small plastic pellets, known as 'nurdles'. These are the raw material that factories use to form the infinite number of plastic products that fill our lives. These are dumped out of factories into our seas in their trillions.

Yet the big shock came when Sam told me to dig in the sand. Plastic doesn't biodegrade. Instead it breaks down into even smaller pieces. Among the grains of sand were billions of tiny plastic flecks, which the pounding of the sea was reducing in size. As I dug through the plastic, I realized the sandy beach was being transformed into a plastic beach. A chill went down my spine.

From the beaches of Hawaii, to the seas around Britain, we are soiling our own nest. It was a shock to realize how much British beaches have changed since I was a child playing on beautiful coastlines in Dorset and south Wales. Just like those in Hawaii, they are now covered in more litter than ever before.



Small plastic pellets, known as 'nurdles'

POISONED BY PLASTIC

Since 1994, plastic litter has increased by an extraordinary 140%. The plastic we see on our beaches is just a fraction of the plastic waste that is clogging our oceans. Incredibly, all the plastic ever created – totalling hundreds of millions of tons – is still out there in the environment in some form.

There are an estimated 600,000 plastic containers dumped overboard by ships every single day.

Nine million tons of plastic enter our seas every year, which means that by 2025, there will be around 150 million tons of it sloshing around. And even more unbelievably, by 2050 the oceans will contain more plastic by weight than fish. The scale of the problem is extraordinary. The beaches in Hawaii are being swamped by rubbish from the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch', a vast accumulation of the world's plastic debris floating in the Pacific Ocean. Twice the size of France, the Garbage Patch is like a plastic soup in the sea and is doubling in size each decade.

And this is not the only such 'patch'. Scientists believe that sea currents have created five vast swirling garbage patches in our oceans, including a huge one in the North Atlantic with up to 520,000 bits of rubbish per square mile. This is an international scandal and a global problem, for which we are all responsible.

'Factories produced more plastic in the first decade of this 21st century than in the entire 20th century.'

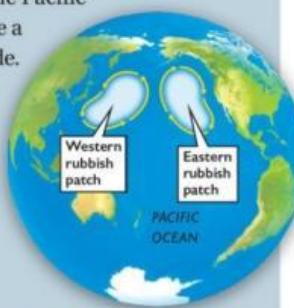
From bicycle helmets to food packaging, from water bottles to toothbrushes, plastic makes our lives easier. But its production and use are completely out of control. Factories produced more plastic in the first decade of this 21st century than in the entire 20th century.

Because tiny fragments of plastic in our oceans are so small and look like food, they are being gobbled up by small fish, which in turn are eaten by larger fish – which in turn are eaten by us.

Plastic is ruining our beaches, choking the oceans, and poisoning our food chain. The consequences are still not fully understood, but they are likely to be devastating. We need to spurn and reject the main culprits: plastic bags, packaging and single-use water bottles – a wasteful obscenity. These make up the bulk of plastic garbage.

In Bangladesh and Kenya, they have done away with plastic bags completely, and replaced them with natural jute bags. The UK has joined the growing number of countries which impose a tax on plastic bags, and the small town of Modbury has banned them completely. Supermarkets around the world are beginning to introduce plastic-free aisles, where none of the goods on sale are packaged in plastic.

At stake is the future of beaches, our seas, and the food chain. It is nothing short of an environmental emergency.



What do you think?

- Give your personal reactions to the text. Use these phrases.

I didn't know/I already knew that ...

What surprised me was ...

It's incredible that ...

It's a shame that ...

I wonder what can be done to ...

- Do you believe plastic is causing 'an environmental emergency'?
- Are there other things that are more harmful to the environment than plastic? What?
- What could you do to reduce your use of plastics?

Vocabulary

5 How many words meaning 'rubbish' can you find in the article?

6 Discuss the meaning of the **highlighted** words in the article.

7 Match the words in A and B. Use them in sentences.

A	B
1 turquoise	a number
2 infinite	b water bottles
3 grains of	c chain
4 food	d society
5 mountain of	e currents
6 sea	f sea
7 single-use	g rubbish
8 throw-away	h sand

Watch a video about an initiative to get everyone to help clean up the world we live in.



Listening and speaking

Bucket lists

- What is a 'bucket list'? How is the phrase connected with the idiom 'to kick the bucket'?
- Look at the bucket list. Which of the activities in the list can you see in photos A–F?
- On a website called *Ranker*, 5,000 people ranked the activities. Put a cross **X** against the **ten** activities *you* think were most popular. Which do you think came 1st, 2nd and 3rd? Compare with a partner. Check your answers on page 166.

- 2.4 Listen to three people, **Helen**, **Keith** and **Judy**, talking about doing activities from the bucket list. Answer the questions for each person.

- Which activity are they talking about?
- Why did they decide to do it?
- How did the experience affect them?

- Answer the questions with **H** (Helen), **K** (Keith) or **J** (Judy). More than one is possible. Who ...

1 mentions the cost?	<u>Hand J</u>
2 was worried beforehand? Why?	_____
3 had a disappointment at first? What?	_____
4 thought about changing their mind and not doing it? Why?	_____
5 had the experience twice?	_____
6 talks about the weather? What about it?	_____
7 mentions a sound? What was it?	_____
8 says that time slowed down?	_____
9 is planning to do it again?	_____

- 2.4 Listen again and check/complete your answers.

SPOKEN ENGLISH Fillers

Fillers give us time to think of what to say next.

'We stayed in a treehouse, well, er, a kind of treehotel ...'
'... because, I mean, it's a shock to see this, like, massive hole where the door usually is.'

Common fillers in English are:

well you know like I mean you see kind of sort of anyway so

Find examples in audioscript 2.4 on page 144.

- Which **five** of the activities would be top of your bucket list? In what order? Write a list and add a sixth item.
- Compare your lists in groups. Can you agree on three activities to do as a group?



Bucket list

Things to do before I die ...

<input type="checkbox"/> Swim with dolphins	<input type="checkbox"/> Go zip-lining
<input type="checkbox"/> Find a career I love	<input type="checkbox"/> Run a 5k race
<input type="checkbox"/> Learn to meditate	<input type="checkbox"/> Write a novel
<input type="checkbox"/> Donate blood	<input type="checkbox"/> Go skydiving
Go snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef	
Get fit and feel good about your body	
Bathe in the hot springs in Iceland	
Learn to play a musical instrument	
Walk on the Great Wall of China	
Do a road trip across America	
Go horse riding on the beach	
Visit the Galapagos Islands	
Learn to ballroom dance	
See the Northern Lights	
Experience zero gravity	
Learn a new language	

