

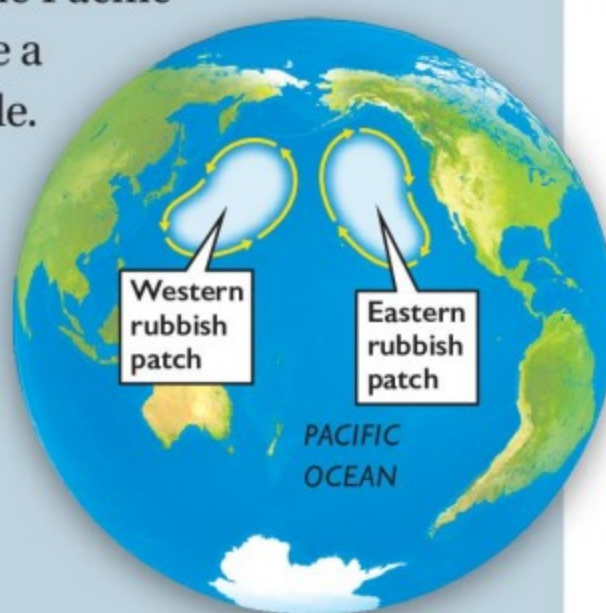
POISONED BY PLASTIC

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.

