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Artivism

Subject links:
Art, Science, Citizenship

Ages 5-7

Curriculum links:
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
- Curriculum links

Extra resources needed:
- Litter items collected from home
- Additional recycled materials collected at school

Step 1 Background

Litter reaches the ocean in a number of ways: it's washed in from our rivers, is left on our beaches, or is 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. Single-use plastic items are a particular problem, as they're used once and thrown away but last forever in our environment. For an overview complete one of the other lessons in this Marine Litter series first.

Artivism is activism through art – using art to raise awareness of environmental issues and inspire change. For this lesson, ask students 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 – What is marine litter?

Gather students' items from home at the front of the class to use as a visual aid. Evaluate their knowledge by asking how litter reaches the sea, what the problems are with litter in the environment, and how long it takes to degrade. Students should discuss the questions in pairs and feed into a group discussion. Explain that you're going to study how artists have used their work to raise awareness of marine litter, and ask if they have seen any artwork made from litter before.

Step 3 Activities

Activity 1: 20 minutes – What is Artivism?

Use the Artivism presentation to introduce the term and study the work of various artists. The presentation includes questions to guide students to evaluate, analyse, and form opinions on the artwork. There are notes provided for each artwork to help you understand the artists vision for their work.

Activity 2: 15 minutes – Evaluating Artivism

Print out the last page of the presentation showing images of the artwork and hand these out. Students should decide which is their favourite artwork and why, and then complete the Evaluating Artivism worksheet.

Activity 3: 1-2 hours – Creating Artivism

Using the presentation for inspiration, students should create their own art piece, using the litter items brought into school. Working in small groups or individually, students should decide on the message they want their artwork 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, as subjects for photography, in a 3D canvas piece, or as part of a dance, drama or music piece. Students should start by writing down their thoughts and sketching ideas in a sketch book. They could decide to make a whole class art piece or make a series of smaller pieces.

Finish by showcasing the completed art piece in your school or community to help raise awareness of marine litter.

Step 4 Extend

30-40 minutes – Raising awareness

Students could draw information posters to go alongside the artwork, including what they have been researching (e.g. plastic pollution and Artivism), how they created their piece (sketches and thought process), and what they hope their final piece will achieve (raise awareness and lead to action). Be sure to take photos throughout the project to include in the posters.

We would love to see your final piece share with us via email, education@mcsuk.org

Step 5 Reflect

5 minutes

Discuss the students' hopes for the Artivism piece as a class, by asking; Why do you want it to inspire people? How do you want it to inspire people?

Step 6 Follow up

This project could work towards an Arts Award level. An initiative that helps children to work towards qualifications in art.

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 from 1–450 years 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, as well as pieces that enter the environment this size like microfibres or plastic nurdles, which 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 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 who 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 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 amongst seaweed. © Natasha Ewins

3. Duncan et al 2018

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Marine Litter Fact File

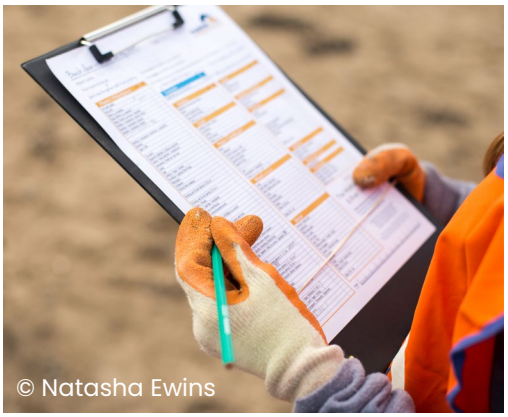
Litter surveys

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 over 25 years. Our brilliant volunteers head out to beaches across the UK to clean and survey our coastline, collecting and recording the rubbish they find in 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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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 can include redesigning products or calling for economic incentives like Deposit Return Schemes (DRS), where a small deposit is paid when people 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-designed into 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

Evaluating Artivism

Name:

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

Curriculum links

England

Art & design

- To use a range of materials creatively to design and make products.
- To use drawing, painting and sculpture to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination.
- To develop a wide range of art and design techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space.
- Learn about the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers, describing the differences and similarities between different practices and disciplines, and making links to their own work.

Citizenship

- Responsibility for themselves and their environment.
- What improves and harms their local, natural and built environments and about some of the ways people look after them;
- Take part in discussions

Wales

Expressive Arts

- I can explore and experiment with a variety of creative techniques, materials, processes, resources, tools and technologies.
- I can ask questions to discover how creative work is made. I am beginning to explore ideas, feelings and moods in a variety of creative work.
- I can listen to and respond to views about my own creative work and that of others.
- I am beginning to compare my own creative work to the creative work of others.
- I can communicate my ideas, feelings and memories in my creative work.
- I can imitate established artistic techniques in the creation of my own work.
- I am beginning to design my own creative work.

Humanities

- I am beginning to recognise the effects that I have on the natural world.
- I can take care of resources and not waste them, and I am conscious of the importance of creating a sustainable future.

Scotland

Expressive Arts

- I have the freedom to discover and choose ways to create images and objects using a variety of materials.
- I can create a range of visual information through observing and recording from my experiences across the curriculum
- I can create and present work using the visual elements of line, shape, form, colour, tone, pattern and texture.
- Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through activities within art and design.
- I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work.

Social Sciences

- I explore and appreciate the wonder of nature within different environments and have played a part in caring for the environment.
- I can consider ways of looking after my school or community and can encourage others to care for their environment.