

Why are American national parks filled with plastic?

Level: Intermediate – Teacher's notes

Article summary: Who is responsible for the single-use plastic littering national parks in the US? What can realistically be done to resolve this problem?

Time: 90 minutes

Skills: Reading, speaking, writing

Language focus: Vocabulary, speaking, writing

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- Students discuss the images and how single-use plastic pollution can be reduced. If necessary, explain what is meant by 'single-use'. If they struggle for answers, you can turn it into a competition and have students search online for tips.
- Students discuss the questions and share their answers. Their answers might vary. If so, ask them to provide reasons.

2. Key words

- Students write the correct word from the wordpools next to the definitions on the lines provided. Then students find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

Key:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. unbridled | 7. treasured |
| 2. distributed | 8. contractors |
| 3. utensils | 9. eyesore |
| 4. condiment | 10. entangled |
| 5. convenience | 11. ban |
| 6. threats | 12. pressure |

- Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. utensils | 4. convenience |
| 2. entangled | 5. distributed |
| 3. eyesore | 6. threats |

3. Understanding the article

- Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the article and correct any that are false.

Key:

- False. There are 423 national parks in the US.*
- False. A policy was issued in 2011 to install water-bottle refill stations, but this policy was reversed in 2017 by the US government.*
- False. It is an eyesore for visitors and a danger for wildlife who may become caught in it.*
- False. They want retailers in the parks not to sell food that requires plastic packaging or utensils, or to provide plastic bags with purchases.*
- True*
- False. The oldest US national park, Yellowstone, was created 150 years ago. Single-use plastics have only been around in everyday products since the 1940s.*
- False. Only 82% of American voters say that single-use plastic should be banned from US national parks.*
- True*

4. Key language

- Students complete the activities about prefixes.

Key:

- refill; (refillable); reusable*
- unbridled; unspoiled; unexpected; unsuitable*
- inexpensive*

- Then they match the prefixes with their meanings.

Key:

- b*
- a*

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- c. Students add other words such as *recycle*, *unnecessary*, *inappropriate* to the diagrams. The difference between the use of *un-* and *in-* prefixes is the spelling. Depending on the first letter and syllable of the word, we use one or the other. Another variation of this prefix is *il-*, as in *illegal*, for example.

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Follow the steps on the worksheet and hold a feedback discussion afterwards. Encourage students to look online for tips and information if necessary. Mention that some seemingly eco-friendly trends aren't necessarily as green as we think. For example, buying local produce is only ecological if you buy seasonal and locally occurring fruit and vegetables. If the local farm has to use a lot of fertiliser to encourage growth of non-native plants, it can actually generate more greenhouse gasses than growing these plants elsewhere and transporting them. Some solutions for reducing single-use plastic also suffer from these issues.