

US beach town bans balloons to save the ocean

Level 3: Advanced – Teacher's notes

Article summary: The article talks about a recent ban on balloons in Laguna Beach, California, and explains the dangers of balloons on marine life.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Relative clauses

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

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

Key:

1. *biodegradable*
2. *exterior*
3. *comprehensive*
4. *persisting*
5. *tangled*
6. *residential*
7. *catch on*
8. *starvation*
9. *intentional*
10. *debris*

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to get students to think about if and when they use balloons to decorate. Have them work in pairs to fill in the chart, then complete the other columns by talking to three classmates.
- b. Encourage the pairs or groups to share their ideas and suggestions. Remind students to use descriptive adjectives with suggestions and support their opinions with reasons.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups. You may wish to mention that *tangled* can be used figuratively to describe a difficult and complicated situation, e.g., "He has been lying to his girlfriend, and now he's in a *tangled* mess."

Key:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>marine</i> | 9. <i>biodegradable</i> |
| 2. <i>violators</i> | 10. <i>metallic</i> |
| 3. <i>residential</i> | 11. <i>persisting</i> |
| 4. <i>intentional</i> | 12. <i>exterior</i> |
| 5. <i>catch on</i> | 13. <i>tangled</i> |
| 6. <i>debris</i> | 14. <i>legislation</i> |
| 7. <i>obstruction</i> | 15. <i>comprehensive</i> |
| 8. <i>starvation</i> | |

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students first read the statements and decide whether they are True or False according to the article and correct any that are false. Students may correct the sentences in different ways, e.g., in item 1, they may say, 'Laguna Beach, a city in California, enacted a strict ban on the sale and use of balloons,' or similar. Suggested answers are provided below.

Key:

1. *False. A city in California (Laguna Beach) recently banned the sale and use of balloons. Residential homes are exempt.*
2. *True*
3. *True*
4. *False. Latex balloons are 32 times more likely to kill seabirds than hard plastic.*
5. *False. There are no safe balloons to release.*
6. *True*
7. *True*
8. *False. There are fewer balloons than plastic bags on beaches.*
9. *False. It's too early to say whether these bans are having an impact, but data is being collected, and there could be more answers soon.*
10. *True*
11. *True*
12. *False. Plastic pollution anywhere affects the ocean everywhere.*

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4. Key language

- a. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. The combined sentences are used in the article, but some have been simplified to keep students' attention on the relative clauses. As an extension activity, you could ask students to go back to the text and find the original sentences. Ask students to look for the differences.

Key:

1. *Kara Wiggin is a doctoral researcher **who** studies microplastics in the marine environment.*
2. *There's the plastic itself, **which** marine mammals and sea turtles can eat.*
3. *Manufacturers claim **that** some latex balloons are biodegradable.*
4. *They have added a substance **that** / **which** slows the biodegradation process.*
5. *It becomes part of the plastic soup **that** / **which** floats through the oceans.*
6. *A lot of stuff **that** / **which** can break down in soil can't break down in the ocean at all.*
7. *There's also a string attached to balloons, **which** can be even more damaging.*
8. *Strings can wrap around necks and body parts, **which** can be deadly and devastating.*

- b. Allow the class to practise writing sentences with relative clauses like those they have just covered. For more support, encourage students to stage this process by writing two simple sentences and then combining them. Monitor and assist students as you walk around the class. Allow time for feedback, so students can share some of the sentences they have written.

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the statements 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. Ask students to imagine they are part of a research team studying the effects of plastic on marine plants and animals. Ask them to brainstorm some questions they have and what area(s) of research they would focus on. Have them use an internet search engine to find more information about current research areas and what their research question(s) would add to this body of knowledge.
- b. Students then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to share the facts they've gathered and their opinions about the issue. Encourage students to use a few of the phrases from the worksheet in their presentations.