
Recycling

Videos:

“Why is recycling SO important?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoA3B7svEcs> (9:00 minutes)

“Even Greenpeace Says ‘Most Plastic Simply Cannot Be Recycled.’”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNqjWB5TWN4> (6:52 minutes)

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. John Stossel said that “huge amounts” of plastic that are sent to recycling plants are never actually recycled. Did you know this before watching these videos? Does it change your opinion of recycling? Why/Why not?
3. Sustainably Vegan said that recycling is important, but consumers need to be educated on the topic. Do you feel like you understand how to recycle? Do you know what is and isn't recyclable? Do you think more education is necessary?
4. In the Stossel video, Lynn Hoffman showed a piece of plastic with a recycling symbol on it, but said that it's not even recyclable. Why do you think unrecyclable plastic would have the recycling symbol on it?
5. Sustainably Vegan said that plastic is often vilified, but that the vilification lacks nuance. Have you experienced this? Do you think plastic has been vilified?
6. John Stossel said that some of the material that's sent to be recycled in the U.S. ends up in countries like Malaysia, where it sometimes ends up being burned or dumped in the ocean. Does this change your view of recycling from a moral perspective? If so, how?
7. What were some of the reasons Sustainably Vegan gave for plastic being useful and difficult to replace?

8. In the Stossel video, John Tierney said: “If you think of the United States as a football field, all the garbage that we will generate in the next 1,000 years would fit inside a tiny fraction of the one inch line.” Did this surprise you? Why/Why not?
9. Sustainably Vegan said: “Recycling one 500ml plastic bottle saves enough energy to power a light bulb for nine hours.” Did this surprise you? Why/Why not?
10. John Tierney called recycling a “sacrament.” What did he mean by this?
11. Sustainably Vegan said that one of the reasons recycling is so important is because it reduces the impact on communities living near plastic production facilities. Had you thought about this aspect of recycling before? Does it affect your opinion on recycling? Why/Why not?
12. John Tierney said: “[Recycling] is so complicated people never learn the rules, and why should they spend their free time learning these rules?” Do you think people should be expected to educate themselves on recycling? Why/Why not?
13. Sustainably Vegan mentioned that some businesses use recycled material to create products like portable speakers and swimwear. Is this a good use of recycling? Why/Why not? Would you buy products like these?
14. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
15. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
16. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
17. What else would you like to learn about this topic?