Lexy Rinehart

Professor Allen

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The Plastic Problem

Do you ever wonder what happens to all the plastic bottles you throw away? People should stop using one-use plastic bottles. People should stop using plastic bottles for the following reasons: plastic bottles are not biodegradable, there are many dangers involved in using plastic bottles, it can harm animals, and it produces a lot of unnecessary waste. To find out the answer to the question we are going to start off by looking at how plastic is not biodegradable.

Non-biodegradable means that something does not breakdown on its own, instead it stays on the planet for at least 1,000 years, if not forever. The problem with non-biodegradable plastics is that when the plastic does not degrade it emits toxins. Often the plastic bottles do not reach the landfills, instead they collect in our parks and forests. If you wonder what the problem is with this, you have to look a little deeper. Do you want to inhale toxic chemicals that are emitted from these plastics? I wouldn’t think so. As long as plastic bottles are on the ground, it is harming everything including the land, people, and animals.

Do you know about the dangers of plastic? Plastic is flammable, and if it happens to get caught on fire then it emits toxic chemicals. “Plastic can contaminate foods with dangerous chemical compounds” (B. Victor). Plastic is made from dangerous chemicals, nothing that would be particularly good for you. The chemicals in plastic start to leach into your water while the water sits in the plastic bottle, and then you drink it. When you drink that water you also ingest all of the chemicals that could make you ill. “Antimony, which is found in PET plastic bottles, in small doses can cause dizziness and depression; in larger doses it can cause nausea, vomiting and death” (Bottled Water Facts). Would you drink a bottle of gasoline or any other chemical? Then why would you want to drink water out of a plastic bottle when you could get your water from the tap, or even an at home water filter, which would be healthier and cheaper.

Not only is plastic dangerous after it’s made, it’s also dangerous while it’s being produced. Plastic releases many cancer-causing chemicals into the air and water while it is being produced. That’s a problem because even if you do not use plastic, you are still harmed by its production. We breathe air, along with the other animals on our planet, expecting it to be clean. We don’t expect to breathe in toxins from the production of plastic, or other products that can cause respiratory illnesses. It also causes problems in our soil by making it infertile. If the soil is infertile it will make it so we won’t be able to grow food, which starts a bad chain reaction. Starting with smaller plants, then turning into no plants being able to grow in the poisoned soil.

Plastic bottles can also harm animals. Including the animals the animals we love, like our dogs, cats, birds, and other pets. When we throw out our plastic bottles they can break into tiny pieces that are then mistaken as food and digested by animals, which can result in intestinal problems, or even death. Plastic pieces also flood the oceans and is digested by marine animals. This is causing many problems in our food chain because we eat the fish, and are then poisoned by it because they have been digesting plastic and we are digesting them. Not only does it affect us, but it also effects the other mammals that eat the fish including bears, and polar bears. The fish eating all those tiny pieces of plastic are then also digested by whales, seals, penguins, and dolphins which are also harmed or even killed by the chemicals that are released into their bodies from the plastic. Many birds also die because of the plastic. You will find in a lot of plastic in some bird’s stomachs if you look inside. Not only does the finished plastic harm the animals, the making of plastic harms animals, because just like us the animals breathe in the chemicals. All the chemicals that plastic bottles are made from pollute the air and the water, causing a very bad chain reaction with the food chain. If this doesn’t get fixed animals are going to start getting killed off one by one.

How many plastic non reusable bottles are used every year by each average American? The answer is about 167, but only 38 are recycled. That means only about 23% of plastic bottles are recycled “Bottles used to package water take over 1,000 years to bio-degrade and if incinerated, they produce toxic fumes. It is estimated that over 80% of all single-use water bottles used in the U.S. simply become "litter"(Bottle Water Is). 2 million tons of the waste in landfills is all plastic bottles. Our landfills are already overfilled as it is, we don’t need unnecessary one use items, like the plastic bottles, flooding the landfills. There are alternatives to once use plastic bottles, including metal or glass reusable bottles. Plastic bottles are also very wasteful in the sense of wasting water. “It is estimated that actually 3 liters of water is used to package 1 liter of bottled water” (Bottled Water is).

There are some positive aspects to plastic. For example, plastic is fairly cheap to produce, bottles can be as cheap as 25 cents per bottle. Which is very cheap for many companies, and companies are about making money. Making the cheapest product is not worth ruining our health or our environment for though. Also the fact that it is light weight and can be molded into anything is really good about plastic, but there are many other materials you could make bottles with that would be cheap and biodegradable. Companies need to quit taking the cheap way out, A lot of people wouldn’t mind spending a couple extra cents to insure their, or their children’s safety. Also the regulations met by the bottled water companies are ridiculous. “In the U.S., public water is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which requires multiple daily tests for bacteria and makes results available to the public. The Food and Drug Administration, which regulates bottled water, only requires weekly testing and does not share its findings with the EPA or the public” (Bottled Water Facts)

We should quit using one use plastic bottles. They can be very harmful to our environment and the living organisms in it. Plastic is also toxic and we are digesting it through our food chain. One person can make a difference, as you saw each American averages over 100 plastic bottles a year. There are many options when it comes to portable water containers that you can use to replace one use plastic bottles. Do you think 100 bottles can make a difference?

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