# Plastic in the Ocean: Merging Art and Science on Marine Debris

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This activity can be completed remotely with items found in most homes.

After completing this activity, students should be able to:
- Describe the way plastic waste threatens the health of global waterways {Knowledge: information gathering}
- Discuss plastic waste and our own behavior. How do we use plastic? Can we avoid it? {Taking apart: analysis}
- Create an image from plastic waste {Making use of knowledge: application}

## Learning about Plastic Pollution

Ask students to research plastic pollution around the world.

National Geographic has a lot of resources appropriate for kids:
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/habitats/plastic-pollution/
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/plastic-facts/

Reflect of the problem of plastic by answering the following questions
- How much plastic is there in the world?
- How does plastic waste harm wildlife?
- How do we dispose of plastic?
- What kind of recycling for soft plastic (ex: chip bag, tortilla packaging, bread bag) is available in my community?
- How can I reduce my plastic use?

Come together as a group to discuss or share answers to an online discussion.

## Learning about Plastic Art

Visit the websites of artists who use plastic as a medium. There are hundreds of artists doing amazing work with and about plastic pollution—a few of my favorites are:
- Pam Longobardi's Drifter's Project https://driftersproject.net/drifters-project-works/
- Aurora Robson https://www.aurorarobson.com/
- Angela Haseltine Pozzi's Washed Ashore Project https://washedashore.org/

Our activity today is based on my work sewing soft plastics onto large canvases in the shapes of sea creatures

Octopus (96 x 59 inches, photo credit: John Groo)



Whale (75 x 61 inches, photo credit: John Groo)

Look closely, do you recognize where some of these plastics came from?



Closeup, Whale (photo credit: John Groo)

## Activity

Here's a simple version of this project appropriate for younger students

Materials
- Soft plastics
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paper

1. Collect soft plastics in a range of colors

2. Draw an image on a piece of paper



3. Cut soft plastic into small pieces



4. Glue pieces onto your image

5. Voilà!

More advanced students can…

- sew plastics onto fabric with needle and thread
- create more elaborate images
- create larger images
- create more meaningful images (i.e., of species, landscapes, or communities impacted by marine debris)
- use this material the way you would tiles in a mosaic

Contact Dr Owens with comments, questions: kowens@hartford.edu
See more examples of her work here: https://katowens.com/art/

Shout out to the amazing Shari Bergel for inspiring this!