

Plastics in our lives

For one day, between the time you leave this classroom until you return, record *every* item you touch that is made of plastic. (Record each item only once; you don't have to count each time you pick up the same pen). List the items below:

Of the items that you've listed, which three items would be the most difficult to do without? Which three could you give up?

Review the list again. What items could easily be replaced with something other than plastic?

Categorizing Plastics

Many plastic items come with a number between 1 and 7 on the bottom. Collect examples of 5 of the 7 codes. Then use the chart in the “Science of Plastics” article to identify the polymer represented by each code and the uses for that polymer.

Look again at the objects you collected. What do they have in common? What kind of plastic objects have codes? Which do not?

Plastic Associations

Over the course of this project you will learn more about plastics and the many different opinions people have about them. What do you already know about plastics and the controversies associated with them? What comes to mind when you think about plastics?

History and Science

You have now learned about the science behind plastics as well as the history of their development. Select either history or science, and write a paragraph or two outlining something surprising or interesting you learned.

Introducing Your Character

Now that you're familiar with your character, consider how your character fits into the larger game. First write a paragraph that outlines your character's interests, knowledge, and point of view. Focus on how your character would introduce him/herself to a colleague. Identify a prop or article of clothing that would identify your character.

Write a paragraph that explains how your character fits into your interest group. How do the goals of your character fit with the goals and recommendations proposed by your group?

Understanding Your Interest Group

In the space below answer the following question: What were the most important turning points in the history of plastics that shaped the interests, goals, and points of view held by you and your group?

Article Review

Review the article you selected from the “Resources” page of the website. Be sure to include the following: a summary of the article, a description of how the article relates to your character and your interest group, and how you will use the information in the article to support your arguments during the Hearing.

Opposition Research

In order to win the game you need to understand not only your position but also that of the other groups. Identify one key argument that each of the other groups will make during the Hearing, and plan how you would counter that argument. Use information from the Case of Plastics website as well as your readings.

Consider areas where you might agree with the other groups. Which groups' goals most closely align with yours? How can you use that to your benefit during the Hearing?

Round 1: The Hearing

In character, reflect on how you did in the first debate. In what areas was your group strongest? Weakest? Which groups made the best arguments?

Based on the feedback of the Regulators, which groups do you think they found the most convincing? What do you think they are looking for in the final regulation?

The Intersession

With which members of your new working group do you share the most common ground? With whom do you differ the most in terms of goals and perspectives? What points of discussion promise to be most difficult to compromise on? What is one specific proposal you can make for reaching compromise on a difficult point?

Round 2: The Debate

How does the proposal you're presenting to the Environmental Protection Agency Regulators in this round reflect the goals and interests of your character? If your proposal is accepted by the Regulators, explain how your character "wins."

In what areas were you unable to achieve the goals of your character? What did you find most challenging about the compromise process?

Final Reflection

Respond to the following questions, not as your character from the Case of Plastics, but as yourself:

What did you learn over the course of this project?

How did your character influence the way you thought about the issues?

Has your view or understanding of plastics changed?

Do you think the United States needs to make policy changes related to plastics?

Do you think there are things you can do as an individual or a class to help address concerns related to plastics?

What should your school or community do to address concerns related to plastics, and what can you do to encourage them to take the steps you suggest?