

Debris Diary

About This Lesson

Time frame: Most creative writing assignments require more time than a single class period and may be carried over several days to allow the students to formulate unique ideas on their topic.

Grade level: Elementary to high school

Academic Question: Where does marine debris originate?

Objective: Discuss in a literary form, the various origins of marine debris.

Background:

Texas beaches are under constant assault from various forms of marine debris. The prevailing currents and winds allow debris from all over the Gulf of Mexico and beyond to collect along the over 300 miles of gulf shoreline. The debris varies from very large to very small and is made up of everything from cigarette butts to large oil drums. Although some of the debris floats ashore from far away locales, much of the debris is deposited by the many visitors to the beach. These various forms of debris have a harmful effect on marine wildlife due to ingestion and/or entanglement. Marine turtles, and various birds seem to suffer the most. The debris also affects the areas local economy. People do not wish to vacation at beaches covered with marine debris and many times pass by various beaches in search of more pristine locations. Beach debris removal is a very costly and time-consuming process that never seems to end.

Getting Started

Process (Activities):

This activity is an individual writing assignment that will allow the student to demonstrate knowledge on the topic in a creative format.

Materials:

- Various pieces of marine debris
- Paper and pen

Procedure:

1. Develop an interrupted case study scenario appropriate to your region, based on the background information provided above.
2. Have the students select a piece of marine debris from a box or bag of assorted pieces. After selection have the students study their piece of debris and lead them in a discussion of its possible origin. Explain to the students that the debris was deposited along the

beach and that it may have been floating around the Gulf of Mexico for several months to years. The students will write a fictitious diary for their particular piece of debris that will contain at least five entries.

First entry: The first entry will be the day the debris (object) was created at the factory. Include where the object was produced and what its original purpose is.

Second entry: Describe how the debris (object) is deposited in to the water. Include where and what activity caused it to enter the water.

Third entry: Give a “day in the life” floating in the Gulf of Mexico. This entry may include the weather (storms), animals encountered, other pieces of debris it congregates with, etc.

Fourth entry: Describe how and where the debris washed ashore. Include the weather conditions, waves, sand etc.

Fifth entry: Describe your current location and reflect upon the journey.

Evaluation/Extension:

- This assignment can be evaluated as per district procedures.
- The students could be required to research the topic on line to better understand the origins of debris.
- Have the students research how long their piece of debris will exist before breaking down.

This module was originally developed as part of the “Hurricane Recovery Workshops for Students”, held in Corpus Christi in 2017.