

Dream the Ocean Clean

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One summer day in June, three children were playing at Sandy Shore Park, their favorite park by the beach. They loved coming to the park because it was the one place in their whole town where they could do what they loved. They loved to spend the day swinging on the swings, building sand castles, and taking naps on the beach.

This one particular day, the children noticed that several of their neighbors were at the park too. They saw Mr. McDonald fertilizing the grass, Mr. Herby changing the oil in his car, and Mrs. Muffet sitting on her tuffet and setting up a picnic.

Children playing at the park



Halfway around the world the League of Terrorizing Garbage convened in their secret and very smelly Lair of the Landfill. Nitro who is the Diabolical Fertilizer, Plassy— the Queen of Plastic, and Crude Oil— the Horrible Spill, pledged to wreak havoc. They plotted together to take over the world.

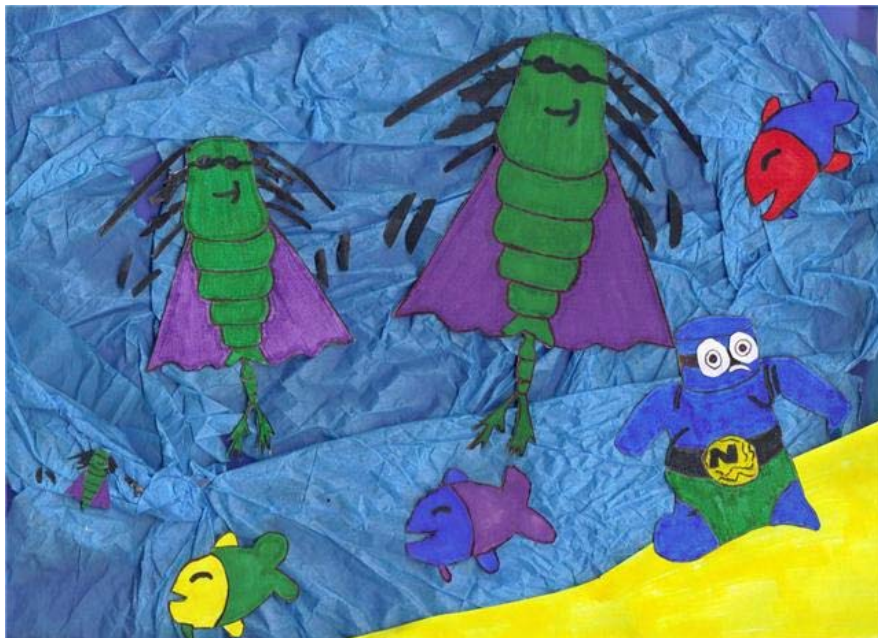
“Mua-ha-ha-ha-haaa, this is too easy!” exclaimed Nitro as he slowly seeped into the water. “These humans make it so easy to destroy their planet,” cried Crude. “Once we hit the water, there’s no stopping us,” hissed Plassy. The League of Terrorizing Garbage set out on their path of destruction.

The League of Terrorizing Garbage in the Lair of the Landfill



Nitro treaded along the watershed and reached the coast, then used his evil power to suck up the oxygen in the water. “Ha-ha! I will make this water hypoxic!” said Nitro. The fish in the water were crying for help as they were suffocating. All of the sudden Nitro cried out, “Owwwww!” as he felt a sharp pain in his foot. He looked down and saw Sir Planktalot, the pint-sized superhero who could change his size at will. Nitro tried to squish Sir Planktalot, but suddenly Sir Planktalot started to grow larger and larger and larger. Nitro took one look at Sir Planktalot’s new size and ran screaming out of the water.

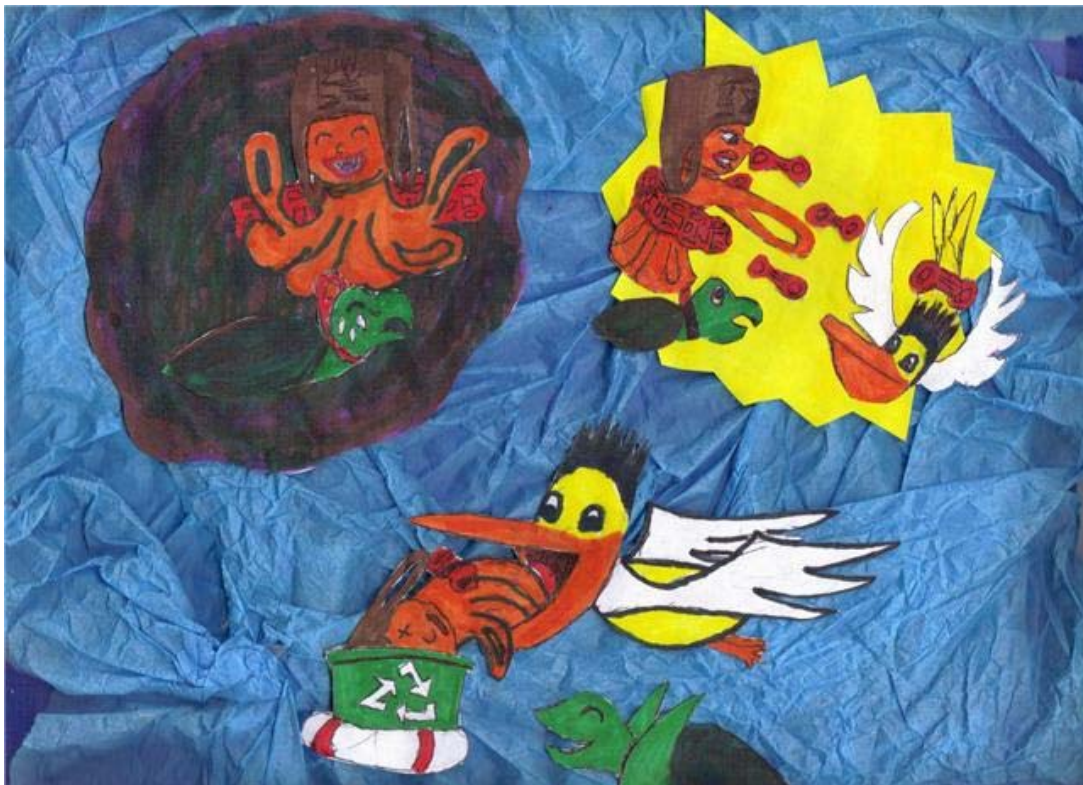
Sir Planktalot grows larger and larger and chases off Nitro



In a quiet corner of the ocean, a turtle was on his way home when Plassy appeared like a flash. “You can’t escape me, silly turtle,” hissed Plassy. She started to shoot her plastic rings of doom. Turtle called out for help, “Save me! Help!” Plassy looked up at the sky and saw an object soaring across the horizon. “It’s a bird, no it’s a plane, no it’s Galactic Pelican!” Turtle turned to her and said, “Actually, Plassy, that would be a bird.”

Turtle was trapped by one of Plassy's plastic rings. Galactic Pelican, the hero whose beak packed a punch, swooped down and set turtle free using his beak of justice. Plassy began to shoot more rings at Galactic Pelican, but he was able to dodge them all. Soon Plassy ran out of her rings. Galactic Pelican scooped up Plassy and threw her in the nearest recycling bin.

Galactic Pelican throws Plassy into the recycling bin



Meanwhile, Crude Oil had made it to the middle of the ocean. He had oozed oil the whole way. In just the nick of time, Octoshock, the superhero with eight tentacles and the ability to swim faster than the speed of sound, arrived at the scene. She surveyed the damage and started swimming faster and faster in giant circles until she had created a whirlpool to suck up all the oil. Crude screamed, “No, not my OIL!” Octoshock faced Crude Oil and had no choice but to spray him with detergent! Crude Oil turned into a gigantic soap bubble and popped.

Octoshock sprays Crude oil with detergent



Once again the day was saved by Octoshock, Galactic Pelican and Sir Planktalot, the Heroes of the Blue Planet!

Our superheroes kick back after a hard day of work of putting pollution in its place



The children woke up from their nap and looked around and saw Mrs. Muffet picking up her litter, Mr. Herby cleaning up his oil, and Mr. McDonald switching to compost as an alternative to fertilizer. They realized they all had dreamt of the epic battle between the League of Terrorizing Garbage and the Heroes of the Blue Planet.

They smiled to each other and said, “We dreamed the ocean clean.”

The children wake up



Words to Know

Watershed (**wot**-er-shed): Land drained by streams, rivers, and groundwater that eventually arrive in the ocean.

Coast (koast): The land next to the ocean.

Hypoxic (hi-**pox**-sick): Low levels of dissolved oxygen in water.

Eutrophication (yoo-**tro**-fick-kae-shun): When too much nutrients are released into the water.

Compost (**kom**-post): Made from dead leaves, manure, or leftover food and used to fertilize soil.

The Bad Guys

Crude Oil – Oil that is not yet processed. It is harmful to marine life because it blocks out sunlight and stops oxygen from entering the water. It can also clog the organs of marine life.

Plassy – Plastic takes hundreds of years to break down. Animals can mistake it for food and it can entangle fish and sea birds. When it breaks into small pieces it releases harmful substances into the water.

Nitro – Stands for nitrogen and it is a fertilizer. Nitrogen can enter the ocean through rivers and runoff. It comes from yards, sewage plants, and farms. It causes plankton to overgrow and leads to hypoxic conditions in the water.

The Good Guys

Sir Planktalot – Plankton are small organisms that drift with the current. There are many types of plankton and they can be either plants or animals. Some are shaped like butterfly wings and some look like shrimp. They form the base of the food web.

Galactic Pelican – Pelicans are large birds found along the coast. They have pouches in their lower beak and webbed feet. They catch fish by diving into the water.

Octoshock – Octopuses are smart animals with great eyesight. They are able to confuse their predators by ejecting ink.

How you can help the Heroes of the Blue Planet

- 1) Participate in beach clean-ups in your local area.*
- 2) Do not litter.*
- 3) Turn off the lights when you are not using them and don't leave the water running.*
- 4) Pick up trash and recycle cans, plastic, paper, and glass.*
- 5) Inform your neighbors, parents, family, and friends about how we should protect and keep the ocean clean.*
- 6) Learn more about the ocean and our planet.*

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DREAMS is a partnership program between Hampton University, Elizabeth City State University and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Our mission is to increase the participation of underrepresented minority students in environmental and marine sciences. To achieve this we provide comprehensive academic and leadership training, and career preparation for undergraduate students.

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