

Don't Just Float There- Get On the RAFT

About This Lesson

Time frame: One or two class periods.

Grade level: Elementary to high school

Academic Question: What effect does marine debris have on the beach environment?

Objective:

- To look at marine debris from different points of view
- To describe the interaction between marine debris and its surroundings
- To explore different writing styles

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

Materials: Writing paper and pen

Process (activities):

This is a creative writing assignment that allows the students to put themselves in the place of the debris to better understand the origins and the relationship of marine debris to the environment. This process uses a procedure known as RAFT. The RAFT stands for Role, Audience, Form, Topic. The students will form a fictitious communication using this format taking on the roles of various objects in the marine environment.

Role	Audience	Form	Topic
plastic bottle	sea turtle	e-mail	“beware of eating me.”
sea shell	cigarette butt	friendly letter	“pardon me, but you are making me look bad”
glass	local surfer	memo	“sorry”
		etc.	

Using the above topics, have the students choose one selection and compose the appropriate communication type. Although a light-hearted exercise, this format is very effective in allowing the students to see the effects of various debris on the environment.

Evaluation/Extension:

- Have the students read their “letters” and allow for discussion.
- Have the students add additional roles

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