The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:
These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at [www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/](http://www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/).

### ELEMENTARY RESOURCES

A shopper with her reusable containers at a Zero Waste Market kiosk in Vancouver.  
(Photo credit: Brianne Miller)

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- In 2014, Canadian households produced 9,996,775 tonnes of garbage.  
  ([Statistics Canada](http://www.statcan.gc.ca))
- Scientists estimate that 9.1 million tonnes of plastic waste ended up in the world’s oceans in 2015.  
  ([Globe and Mail](http://www.globeandmail.com))
- The same study estimated that, by 2025, the world will be dumping 17.5 million tonnes of plastic in the ocean.  
  ([Globe and Mail](http://www.globeandmail.com))
- By 2050, there could be more plastic in the world’s oceans than fish, according to a study by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.  
  ([The Guardian](http://www.theguardian.com))
- In 2012, scientists examined sea birds that had been found dead on ocean beaches in British Columbia, Washington State, and Oregon. Nearly 93 percent had plastic garbage in their stomachs.  
  ([Globe and Mail](http://www.globeandmail.com))
- About 35 percent of the garbage in North American dumps comes from the packaging on food and consumer products.  
  ([GB Resources Group](http://www.gbresourcesgroup.com))
- The average North American will throw out 600 times their own weight in garbage—approximately 40,825 kg over their lifetime, according to Natural Resources Canada.  
  ([GB Resources Group](http://www.gbresourcesgroup.com))
- An estimated five billion drink boxes end up in the garbage every year in North America.  
  ([GB Resources Group](http://www.gbresourcesgroup.com))
- 92 percent of Canadian households have access to a local recycling program.  
  ([Statistics Canada](http://www.statcan.gc.ca))

### NOTE TO EDUCATORS

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### KEY TERMS

**Landfill**—A garbage dump where the waste will eventually be buried in soil.

**Pollution**—Waste products—E.g., plastic items, chemicals, greenhouse gasses—in the ground, water or air that have a harmful effect on health and/or the environment.

**Recycling**—Breaking down waste products like plastic or paper containers so they can be turned into new items.
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- **Themes:** Environment, Global Issues, Local Issues, Socially Conscious Living
- **Course Connections:** Language, Social Studies, Geography

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Investigate the impact on the environment and ecosystems of excessive food waste packaging.
- Become aware of their own waste and create small changes to decrease their consumption.
- Raise awareness within the local community about the issue.

DISCUSS

1. How does packaging impact our environment and ecosystems? Is this a local or global issue?
2. Before reading the *Global Voices* article, did you realize that food packaging had such a large impact on waterways, oceans and marine life? Do you think the average consumer knows of this issue? How can we raise awareness of this issue?
3. If you believe there is a negative impact, how can you assist in preventing or reducing package waste? What are some small, everyday actions that can be taken? What are some longer-term solutions?
4. What are the specific features of the zero waste grocery store? How is this different to a regular supermarket?
5. What can retailers do to reduce packaging and excessive waste?
6. What small, daily changes can you, your family and your local community do to decrease package waste?

DIVE DEEPER

Ask students to draw images of food items that they would use to make a favourite weekend lunch or dinner. Have students think about the packaging that comes with each item of food. How much waste would this one meal generate? How much would collect in one day, one week, one month or one year with three meals a day?

For example: A cold chicken salad sandwich with cheese, celery sticks and potato chips. The slices of chicken are wrapped in plastic film and covered with a non-stick paper covering, the bread is wrapped in plastic, the cheese comes in individually wrapped plastic wraps, vegetables for the salad are wrapped in plastic wrap and clamshell containers and the potato chips in a foil and plastic packet.

Alternatively, have students perform an audit on their fridge and cupboards. Ask students to record the following questions and answers:

a. What packaging do you see?
b. What packaging is necessary and why?
c. What packaging could be replaced with reusable materials if stores allowed?

Share the video "You can live without producing zero waste" [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYDQcBQUdpw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYDQcBQUdpw) (4:37). In small groups, ask students to create a list of six ways they can begin to reduce their own packaged food waste. Ask students to choose two ideas and present these to the class.

In pairs, create an infographic that can be displayed in the school or local community to raise awareness about the excessive usage and of waste from food packaging. The infographic should discuss the impact of creating waste and small, daily solutions individuals can take to reduce their waste.

Have students reflect on the impact they think the infographic will have on members of their community. How can they create a lasting impact on their community by generating continued awareness?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Zero Waste Grocery Shopping [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUB9LFylfXy](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUB9LFylfXy) (3:12)
- Zero Waste Market [www.zerowastemarket.ca](http://www.zerowastemarket.ca)
- "Why I live the zero waste life." Lauren Singer. TEDx Teen [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF72px2R3Hg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF72px2R3Hg) (13:30)