

Gloop



“Once upon a time, a genius of science, a chemist called Leo, stumbled on a substance, a curious gloopy mess, that molded into any shape the genius cared to test.” While his marvelous gloop seemed to have unlimited uses, it also had a darker side that no one could foresee. The film is co-directed by Gaby Bastyra & Joe Churchman.

Discussing the Film:

The following questions are intended to be used post-film screening to spark discussion and activities related to both the content and storytelling elements of this particular film.

1. What were some of the most interesting images from *Gloop*? What do you remember the most about the film?
2. How is narration used in the film to tell the story? Do you think it works? Why or why not?
3. We all use plastic in our everyday lives. Make a list of the plastic things you use in your everyday life and which ones you think you could live without.
4. Plastic pollution in the form of small particles (diameter less than 5 mm) — termed “microplastic” — has been observed in many parts of the world’s oceans. This microplastic gets into the diets of seabirds and marine life causing digestive problems and, in many cases, death from toxicity. Much of this comes from single-use plastic, like the kind found in water bottles and bags. What are the single-use plastic items that you can get rid of in your own community or in your individual household?

For more information on the film, the filmmakers, or to see other tour destinations and films, visit www.mountainfilm.org

5. Pair up in groups of two: Take 15 minutes and create a new idea for a fairy tale film involving plastic and pitch it to the class. Think about music, narration and imagery that you would like to include in the film.
6. What are the most important elements of telling a fairy tale? Write a fairy tale, in the form of a rhyming poem, that warns about some type of environmental threat or something you think people should be more aware.

Extensions:

1. To rewatch the film, take the True/False quiz, or find out some ideas for plastic projects, go to the Ecotales website: <http://ecotales.co.uk/schools/>
2. Use recycled/discarded plastic found around your school and neighborhood to create a plastic mobile in a local tree on your school grounds. Make placards to put at the base of the tree telling people facts about plastic and its effects on the environment. (Make sure you and your teacher gain all the proper permissions first!)
3. Submit to Gloop's poetry contest: open to all writers and artists, 16 and under. Write a poem inspired by plastic pollution. Do it in the same style as the narration from *Gloop*. Send the poem to louise.ecotales@gmail.com and Ecotales will judge it for possible publication in a digital e-book and use as a creative resource in the classroom for schools around the world.
4. To introduce the idea that plastic is not biodegradable, choose five children to come to the front and hold an object each. Ask them to arrange themselves in the order they think that the objects would decompose. *Answer: Orange/banana - 2/5 weeks; newspaper - 6 weeks; wool sock - 1-5 years; plastic bags - 10-20 years; plastic bottle - 500-1000 years (but it never actually decomposes, only breaks down, unlike the other objects).*
5. Find a plastic recycling center near your town and take a class trip!
6. Teachers — for more individual projects and information, go to www.ecotales.co.uk and download the Project Gloop Schools Pack.

Filmmaker Conversation:

Gaby Bastyra (Director) and Joe Churchman (Director/Sound Designer) from “Gloop”.

Where did you get the idea for *Gloop*?

JC: I’m a sound designer. Gaby and I wanted to do a film together. I had just had a baby and was standing in my kitchen completely surrounded by plastic. I wondered if it was safe, and found out it really wasn’t, and took the idea of doing a film on it to Gaby.

GB: I work at my day job as a wildlife film producer. The plastic issue is not just affecting humans. After Joe and I talked about it, we wanted to tell a story that would combine the effects of plastic on humans to how it affects wildlife in the ocean. Usually Joe is given the films to do the sound but, in this case, he and I co-directed and edited throughout the process.

How important was sound to the storytelling?

JC: With *Gloop* the music is very important. It gives the story that twisty sinister effect of a dark fairy tale.

GB: Yes. It gives the whole tale a dark undertone. The innocent-sounding child’s voice represents a future with plastics that we can’t quite predict.

JC: You can’t ignore the narrator. This tiny little innocent person was talking about this big horrible thing. You kind of had to listen to her because she’s sweet and innocent. The young girl we used is a friend’s daughter. She rehearsed the whole script numerous times while she was on holiday with her mom and was very intent on getting it correct, but fumbled a couple of words. We kept it in, because we wanted that sense of a child struggling through this big concept.

Did you face any challenges? What was the filming process like?

GB: Not having any money. We did the whole thing with everyone donating their time and being unbelievably generous. It took a lot longer than we wanted it to. A lot of the time, when budgets are limited, you have to think around things. The different textures in the film are specific. We wanted to mix up the different kinds of medium.

JC: Yeah, the budget was tough because we didn’t want to compromise the look of the film. The albatross sequence is one we really wanted more from. We wanted it to be totally entangled in plastic. Everybody was trying different things, and it would’ve been much easier if we had just been able to build it with CGI (computer-generated imagery) or something like that.

Talk about the visual effects?

GB: We couldn’t have done it without using graphics. I personally really enjoyed the pan-down to the earth. We wanted to create “the time lapse of forever” effect. I also love the tornado.

JC: Yes, the tornado was my favorite. It was the turning point where it gets really dark.

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Do you think the film is successful? What do you hope your audience will take from it?

JC: We have been overwhelmed with the response. When people are watching documentaries they often only take one thing away with them. If they could understand that one thing, then maybe they would look into it for themselves. That's why we chose to focus on disposable plastic, one-use plastic, like water bottles and plastic bags.

GB: It was definitely successful. More than we ever hoped it would be. We made it as an experiment. We wanted to get the message out without lecturing, because plastic never goes away. We also didn't want to turn people off. With a lot of conservation films, it's drummed into you and it puts you off. Ours was really a fairy tale at the end of the day. We made it so fewer people will use plastic.

JC: The film sparked an entire film festival in our borough of Richmond! We worked with over half of the primary schools in the borough and made these giant plastic creatures. We invited artists down that work with recycled plastic. Students made their own 3-minute films about plastic and David Attenborough, the famous BBC announcer and naturalist, handed out the winning prizes. We're even running a worldwide poetry contest and David is actually judging it!

What piece of advice would you give to a student who wants to get into filmmaking?

JC: Just do it. If your idea is strong, people will appreciate it.

GB: Yes, you can make a film on anything these days. You don't have to worry about having a fancy camera. If you've got a really good idea, the production value doesn't matter.

What's next?

JC: We've written another film and it's all about plastic bottles and about turning people back to the tap and filling up their own reusable bottles. We've written it to the tune of "Message in the Bottle" by Sting. We want to involve him! It's something people are just not aware of, especially in the UK.