



## TEACHING THE COVER STORY

# THE PLASTIC BAG PROBLEM

Switching to plastic bags is a good investment for you and for the environment.

**FINANCIAL-LITERACY STANDARDS**  
II. Buying Goods and Services  
V. Financial Investing

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS**  
RI.1, RI.3, RI.4, W.2

**From the Editor:** Thanks to the PwC Charitable Foundation, *TIME for Kids* is pleased to offer teachers, students, and their families a monthly financial-literacy magazine.

—**Andrea Delbanco**,  
**Editor in Chief, TIME for Kids**

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR THE FINANCIAL-LITERACY STANDARDS

Standard II. Benchmark 2: How do you prioritize what you buy?

Standard V. Benchmark 1: What does it mean to invest in something?

## SUMMARIZING

### Engage the Reader

- Post the following phrases on the board using the word *green*: *going green*, *getting the green light*, and *saving some green*. Discuss the phrases and the many meanings that *green* can have. Then show students the cover of this week's issue and read the cover text aloud. Ask: What does the phrase *Going Green* mean here?

### Read the Text

- Read the headline deck on page 2 of *Your \$* aloud. Ask students to raise a hand if they or their family have faced this issue. You might choose to show them the map illustrating plastic bag legislation in states across the U.S. (see the "Additional Resources" section on page 2 of this guide).
- Have students share their opinions on plastic bag bans, including why they are for or against them. Then have them read the rest of the text independently and identify the reason for plastic bag bans. Have them notate the pros and cons of banning plastic bags as they go.
- Bring students together to discuss their notes. Ask if their opinion on plastic bags has changed, now that they've read the article.
- Draw students' attention to the article's last paragraph. Point out the Power Word *investment*. Partner students up and have them discuss the following: How are reusable bags an investment for customers? How are they an investment for the environment?
- Have volunteers share their responses with the class. Then ask: What other bans does the article suggest could

be helpful? Even without mandatory bans, what could you be doing to invest in the environment?

### Respond to the Text

- Ask students what it means to prioritize. Have them write responses to the following questions independently: How might bringing your own bags to a store help you prioritize what to buy? How might it help you prioritize the environment?
- For an alternative point of view, you can have students listen to National Public Radio's (NPR) podcast titled "Are Plastic Bag Bans Garbage?" While listening, they can add to their pros-and-cons list from earlier in the lesson. You might wish to open a debate about whether plastic bags should be banned.

### Extend Learning

- Have students turn to the back page of the magazine and analyze the chart. Then use the writing lesson on page 2 of this guide to have them create a product that will benefit the environment.

## WITHIN THIS GUIDE

- Read money expert Jean Chatzky's letter about how she has adapted her shopping habits.
- Have students pitch a product that benefits the environment.
- Send a letter home to help families discuss this month's topic.



## A NOTE FROM JEAN

Dear Teachers,

Like many of you (I'm guessing), I had the experience that inspired this month's story. I walked into my local grocery store the day after the New York State plastic bag ban went into effect, and realized I'd left my reusable shopping bags at home. I reluctantly paid 10¢ apiece for too many paper bags. But I haven't forgotten my reusable bags since. It has now become a habit to put them back in the car as soon as the groceries are put away.

This is how change happens. One person at a time. Then, it seems, all at once. I hope—as we mark Earth Day during a difficult time in our country and on our planet—this story can be an example of the positive impact we can all, individually and together, make on our world.

Take care,  
Jean

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[councilforeconed.org/standards](http://councilforeconed.org/standards)

Visit for free teaching resources and to download the K–12 national standards for financial literacy.

### Map of Plastic Bag Legislation

By Patterson Clark, Politico Pro DataPoint. This map illustrates state laws regarding plastic bags in the U.S. [politi.co/3b6ayGZ](http://politi.co/3b6ayGZ).

### ANSWER KEY FOR WORKSHEETS

#### Invest in the Environment, p. 3:

Answers will vary, but must include a description of the product and an explanation of why investors should give them money to create it.

ITEM	TIME TO LAST	REPLACE WITH	COST PER ITEM	COST PER YEAR	MONEY SAVED PER YEAR
Plastic water bottle	450 years	Reusable water bottle	\$1.45	\$10	\$519.25
Brown paper lunch bag	2–6 weeks	Reusable lunch bag	12¢	\$6.99	\$36.81
Paper towels	2–4 weeks	Rags or microfiber cleaning cloths	50¢	\$0	\$182.50
Zipable bags	10–20 years	Reusable containers	3¢	\$5.09	\$5.26
Styrofoam cup	May never decompose	Glasses or cups from home	4¢	\$0	\$14.60
Newspaper	6 weeks	Digital newspaper subscription	\$1.40	33¢	\$390.55

### EXPLANATORY WRITING

#### ARTICLE: “MAKING A SWAP,” (P. 4)

Have students read the chart on page 4 of the magazine. Discuss how each replacement item is an investment. Then have individuals or partners calculate how long it would take for a replacement item to pay for itself. (For example, a reusable water bottle costs \$10, and a plastic water bottle costs \$1.45. So after drinking seven plastic water bottles, a reusable one would pay for itself because seven water bottles costs more than \$10.)

Then tell students they'll be designing their own product to help save the environment. Ask them to raise a hand if they've seen the show *Shark Tank*. Explain that the show asks a group of “sharks” to invest in entrepreneurs' ideas. This means investors give people money to produce a potentially life-changing product.

Provide students with the reproducible “Invest in the Environment,” on page 3 of this guide. Have students check one of the boxes to decide what the purpose of their product will be. Students can create an item from the “Replace with” list on page 4 of the magazine or create something of their own. Give them time to design the item and write a pitch for it. Have students record or present their pitch for the class.

### PAIRED TEXT

#### DISCUSS A SIMILAR TOPIC WITH TFK

- After reading the article “Making a Swap,” have students read TFK's article “Swap and Save.” This article can be found in the Financial Literacy section of [timeforkids.com](http://timeforkids.com). You can locate this by clicking the hamburger menu at the top left-hand corner of the website and scrolling down.
- All the swaps suggested in the paired text are a financial investment. Ask students to identify which are also an environmental investment and to explain how.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# INVEST IN THE ENVIRONMENT

After reading *Going Green* (April 2020), design an item that will help the environment. Write a pitch below to get investors to support your product.

## My product will...

help conserve water.

reduce food waste.

reduce plastic use.

protect endangered animals.

help conserve trees.

other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Draw your product:

## Pitch your product:

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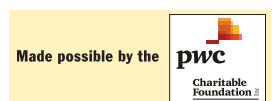
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Common Core State Standards: W.2





# YOUR \$

FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR KIDS  
APRIL 2020



**To connect families with the financial topics being discussed in the classroom, we are including this monthly newsletter featuring family resources. Teachers, please take a moment to photocopy this page and send it home with your students.**

## DEAR FAMILY,

On April 24, we celebrate Earth Day. This year will be the 50th anniversary of people coming together to raise awareness and clean up our Earth. In this month's *Your \$*, your children will read about investing—in this case, investing in our environment with reusable bags and other Earth-friendly items.

Depending on what state you live in, you and your family may soon or already be taking reusable bags to grocery stores or paying a fee for paper bags at the checkout. We may even see bans of single-use water bottles, straws, and cups. For now, I think we can all agree on the importance of recycling plastic goods when and where we can. Let's work together to clean up our planet!



## FAST FACTS

-  Plastic bags became standard at U.S. grocery stores only about 40 years ago.
-  In 2014, California became the first state to ban single-use plastics.
-  In addition to a plastic bag ban, Hawaii also has a ban on any paper bags containing less than 40% recycled material.
-  A study from 2019 showed an increase of 120% in four-gallon trash bag purchases after the plastic bag ban in California. That means about 30% of the plastic that was eliminated by the ban came back in the form of thicker garbage bags.

## AT-HOME ACTIVITY

Take a 30-day family challenge! As you put items into the recycling bin, try to think of ways in which single-use plastic items can be reused around the home. For example, that plastic takeout container makes a great pencil case! You can use plastic forks as garden posts to show what you have planted. Or milk jugs as bird feeders. As you come up with ways to reuse these products, keep a tally of the items that you're not throwing away. At the end of a month, multiply that number by 12 to see the impact just your family can have on the environment in a year.