

Exploring and Creating Marine Sustainability Texts: a student work ebook



Lessons and exercises based on developing skills in
creating and analysing marine sustainability texts

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Contents

Welcome	5
Using this work ebook	5
The tools you could use	5
Resources	5
1. Exploring and Creating Marine Sustainability Texts	7
2. The Great Garbage Patch mockumentary	9
3. Persuading the audience	17
4. Values in advertisements	24
5. Exploring ideas about marine conservation	26
6. Creating emphasis in writing	29
7. Presenting research on marine conservation	35
8. Social responsibility for our marine environment	38
9. Stepping into someone else's shoes	39
10. Aboriginal Dreaming and marine conservation	42
11. Re-imagining The Sea Eagle and the Gull	45
12. How texts draw on other texts	56
13. Satire in advertising	61
14. Ethics in advertising	63
15. How advertisements establish a position	65
16. Influences of big corporations	66
17. Making connections between texts	69
18. Popular culture	74
19. Manga and storytelling	76
20. Planning to create manga	78
21. How to create manga	81
22. Understanding webpages	82
23. Evaluating websites	85
24. Planning to create a webpage	88
25. Creating a webpage	91

2. *The Great Garbage Patch* mockumentary

We are now going to look at a mockumentary about plastic bags.

Before we get into it, consider what a mockumentary actually is. What is a mockumentary? Talk about the meaning of a mockumentary with a friend. Hint 'mockumentary' comes from 'to mock' and 'documentary'. Jot your ideas down below if necessary.

You may have come up with ideas that a 'mockumentary' mocks or makes fun of something through a documentary or short or feature length film about a non-fiction topic depicting real life accounts.

Let's have a look at an example of a mockumentary. In this mockumentary from the Tangaroa Blue Foundation (a not-for-profit organisation that focuses on the health of the marine environment), the plastic bag is portrayed as a miraculous natural wonder. The documentary follows the life cycle of the plastic bag to the 'great pacific garbage patch'.

Watch the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch* mockumentary. The link is below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLgh9h2ePYw>

You may have found yourself laughing at times when you watched this mockumentary. That is because what is presented is quite ridiculous – a documentary about the journey of a plastic bag to the ocean. However when you look a bit closer, you will notice that a very important and serious message is being conveyed.

What do you think that message is? Talk about the message with a friend. Jot your ideas down below if necessary.

Let's look at what it is about this mockumentary that makes it both funny and serious. You may have noticed some of the following:

Subject matter: plastic bags are not part of natural phenomena, which are usually the subject of documentaries. Referring to aspects such as the Teacup Yorkie dog and Park Services as predators is funny because that is not what they really are – the dog is just playing with the plastic bag and Park Services is cleaning up rubbish.

Tone of voice: the tone is serious and indicative of traditional voiceovers in documentaries. The tone of voice is funny as it seems ridiculous to take the life cycle of a plastic bag seriously. However it really is serious because of the damage plastic bags cause the marine environment.

Structure: the documentary follows the life cycle of the plastic bag as if it is a living organism. It's broken up into small scenes reflecting the life cycle, for example the plastic bag is freed into the wild and dangers are encountered. By portraying this, the viewer is able to see how easily a discarded plastic bag can end up in the sea.

Language: the word choice and subject matter mimic what is usually used in documentaries. For example, 'Over the course of its miraculous migration, the plastic bag will cover vast distances'. 'Migration' is a commonly used word to show the movement of animals such as birds and whales. Emotive words such as 'miraculous' would normally show how amazing nature is, but in this case it is suggesting the opposite – that it is concerning that plastic bags can travel as far as they can.

Music: the music is similar to music used in documentaries and is reflective of a journey. At times the music sounds dangerous, for example when the Teacup Yorky dog attacks the plastic bag.

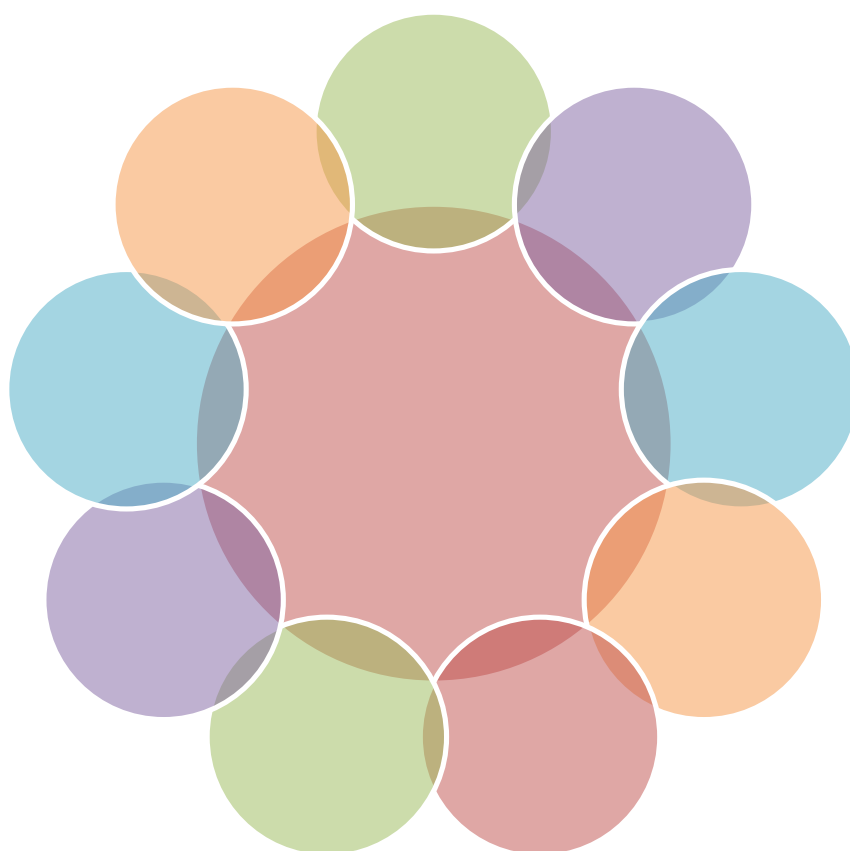
Exercise 2: Language in *Great Pacific Garbage Patch*

- What message does this mockumentary send about plastic bag use?
- What does the following slogan mean?
- 'plastic bags are not indigenous to the Pacific'
- Look at the following examples of language used in the mockumentary. Explain what is being said, why it is funny and what serious message is being conveyed.

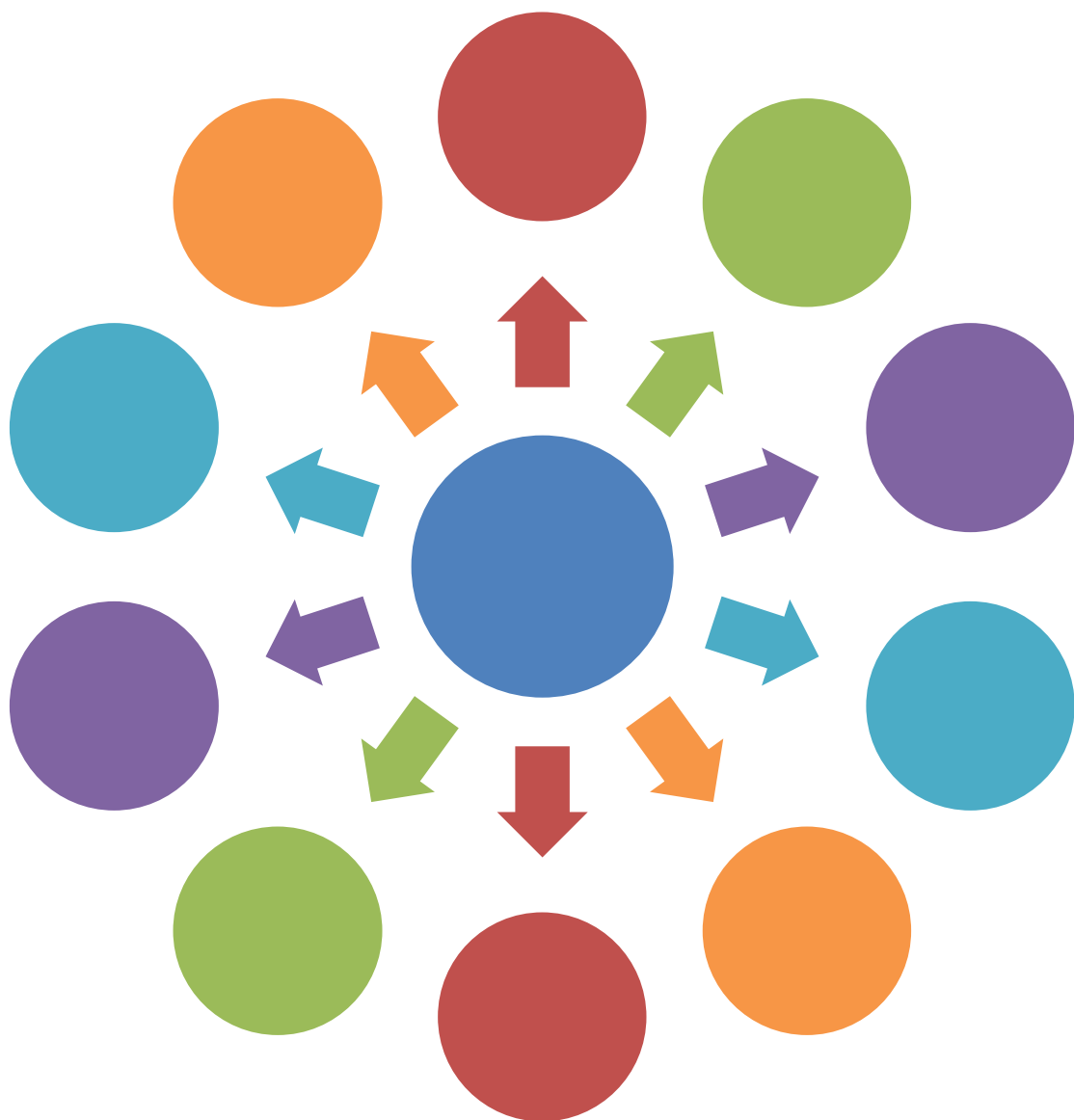
Language	What is being said?	Why is it funny?	Serious message being conveyed
'Once released into the wild, the plastic bag is unsure of itself, it falters at first, but soon, with a little help from the wind, the bag will be airborne'			
[the plastic bag's] 'final destination - the garbage patch in the heart of the Pacific Ocean'			
'The city park – this park may at first seem an idyllic place for the plastic bag, but danger lurks around every corner'			
'Our little bag has encountered one of nature's deadliest killers – the teacup Yorky'			

Exercise 3: Planning a storyboard for an 'Exploring and Creating Marine Sustainability Texts' mockumentary

- a. You are going to create a storyboard for a scene in a mockumentary about an area of marine conservation that concerns you. For example saving the whales, protecting the Great Barrier Reef or rising sea levels. But before you do, it's a good idea to think about your topic and what you want to say about it.
- b. Choose an issue related to marine conservation. For example, rising sea levels.
- c. Brainstorm what you know about this issue and your concerns below. You might like to do some research on this topic. For example, ice melting causes the sea levels to rise, global warming is the cause of large areas of ice melting and pollution causes global warming.



- e. Brainstorm ways you could make fun of this issue using the documentary style. Feel free to be a bit ridiculous. For example, set up an imaginary world on the coast where people accept and live with flood waters in their houses, schools and general buildings. Explain all the advantages of flood waters in the home – easy to access to swimming pools, no need to save water, no need for showers or baths, buoyancy of the water provides shelving. Also include negative issues about living in flood water – not good with electricity, cold water for baths and showers, items float away.



Extend yourself

Exercise 4: Creating a storyboard for an ‘Exploring and Creating Marine Sustainability Texts’ mockumentary

- a. Create a four box storyboard for a scene in a mockumentary about your chosen issue. Include a drawing, description and the voiceover (what is spoken) for each frame.

<p>Image</p>	<p>Image</p>
<p>Description of shot:</p>	<p>Description of shot:</p>
<p>Voiceover:</p>	<p>Voiceover:</p>

<p>Image</p>	<p>Image</p>
<p>Description of shot:</p>	<p>Description of shot:</p>
<p>Voiceover:</p>	<p>Voiceover:</p>

Extend yourself

- What type of music would you use for this scene?
- In one line, sum up the message in your mockumentary scene.
- Come up with a slogan for your mockumentary like the one in the Great Garbage patch mockumentary – ‘plastic bags are not indigenous to the pacific’.

Writing space

[illegible]