

Bags with Stories to tell

This resource contains a collection of images of different shopping bags, and short stories about where they came from, what they are made from and what might happen when they can no longer be used for shopping.

You might use the resource to create a display, and perhaps add more bags and stories relevant to your own context.

You might use the images and stories as a stimulus for a discussion, or a debate by asking students to decide which bags they would, or would not, choose to use.



This bag is made from newspaper

It was made in India by an organisation that supports street children. The older children make the bags to sell to help support the care of younger children.

It was bought online from a charity in the UK.

It had to be transported from India to the UK, then distributed to the charity, and then to the person who bought it.

When it breaks, the material can be recycled, but the UK exports paper and other materials for recycling to India and other developing countries.



This bag is made from flax

It was made by hand by a Maori weaver in New Zealand and bought by a tourist. Flax grows wild, but is also cultivated to provide weaving material, used to make bags, mats and other objects.

It did not cost much to buy, though it took a long time to make. It travelled from New Zealand by air (in the tourist's luggage). It is stronger than it looks, and has been used many times, but it does not hold much shopping.

When it breaks, it might be re-used in some way, because it is a beautiful object, but it might eventually go onto the compost heap



This bag is made from plastic

Bags like this used to be given away by supermarkets in the UK. Now shops have to make a charge for such bags, and there has been a drop of 83% in their use.

Supermarkets often encourage shoppers to use a 'bag for life', which is a stronger bag that can be re-used many more times. But it is still made from plastic!

When it breaks it can be recycled, but in practice not many recycling companies accept bags.

Plastic bags can last of hundreds of years, and are a real danger to wildlife.



This bag is made from re-cycled plastic

It was sold to a shopper at a supermarket in the UK for 5p. The message on the bag says: *All the profit from your 5p contribution helps to protect and save our precious sea life, oceans and beaches.*

When it breaks it can be recycled, but in practice not many recycling companies accept bags.

The message at the bottom of the bag says: *Please re-use and then dispose of safely to help protect the environment.*

How could you dispose of the bag 'safely'?



This bag is made from paper

It was given away at a conference for participants to carry a 'take-away' lunch. Most people felt that a paper bag was much 'greener' than a plastic one.

In fact a paper bag weighs about 6 times more than a plastic bag, takes up to 10 times more space and often breaks after only one use. This means that more fuel is used to transport paper bags and more bags are thrown away. Making (or recycling) paper uses a lot of energy.



This bag is made from cotton

It was produced in India, using Fairtrade cotton, and sold by the Co-operative Group (who run supermarkets in the UK).

Making these bags has created over 300 jobs in the community. This provides a stable and fair income for factory workers, and a guaranteed better deal for cotton growers. Some of the money raised by selling these bags supports environmental projects.

When it breaks it could be put onto the garden compost heap.



This bag is made from re-used fabric

It was made by a charity from unwanted curtains or other household textiles, and given away free to shoppers in order to reduce the use of plastic bags.

When it breaks the fabric might be re-used again for other purposes.

