

JOURNEY OF BOTTLED WATER

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OBJECTIVE // Participants learn about the journey of bottled water, from source to store, and its contribution to the water crisis. Participants discuss how active global citizenship can make possible clean safe water available for everyone

TIME // 30 minutes

GROUP SIZE // Groups of 6 or 12 participants

MATERIALS //

- One ball of yarn/string for every group
- Story of 'Journey of Bottled Water'
- Water Journey cards

PREPARATION // Print and cut out Water Journey cards for each group.

OUTLINE //

- Gather participants into groups to form a circle. In small groups participants can take on more than one role. In larger groups, have more than one circle going at the same time.
- Each circle receives a ball of yarn, and each participant randomly selects one of the 12 Water Journey cards.
- Each Water Journey card indicates a step in the journey of bottled water. For this activity each person will represent one step, for example: the plastic bottling factory.
- After the roles are picked, explain that we are about to explore the trip water takes from source to store in the story 'Journey of Bottled Water' that will be read aloud.
- As the story is told you will be passing the ball of yarn to the person representing the next step in the journey. Hold onto the yarn before you pass it along.
- Everyone who has a Water Journey Card will represent a stop along the voyage. This continues until the ball of yarn has been passed to all 12 people representing different parts of the journey.
- Close the game with debrief questions to assist in generating discussion on bottled water and access to water, as well as the role active global citizenship plays in making safe clean water accessible for all.



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TELL THE STORY //

Read the story aloud or designate one participant as the reader in each group.

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- 1** Imagine a water source, in any part of the world, where you can see water flowing. It might be a stream or a river, a well or a tap. However you imagine it, this is where the journey begins; at the source.

The journey begins with the WATER SOURCE.

- 2** This water source has recently been bought up by a multi-national bottled water company, like Coca-cola or Pepsi. What that really means is the land has been bought where the lake or the spring exists. Now the water will start being removed, for this water will be used for the manufacturing and sale of bottled water. The bottled water company has proudly said they plan to make big profits off the sale of bottled water. From now on, no joke, tap water should be used just for washing clothes and taking showers.

With the bottled water company purchasing the land, the local people have lost access to their water source.

The journey from the water source has made its way into the hands of the MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANY.

- 3** Once the multi-national bottled water company has hauled the water out from the source, the water is funnelled into a large truck, powered by fuel to be shipped to its next destination, where it will undergo transferring and bottling.

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This part of the journey is long, as it means the truck now travels many miles across countries and in lots of cases also by container shipping across oceans, by TRUCK and SHIP TRANSPORT. The journey now goes to the TRUCK and SHIP TRANSPORT.

At this point there should be a line of yarn connecting the person representing the 'water source' to the person representing the 'multi-national company', to the person representing the 'Truck and Ship Transport'. The yarn continues to be passed in this fashion for the remaining of the story.

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The truck travels to its next destination - the factory where they produce plastic bottles.

Before arriving at the factory, preparations include the mining and refining of oil to make the plastic bottles. Each year, the amount of plastic water bottles used in the U.S. takes enough oil and energy to fuel 1 million cars. Along with many other chemicals used in manufacturing the bottles, making the polyethylene plastics releases toxins into the air. All this goes towards the production of plastic bottles used to contain the water extracted from the water source.

The journey moves on to MAKING THE PLASTIC BOTTLES.

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Upon arrival to the bottled water factory, the water is channelled through a filtration process to be bottled. That means the factory requires an uninterrupted supply of electricity, something the local utility structure cannot always support. So the factory often supplies its own electricity, with three big generators running on diesel fuel.



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Now the prices are adding up. How much does it cost for the actual water? It costs \$0.13 for 3,000,000 litres of water. Not so much, but let's get back to the bottle process. This part of the journey all takes place onsite at the factory, where the water is hooked up to be poured into plastic bottles.

The journey must now go into WATER IN PLASTIC BOTTLES.

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After the plastic bottles are filled with water, they are loaded onto another truck and travel from the bottled water factory by sea or train and truck to be shipped to their next destination.

Travelling from the bottled water factory, the outside temperatures en route range from hot to cold as the water arrives at its next destination. The water in a bottle is then unloaded onto wooden pallets and transported into a warehouse where they will sit until they are moved to their next destination. They may sit there for a while, years even.

The journey of water now moves on to the BOTTLED WATER WAREHOUSE.

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An order has come through to the warehouse from a convenience store, so the water now goes back onto another diesel-fuelled truck travelling from the warehouse to be sold.

The journey now goes from WAREHOUSE TO STORE.

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After travelling by truck, the water in a bottle arrives at its next destination where it gets moved onto the shelves for sale for about \$1.50-\$4.00. Oops, there is also marketing that takes place in the journey. \$0.30 from the cost of bottled water is spent on marketing – magazines, billboards, and celebrity endorsements. At \$1.50-\$4.00 per bottle, that's a huge increase from the original cost of water at \$0.13 for 3,000,000 litres.



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The journey passes on to the LOCAL STORE.

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At the local store, the bottled water is waiting for customers. People like you and me, customers, are wondering: does it taste better? Does it look good, it's convenient? Someone enters the local store that pulls \$2.50 from their pocket and gives it to the store owner.

This part of the journey is probably the shortest of them all, where that water in the bottle has travelled such a great distance, but is now consumed within seconds, by the consumer.

The journey goes continues on to the CONSUMER.

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After the consumer purchases and drinks the water in a bottle, they discard the plastic bottle. If this consumer threw the plastic bottle into the garbage can, it would end up like 80% of all the plastic bottles that end up in landfills, or in an incinerator where they are burned and release toxins into the air.

Alternatively if the consumer put the plastic bottle into the recycling bin it may be down-cycled into something from the dollar store (turning it into lower quality products that would be chucked later on) or shipped to another country, like India, only to end up in a mountain of plastic bottles just outside Madras.

The journey continues on to end up DOWN-CYCLED or in INDIA.

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In either case, this part of the journey requires transportation, to ship the plastic bottle from where the consumer discarded it to the next destination; in this case garbage or India. Once the plastic bottle has travelled hundreds of miles it arrives in this place, and finds itself between a river and a land fill site where it could sit for 1,000 years. This part of the journey can be long or short; the final destination can take on many paths from here, but for now it sits, and it sits, and it sits.



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The journey arrives in the **LANDFILL**.

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As the bottle sits between the rivers, it is spotted by a child nearby, who is one of the 36% of city dwellers living on less than \$1.25 a day. Having spent yesterday's earnings on water for their family, that came from another water company, they contemplate picking up the empty plastic bottle and filling it with water from the river.

At this final part of the journey, the plastic bottle is at a cross roads of its own cause and effect, leading the child to decide between purchasing bottled water using their whole day's income, or drinking water from the river near the land fill, risking exposure to 'water borne diseases'.

The journey follows on to **WATER-BORNE DISEASES**.

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And as other plastic bottles remain in the landfill site, through time (A LONG TIME) the plastic toxins break down and pollute the earth and the surrounding ecosystems and water sources, like the one from where this journey began.

The journey finds its way back to the **WATER SOURCE**, where the beginning and the end of the journey of water meet.

Ask participants to step back so the web is taut.

**Leader: "What happens if we do not want to support this system?
Can we stop it? Can we change it?"**

**"What if we remove the consumer from the web? CONSUMER, can you let go
of the string. What if we protect the water source?
WATER SOURCE, can you let go of the yarn. What happens?"**

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DEBRIEF AND NEXT STEPS // The game demonstrates one of the many reasons why we want to create bottled water free zones in our school, parishes and communities.

“In the U.S. and Canada, for the most part, we have strong, safe public water systems. But in much of the world, this is not the case. This doesn’t mean that in these countries bottled water is the solution, because it’s not. It means we need ever-increasing efforts to understand the root causes of the world’s drinking water crisis, and efforts to beat the crisis that are based in human rights, care for the environment, and the common good”.

Taken from the Story of Bottled Water, watch it at <http://storyofstuff.org/bottledwater/>

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS //

- What water source did you imagine at the beginning of the story and why?
- Where along the journey can the negative aspects be prevented and/or avoided?
- How is bottled water contributing to the water crises?
- Ask how we can personally make a difference in the world’s water crises.
- Ask participants if they know about the different water sources that bottled water companies are using (ex. Canadian springs, filtered Toronto tap water). Does bottled water all come from pristine glaciers? (A third of all bottled water in North America actually comes from the tap, like Dasani).
- Remind participants that the good thing is when we understand the journey of water in a bottle and the system of the bottled water industry; we can start to turn problems into solutions!
- Share success stories of how change is happening: with the sales of bottled water going down in North America, and how people are signing the Development and Peace pledge and saying no to the privatization of water, and creating Bottled Water Free Zones in their lives.

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WATER JOURNEY CARDS



WATER SOURCE	MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANY	TRUCK AND SHIP TRANSPORT
MAKING THE PLASTIC BOTTLES	WATER INTO PLASTIC BOTTLES	BOTTLED WATER WAREHOUSE
TRUCK TO STORE	LOCAL STORE	CONSUMER
DOWN-CYCLED OR IN INDIA	LANDFILL SITE BY THE RIVER	WATER-BORNE DISEASES

