



## Case Study: The Story of Bottled Water

Rebecca Sutcliffe, Roseville College

### Lesson Intention:

1. Investigate the effects of the production and consumption of goods on people, places, and environments throughout the world. Case Study: Bottled Water.

### Success Criteria:

- a. Examine the case study of 'Bottled Water' to determine the effects on people, places and environments.
- b. Describe the history of bottled water in the US.
- c. Identify positive ways to change the consumption of bottled water.

### Tasks: Reading for understanding

1. Watch the video: [The Story of Bottled Water](#) (8 mins)
  2. Open the guided reading pdf worksheet – The Story of Bottled Water
- **Note to teachers:** Print the guided reading worksheet in advance on A3 paper, one for each student. Students write their answers directly on to the guided reading worksheet. Alternatively, students can complete a table, such as the one below, whilst reading the worksheet online.

QUESTION	Type your answer in the space below for each question. Please answer in FULL sentences.
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3. Explore the 'Unbottle water' – story of stuff campaigns at [Unbottle Water Campaign](#). Select and record THREE facts from any of the campaigns.
  4. Reflect on how you use tap water versus bottled water... What changes can you and your family and friends make today? Write your response as a short paragraph.
- **Note to teachers:** If you are using a table for students to answer the guided reading questions, add room for answers to Questions 3 and 4.

### Extension task

If there is time watch the ABC iview documentary *War on Waste* <https://iview.abc.net.au/video/DO1724H001S00> Series 2, Episode 1 from 10 mins 54 secs to 30 mins (29 mins) – this episode is about bottled water vs tap water!

- Resource created by R Sutcliffe @GeoTeacherOz with thanks to @MrHand (Twitter) for his Guided Reading template and his Google Drive of over 72 guided reading resources covering a whole variety of topics. All resources were produced by amazing #geographyteachers [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vhBE3ix3pjgpmD07vYpAYLeQl8hxtwo1?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vhBE3ix3pjgpmD07vYpAYLeQl8hxtwo1?usp=share_link)



**1** Define the term 'manufactured demand'

**2** What did the soda companies do in the 1970s?

**3** Identify the two well known brands of bottled water mentioned?

**4** Do you agree with what Nestlé said? Provide a reason why/why not.

**5** How much oil does it take to produce plastic water bottles in the US?

**6** Identify the big problem at the end of the plastic bottle lifestyle.

## THE STORY OF BOTTLED WATER - [HTTPS://WWW.STORYOFSTUFF.ORG/ABOUT/](https://www.storyofstuff.org/about/)

Bottled water costs about 2000 times more than tap water. Can you imagine paying 2000 times the price of anything else? How about a \$10,000 sandwich? Yet people in the US buy more than half a billion bottles of water every week. That is enough to circle the globe more than 5 times. How did this come to be? Well, it all goes back to how our materials economy works and one of its key drivers which is known as manufactured demand.

If companies want to keep growing, they have to keep selling more and more stuff. In the 1970s giant soft drink companies got worried as they saw their growth projections starting to level off. There's only so much soda a person can drink. Plus it wouldn't be long before people began realising that soda is not that healthy and turned back to "gasp" drinking tap water. The companies found their next big idea in a silly designer product that most people laughed off as a passing yuppiefad. "Water is free," people said back then. "What will they sell us next, air?" So how do you get people to buy this fringed product? Simple. "You manufacture demand. How do you do that? Well, imagine you're in charge of a bottled water company. Since people aren't lining up to trade their hard-earned money for your unnecessary product, you make them feel scared and insecure if they don't have it. And that's exactly what the bottled water industry did. One of their first marketing tactics was to scare people about tap water, with ads like Fiji's Cleveland campaign. "When we're done," one top water executive said, "tap water will be relegated to showers and washing dishes." Next, you hide the reality of your product behind images of pure fantasy. Have you ever noticed how bottled water tries to seduce us with pictures of mountain streams and pristine nature? But guess where a third of all bottled water in the US actually comes from? The tap! Pepsi's Aquafina and Coke's Dasani are two of the many brands that are really filtered tap water. In a recent full page ad, Nestlé said: "bottled water is the most environmentally responsible consumer product in the world."

What? They are trashing the environment all along the product's life cycle. Exactly how is that environmentally responsible? The problems start here with extraction and production where oil is used to make water bottles. Each year, making the plastic water bottles used in the US takes enough oil and energy to fuel a million cars. All that energy spent to make the bottle even more to ship it around the planet and then we drink it in about 2 minutes?

That brings us to the big problem at the other end of the life cycle. Disposal. What happens to all these bottles when we're done? Eighty percent (80%) end up in landfills, where they will sit for thousands of years, or in incinerators, where they are burned, releasing toxic pollution. The rest gets collected for recycling. I was curious about where the plastic bottles that I put in the recycling bins go.

Shiploads are being sent to India. I will never forget riding over a hill outside Madras where I came face to face with a mountain of plastic bottles from California. Now, real recycling would turn these bottles back into bottles. Instead these bottles were downcycled, which means turning them into lower quality products that would just be dumped in someone else's backyard. If bottled water companies want to use mountains on their labels, it would be more accurate to show one of these mountains of plastic waste.

Scaring us, seducing us, and misleading us these strategies are all core parts of manufacturing demand. Once they have manufactured all this demand, creating a new multibillion dollar market, they defend it by beating out the competition. But in this case, the competition is our basic human right to clean, safe drinking water. Pepsi's Vice Chairman publicly said "The biggest enemy is tap water!" They want us to think it's dirty and bottled water is the best alternative. In many places, public water is polluted thanks to polluting industries like the plastic bottle industry. And these bottled water guys are all too happy to offer their expensive solutions, which keep us hooked on their products. It is time we took back the tap. That starts with making a personal commitment to not buy or drink bottled water, unless the water in your community is truly unhealthy. Yes, it takes a bit of foresight to grab a reusable bottle on the way out, but I think we can handle it. Then take the next step join a campaign that's working for real solutions, like demanding investment in clean tap water for all. In the US, tap water is underfunded by \$24 billion partly because people believe drinking water only comes from a bottle! Around the world, a billion people don't have access to clean water right now. Yet cities all over are spending millions of dollars to deal with all the plastic bottles we throw out.

What if that money was spent improving our water systems or better yet, preventing pollution to begin with? There are many more things we can do to solve this problem. Lobby your city officials to bring back drinking fountains. Work to ban the purchase of bottled water by your school, your organization or entire city.

This is a huge opportunity for millions of people to wake up and protect our wallets, our health and the planet. The good news is: it's already started. Bottled water sales have begun to drop while business is booming for safe refillable water bottles. Yay! Restaurants are proudly serving "tap" and people are choosing to pocket the hundreds or thousands of dollars they would otherwise be wasting on bottled water. Carrying bottled water is on its way to being as cool as smoking while pregnant. We know better now. The bottled water industry is getting worried because the jig is up. We are not buying into their manufactured demand anymore. We will choose our own demands, thank you very much, and we're demanding clean safe water for all.

**12** Identify ONE positive change YOU are going to make from today to help this cause

**11** Explain how else this money could be used in a positive way.

**10** How much is water underfunded in the US?

**9** Identify another positive change that people can make to decrease the consumption of plastic bottles.

**8** Describe the main way people can 'take back the tap'?

**7** Having identified the answer to Q6 explain what happens next in your own words.