

**Explorer Classroom Event Guide: Grades 4-8**  
**Investigating Plastic Pollution | Imogen Napper**  
**October 21, 2021, 10:00AM & 2:00PM Eastern Time**

Help your students get the most out of their Explorer Classroom experience by choosing one or more of the activities from each section below:

### **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

**[Register here!](#)** Registering your class gives you a chance to be featured on screen with the Explorer, a shout out during the intro, and helpful email reminders before the event. Remember, the further in advance you register the more likely you are to be selected to be onscreen.

### **BEFORE THE EVENT**

Research the Explorer and pick 1 or more activities to complete before the event date:

- ❑ **Read** about marine scientist [Imogen Napper](#) to familiarize yourself and your students with her work. *Ask*, what are you excited to learn about Imogen's research on plastic pollution? Is this connected to anything you've already learned about?
- ❑ **Watch** the [Science 101: Plastics](#) video (5:45) to learn about this ubiquitous material, its history, how it's made today, and its negative effects on our environment. *Activity*: Plastic is everywhere! Have students survey the classroom, or their room at home. How many items are made of plastic? How many of those items are single-use?
- ❑ Imogen is passionate about being part of the solution to reducing plastic in our ocean. **Watch** [Tracking Plastics from Sea to Source](#) to see Imogen in action on a recent expedition to investigate how plastic is making its way into our oceans.
- ❑ **Become a citizen scientist!** Use the [Debris Tracker](#) app to record data in your community that can help researchers pinpoint how plastics and other trash end up in rivers and streams, and make their way to the ocean. View the user guide [here](#).
- ❑ **Brainstorm questions for the Explorer** Help your learners revise their questions, making sure they are specific and are asking only one thing. You may need to work together through a few drafts to arrive at a solid final question. Consider using question words like **WHERE, WHAT, WHEN, HOW, WHY, & WHO** to brainstorm a long list of questions, then choosing your favorites from the list to ask the Explorer.

### **DURING THE EVENT**

Pick 1 organizer to help you out during the event:

- ❑ [Two-Column Chart](#): Print copies or ask your students to draw their own two-column chart. Have your students write things they are learning in one column and in the other, write questions about that information, or draw something related to it.

- ❑ Your list of questions: write your list of questions you came up with for the explorer on the board, or print copies of the list for the class. As the Explorer presents, see how many answers your class can find!

## **AFTER THE EVENT**

Choose from the discussion questions and reflection activities to process the event:

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your favorite part of today's talk? Why?
2. What was one new thing you learned during the Explorer Classroom event you didn't know before?
3. What skills, tools, or knowledge do you think are needed to explore?
4. What do you think the most important message was from the Explorer?

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE AS A CLASS

1. Is there anywhere in your school building or community where you could intervene to reduce plastic waste? Consider the option below, or take your own unique approach.
  - Make a map and plot where plastic waste and other litter is found in your school/neighborhood. See if you notice any patterns. What recommendations would you make to help reduce waste in the problem area(s)? Who could help you make that change?
2. Where does your local trash go? Research your municipal waste stream to find out what happens to plastic that ends up in your classroom trash or recycle bin.
3. What other questions and techniques from Imogen's research could you apply to your own community? Is there a similar expert for this topic in your area?

### REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

- ❑ Write a short news article to tell others what the Explorer is working on and why that work is important.
- ❑ Produce a short video or social media post explaining one thing you learned today and one thing you're curious to learn more about.
- ❑ Read about the [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#), a collection of debris in the North Pacific Ocean. Then use a digital tool like [MapMaker](#) or a physical map in the classroom to mark the location of the patch.

## **SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE**

We LOVE to see student work and share it with the Explorers who inspired it! Please feel free to share student projects and reflections by using the *#ExplorerClassroom* and tagging *@NatGeoEducation* on Twitter, or by emailing them to [explorerclassroom@ngs.org](mailto:explorerclassroom@ngs.org)

## **OPTIONAL EXTENSION RESOURCES**

Try one of these related resources and keep exploring with National Geographic Education.

- *Join in the Explorer's Mission*: What are some themes from the event today? Did the Explorer inspire you in some way? How?
- Looking for an opportunity for deeper engagement around plastics? In the [Plastics: From Pollution to Solutions](#) unit (12 activities total), students learn about the plastic pollution crisis, its ecosystem impacts, the growing global anti-plastics movement, and eventually advocate for solutions of their own by creating their own *National Geographic Magazine*.

Looking for more ways to engage your students online, in-person, or at home? Find more on our [Learn Anywhere](#) page or in our [Resource Library](#).