

EXAMPLE LONG FICTION STORY BASED ON RESEARCH

Prompt: Write a long imaginary story focused on an issue related to the environment. Show the challenges that are faced and what happens as a result. Make sure that the story contains at least eight paragraphs and all the elements of a story. Provide at least four footnotes and a reference list containing at least four references. Use the MLA style.

TITLE OF THE STORY: The Great Pacific Garbage Dump

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The Great Pacific Garbage Dump

"Wake up, dude!" Kaia was shaking her brother Ariki in the dark of his bedroom. "It's almost sunrise. You've got to clean up the beach!" By way of explanation, she was on the lagoon diving team, and he was with the beach cleaners on the island of Moka Moka. They had to finish their work before the rich Australian tourists started arriving at the beach from their hotels. In fact, their future jobs depended on their sector of the beach looking squeaky clean for the foreigners. Their boss would inspect every inch of the beach before they would be released to go to school and allow them to return the next day. Fortunately, the day looked like it would be a glorious one. As the sun was rising, Kaia could see that the sky was perfectly clear of clouds. Indeed, Kaia was happy to have a job and to contribute to the island's health. She knew that the reasoning behind her job was important.

Up until 20 years ago, tourism had been an easy moneymaker for people living on Moka Moka. Snorkelers loved the crystal clear water of its lagoon, and sunbathers loved the soft white sand of its beaches. All that changed when the small island, which was located in the southeastern Pacific, became a landing site for plastic trash. Over the years, ocean currents had clustered hundreds of thousands of discarded cups, bottles, and pieces of polystyrene packaging (commercially named Styrofoam). The plastic became a fleet of floating debris. Some of this junk started washing ashore on Moka Moka and neighboring islands as far back as 1997.¹ It was

¹ Montaanari, 2017, p. 1

not a pretty sight. In fact, the mess on the beach became really disgusting. Every square foot was covered in trash, and the beach smelled just like a rotting garbage dump.

After tourists stopped coming to Moka Moka, the staff at hotels and restaurants had realized that the unsightly trash was driving away the tourists. To protect their businesses, they started paying the local teens to clean up the mess, and this was a never ending, daily challenge. In fact, it was lifetime employment because the plastic stuff just kept on coming. Each morning, the teenagers would collect all the plastic pieces they could find, either on the lagoon floor or on the beach. They would drop their full bags at collection points for a truck to pick up. After the truck picked up the bags, it dumped them at the recycling center. Some of the trash—mostly plastic bottles and cups—was shipped to Australia, where it could be recycled into fleece clothing, carpets, or just more bottles.²

In spite of the recycling, there was still a problem with polystyrene. Most of it could not be recycled. Plastic bags and any kind of plastic film could not be recycled either.³ Thus, every month they trucked the non-recyclables up the side of the volcano in the middle of the island and threw them in. Unfortunately, this plan was not ideal because burning polystyrene at low temperatures can release styrene gas, which can negatively affect the nervous systems of humans and animals.⁴ Fortunately, people had predicted that the volcano might not erupt again for decades. If it did erupt, when the volcano heated up, the temperature would be super hot—high enough to neutralize the toxic gases. At least that was the theory.

This morning, when Kaia and Ariki arrived at the beach, the ocean was at low tide, which made Kaia happy. That meant that more of the sandy beach and its plastic garbage were exposed.

²"How it works," 2015, p. 1

³"Trash: Landfill Bound," 2017, p. 1

⁴Block, 2009, p. 1

There would be less area for her underwater team to cover but more work for her brother and the three other kids who cleaned the beach. The teams of youths worked steadily until the beach was pristine and their boss agreed to release them. When Kaia and Ariki got home from work, they had a half hour to eat breakfast and change clothes before leaving for school. Their dad served them steamed rice and freshly caught sardines even though Kaia and Ariki no longer liked to eat sardines. Indeed, they just could not get used to the altered flavor, now that the sardines and anchovies and even the squid had been eating microscopic plastic particles along with the usual plankton. Not surprisingly, this change really bothered Kaia. She loved seafood, but she couldn't stand the plasticky taste. She just ate her rice and skipped the sardines. When she got to school, she knew that she could have pizza, hamburgers, donuts, and other foods that were imported from Australia. She would fill up on those items later.

In fact, the more Kaia learned about the dangers of ingesting plastic, the stronger she felt about protecting her family and friends from its harmful effects.⁵ When she talked to her mother about her concerns, her mother had said, "But we have always lived on the bounty of the ocean! The fish taste fine to me. I think all this fuss about plastic is just a way to scare us. The supermarkets want us to buy the expensive canned food they sell." Naturally, Kaia didn't want to hurt her parents' feelings. Nevertheless, she finally came to a decision. From now on, she would use the money she was paid by the hotels to buy imported fish. On the other hand, she would continue to eat the rice and breadfruit and taro that were grown on Moka Moka. She would not eat any more sardines or mackerel or bonito. That meant that she would not eat birds either because the birds were eating the fish that were eating the plastic particles.

⁵ Barclay, 2013, p. 1

For three or four months, Kaia's mom kept quiet about the "plastic protest." That's what she called Kaia's decision about not eating local fish. Eventually, through the usual gossip channel in the valley where they lived, Kaia's mom learned that several other families also had plastic protesters. Their teens had sworn off eating locally caught fish and birds. In fact, even some of the parents had done the same thing. She started to think that this was not just a fad. Maybe the fish did taste just a little funny. After thinking it over, Kaia's mother started buying canned salmon and frozen ground beef at the supermarket. This made Kaia happy because she could go back to saving her money for college instead of using her money to buy food.

Unfortunately, the change was not good for Kaia's dad. Because they were avoiding local fish, the family was eating a lot more canned goods now. Grocery store food cost a lot more than free fish, so he had to cut back on fishing and look for a steady job. Soon, Kaia's dad went to work at a plant where they manufactured a highly valued fertilizer. The ingredients for the fertilizer—nitrogen and phosphorus—were extracted from giant bat caves in the interior of the island. Fortunately, this fertilizer had a ready market with farmers in Australia. In fact, fertilizer sales eventually became, after tourism, the biggest cash export for Moka Moka.

Of course, everyone in the family was sad that they could no longer rely on the sea to provide their food. Everyone had loved eating nature's bounty. They all missed the taste of freshly baked fish. Furthermore, Kaia's dad missed the hours he used to spend out in nature while he was fishing. He loved being in the sunshine and on the ocean each day. Nonetheless, they could still eat many locally grown meats like pork and chicken. All in all, though, they all felt healthier not to be eating plastic. One thing, however, was sure not to change. The generous Pacific Ocean would just keep leaving its "gifts" on the Moka Moka beaches.

Works Cited

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