

NEAL LAYTON

A PLANET FULL OF
PLASTIC



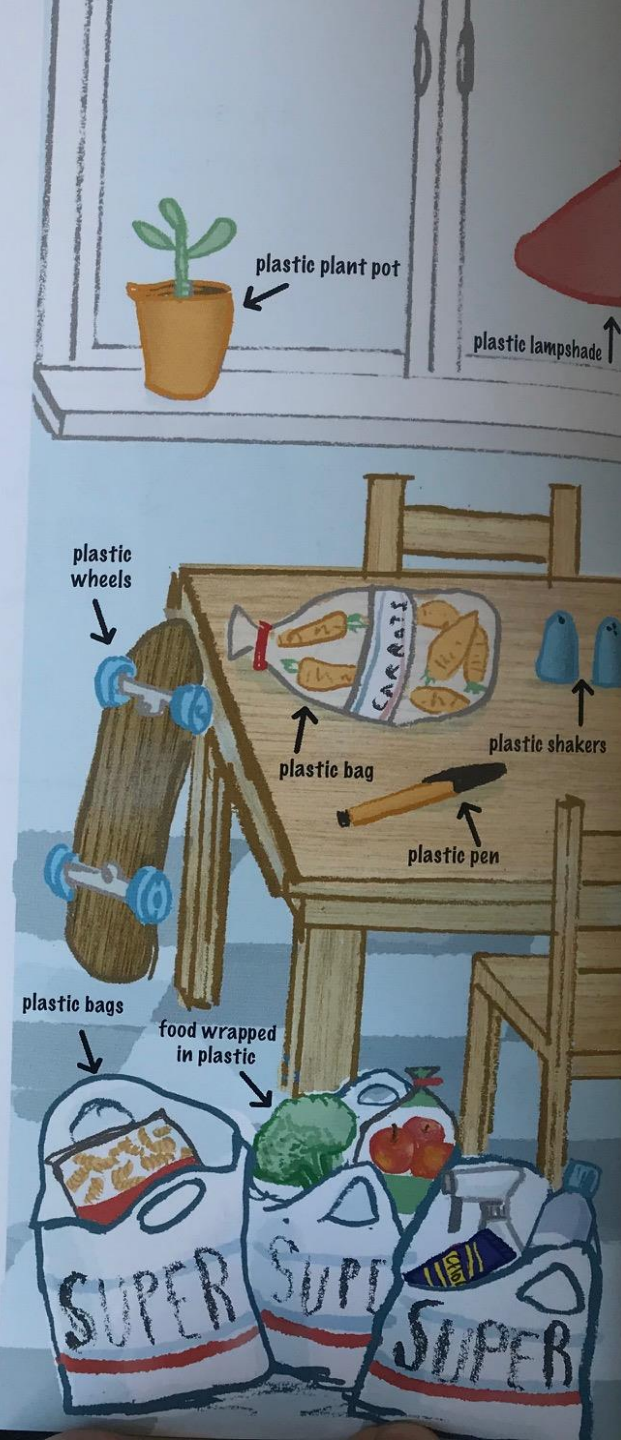
Hello you!

Who, me?



That's right. Quick question: do you ever think about what things are made of?

Because some things are made of paper, like this book. Some things are made of wood. Or metal. Or glass.



But some things, in fact lots of things,
are made of something called PLASTIC.



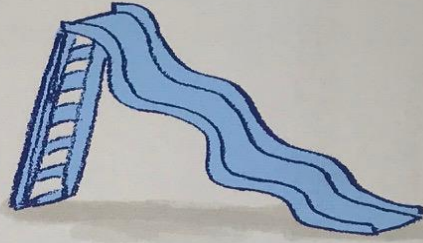
Isn't plastic FANTASTIC! It comes in lots of different shapes, sizes and colours.



Sometimes
it's bendy.



sometimes
it's hard.



Sometimes
it's big,



and sometimes
it's really really tiny.

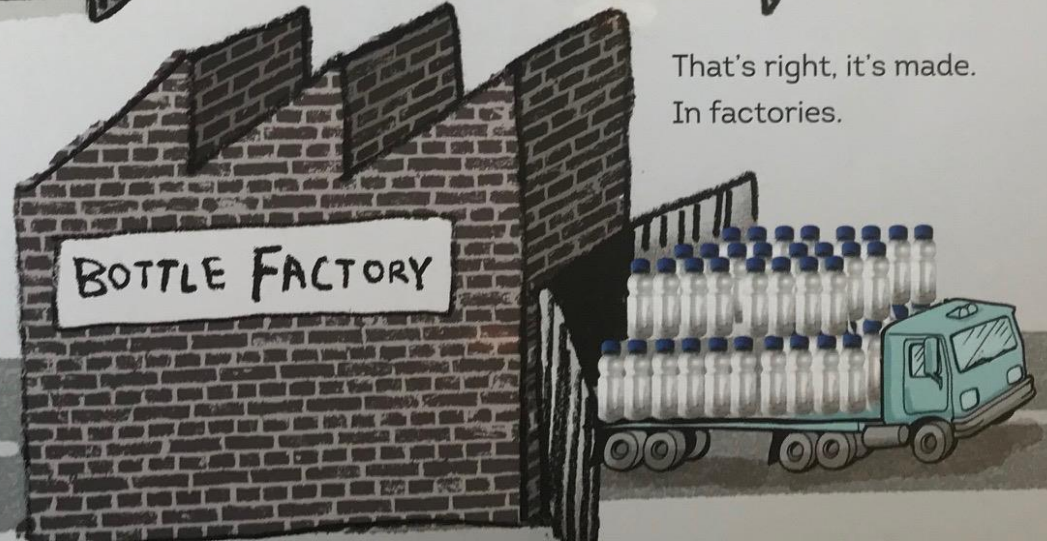
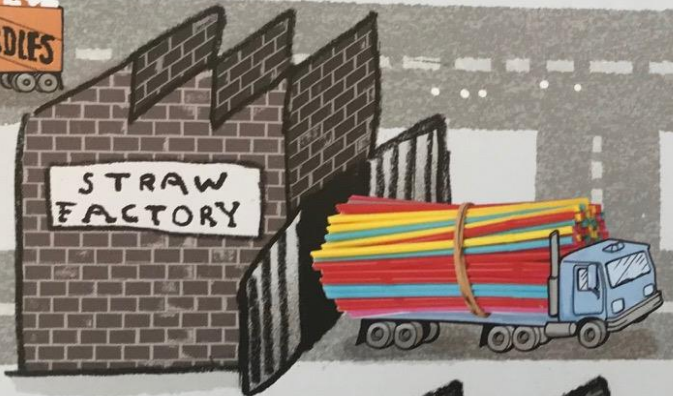
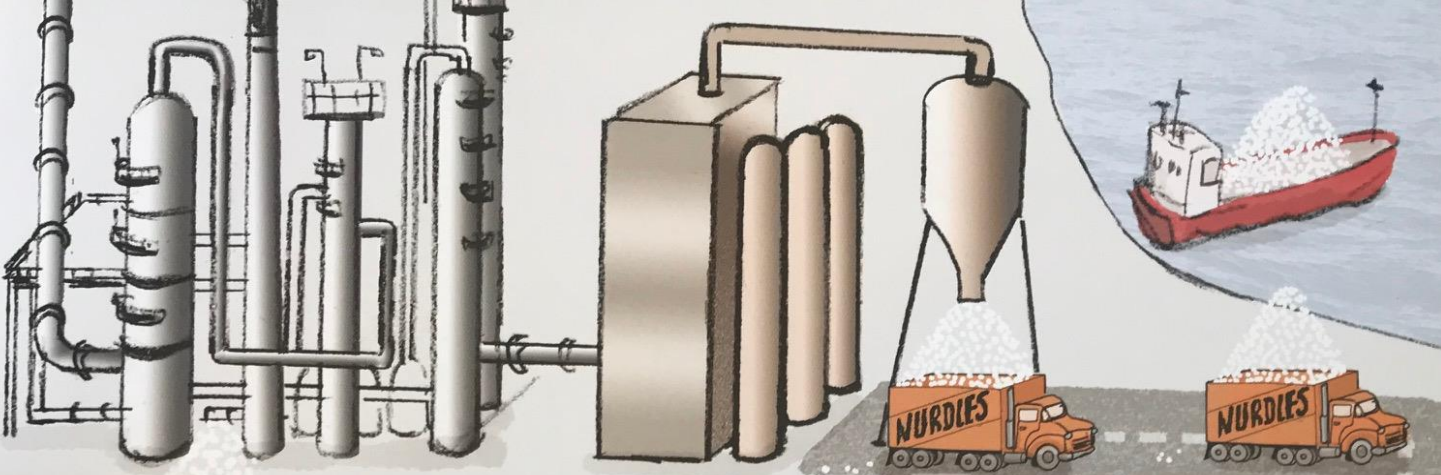
If you look around you, plastic is EVERYWHERE.



But where does all this
plastic come from?

*Hint: It doesn't grow
on trees.*





That's right, it's made.
In factories.

You see, 150 years ago there wasn't any plastic.
Only materials like wood, metal, paper and stone.

And then one day, super-chemist Mr Baekeland
made an incredible discovery...

WOW!



↑
Bakelite
telephone



↑
Bakelite
switch



↑
another
Bakelite
telephone

CRAZY! Groovy!

"Plastic is FANTASTIC!" they all said.



They started making lots of it. And using it for just about everything they could.



But there was a problem.

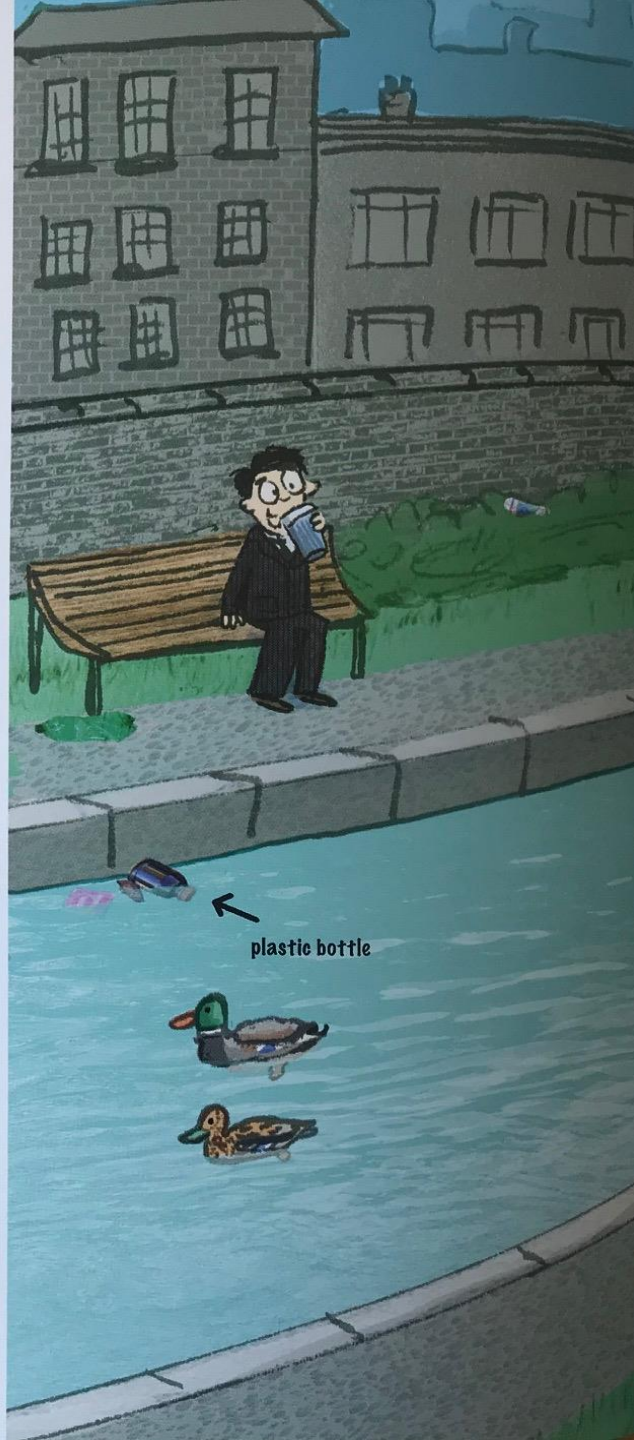
If you look around, you won't just see plastic where it's meant to be.

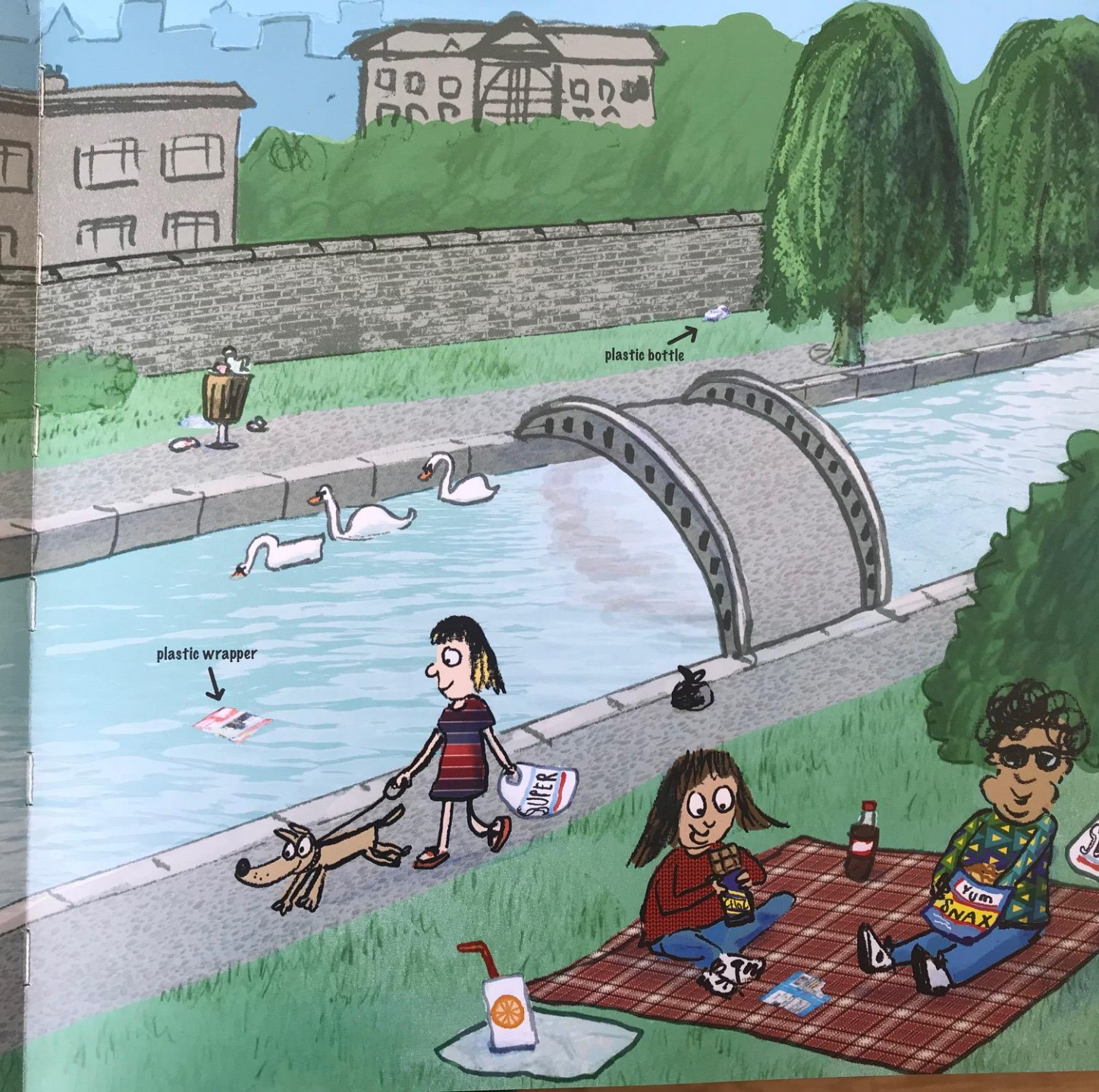
You'll also see it where it's NOT meant to be. Because one of the most amazing things about plastic is that it doesn't

biodegrade

like natural things.

Oof, that's a big word. What does it mean?





plastic bottle

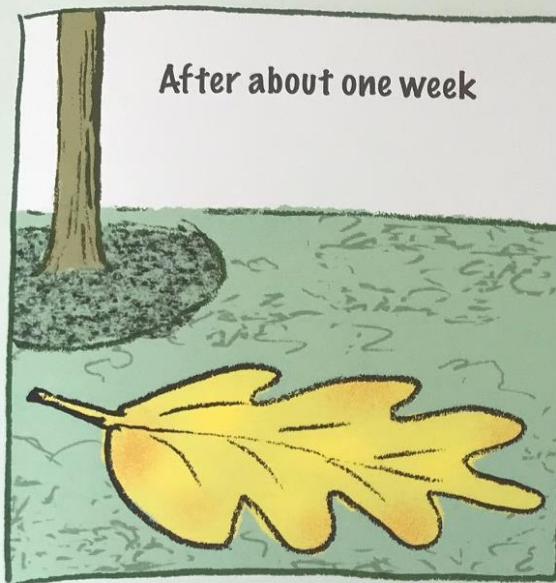
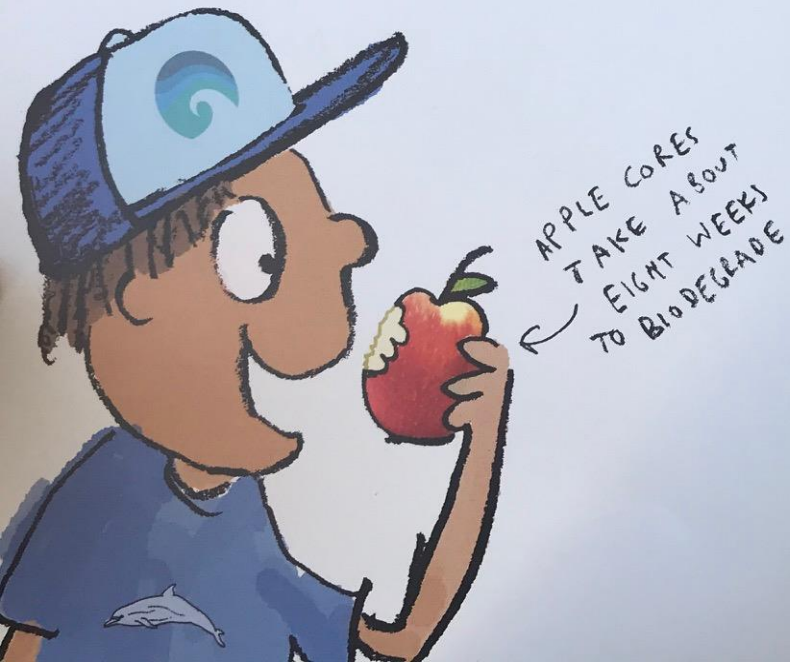
plastic wrapper

Let me explain...

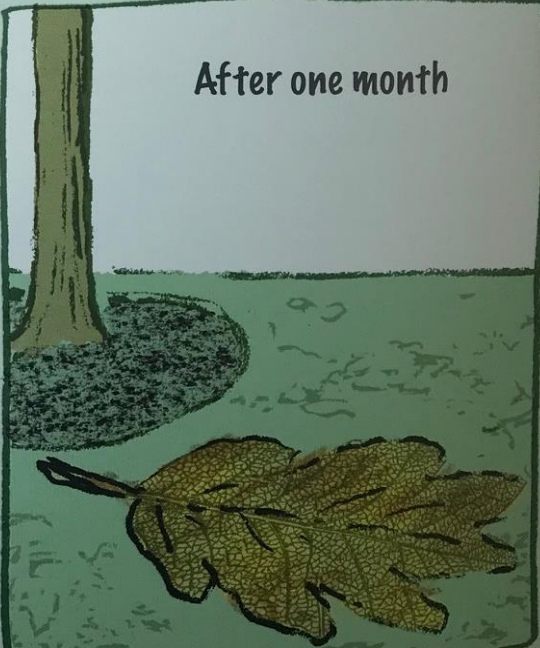
If a leaf drops to the ground, it will go yellow, then brown, and all skinny and thin, until it's just mud and dust.

It takes a few months. You can't see them, but bugs are eating the leaf, breaking it down.

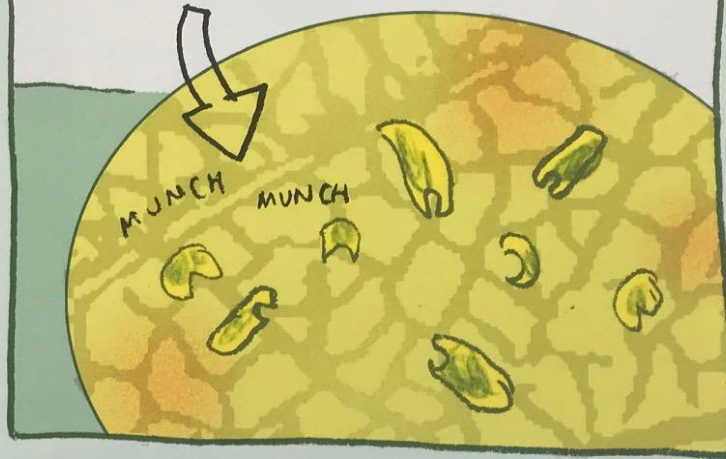
And it's the same with an apple core or any natural thing. This is called biodegrading.



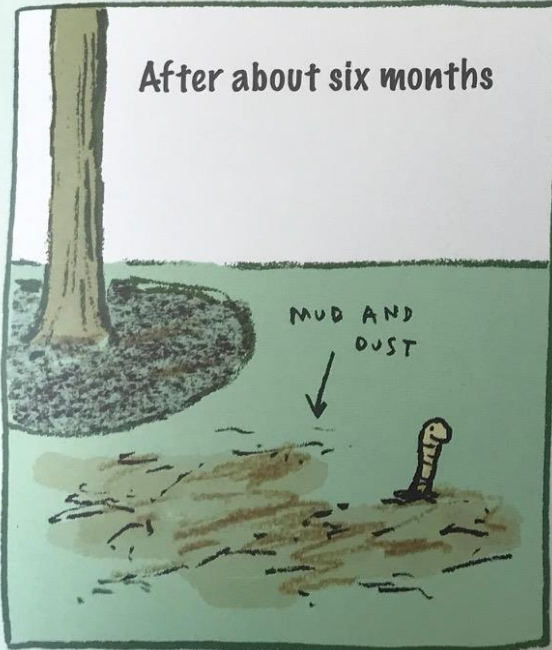
After one month



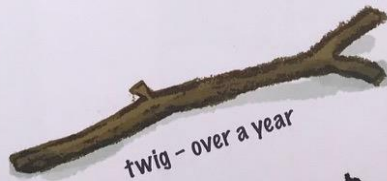
CLOSE-UP OF WHAT IS HAPPENING



After about six months



How long things take
to BIODEGRADE



twig - over a year



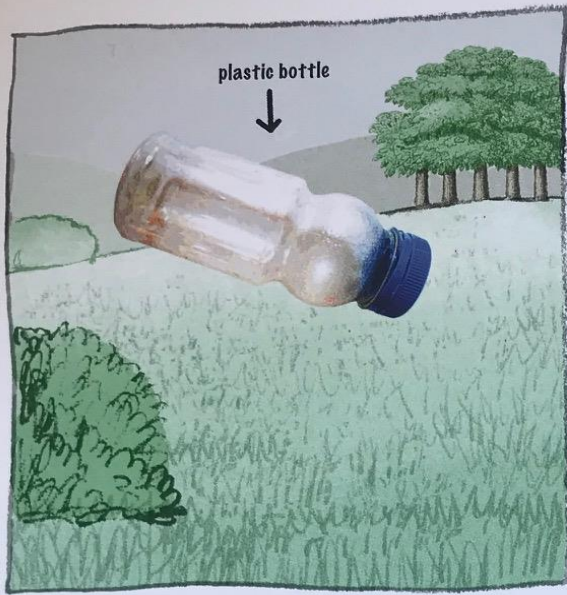
paper - four weeks



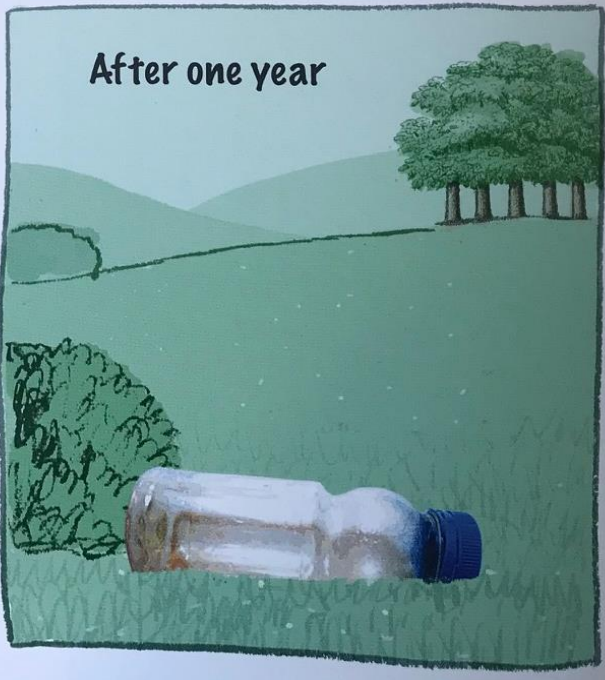
leaf - six months



banana peel - six weeks



After one year



Plastic is different. If it drops to the ground, it just stays there.

For years.

And years.

And years.

It doesn't biodegrade.

Many years later



REALLY?

Yes, really.

This makes plastic super-useful, because it lasts a long time.

But it also creates a problem.

