

Opinion: Bottled water hurts the Earth; tap water is cheap and healthy too

By Project Syndicate, adapted by Newsela staff on 11.06.15

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John Hawk, 77, fills a jug with drinking water during his weekly visit to Big Springs at Mount Shasta, California, April 16, 2015. Photo: Don Bartletti/Los Angeles Time

BERLIN, Germany – More and more people are drinking bottled water.

It has been terrible for the environment.

Less Water For Farms

Most bottled water comes from underground water. Much of this water flows to rivers and lakes. When underground water is bottled it means less water for farming.

Bottled-water companies use water from mountain glaciers, too. This is not much better. Glaciers are huge chunks of ice. Water from glaciers is important. When they melt, the water fills rivers and streams. This has not stopped

companies from using glacier water. Chinese bottled-water companies take water from glaciers in the Himalayan mountains. It hurts the environment in Tibet, which is next to China.

Much of bottled water is actually water that has been treated to be safe to drink. It has been filtered, or cleaned. Some of it comes from the water used by towns and cities. More often it comes from groundwater that was purified. California is in the middle of its worst drought ever. There has not been much rain for years. There is not enough water even for farms. Some people say that bottled-water companies are using too much water. One company was even stopped from using water from a spring.

Water Is Wasted

There is another problem. It takes about 1.6 liters of water to end up with one liter of bottled water. Water is wasted when the bottling happens.

There is also still another problem. Water bottles are made from a plastic. It is called polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

PET does not break down when it is thrown out. It can be recycled though. Yet people usually do not put it in the recycle bin. Billions of bottles end up in the trash every year. Eight out of 10 plastic water bottles are just thrown out.

Some say that bottled water is safer and more healthy. That claim is not true either.

Most Tap Water Is Healthy

Actually, tap water is often healthier than bottled water. Chemicals or germs can get into bottled water. Also, bottled water may not contain fluoride. The mineral helps prevent tooth cavities. Fluoride is naturally in most groundwater. It can also be added to tap water.

Bottled water adds to the world's problems. It is not any healthier than clean tap water. It does not even taste better. People cannot tell the difference between bottled and tap water. People have tasted both in tests. They seemed the same.

It is bad news when a better and cheaper product does not win. When it is water, we all lose.

Evidence-based discussion prompt:

What would the author of the article above think about the recycled sewer water project in [this \(https://newsela.com/articles/water-recycle/id/8890/\)](https://newsela.com/articles/water-recycle/id/8890/) article? Why would the author have this opinion? Use evidence from both articles to support your answer.

Quiz

- 1 What is the author's purpose?
- (A) The author wants to explain the many benefits of using tap water.
 - (B) The author wants to convince people to use less bottled water.
 - (C) The author wants to convince people that tap water is unhealthy.
 - (D) The author wants to explain why bottled water is the main cause of droughts.
- 2 Which statement would the author of the article most likely AGREE with?
- (A) Tap water can be dangerous because it may have chemicals in it.
 - (B) Tap water can be healthier than bottled water because of natural flouride.
 - (C) Tap water use can lead to droughts and not enough water for farms.
 - (D) Tap water is better than bottled water because it does not cost as much.
- 3 According to the author, what is one problem with bottled water?
- (A) Bottled water is usually only available for the rich.
 - (B) Bottled water is always less healthy than tap water.
 - (C) Bottled water does not taste as good as tap water.
 - (D) The bottles are often thrown away after they are used.
- 4 Review the sentences from the section "Most Tap Water Is Healthy."

People have tasted both in tests. They seemed the same.

Which statement explains the purpose of the sentences above?

- (A) The sentences introduce a new argument.
- (B) The sentences identify a solution to a problem.
- (C) The sentences support the author's claim that tap water is better than bottled water.
- (D) The sentences support the author's claim that people cannot tell the difference between tap and bottled water.

Answer Key

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