DEAR DIARY

"ARTIVISM"

Using art to support a campaign or promote a cause is a tried and tested approach. The idea is to create something that looks interesting or appealing at first glance – this is sometimes referred to as "eye candy" – but once looked at more closely, a deeper message is revealed.

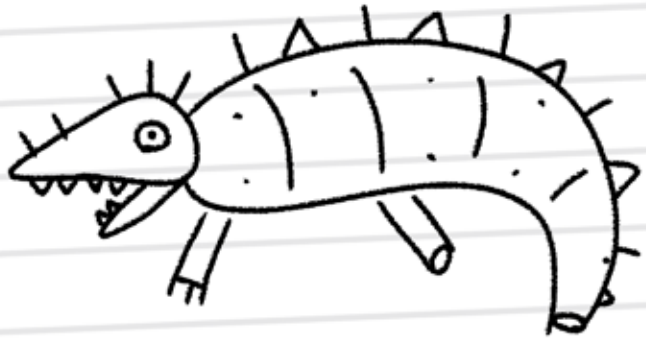
The Monster of the Ocean

Ella and I were around 9 and 11 years old, I think, when we decided to build our Monster of the Ocean sculpture. It was a dangerous-looking sea reptile-y thing made from plastic that had been washed up onto a beach in North Yorkshire. I'm not even sure that we were that into plastic pollution at that point – I guess we were just fed up of seeing **plastic rubbish washed up on the beaches** where we liked to play. Oh, and the plan was to enter our sculpture into a competition being run by an ethical ocean-focused clothing company.

So, **we did a beach clean**, took the rubbish items we'd collected home and washed them all in a big dustbin full of soapy water. Then we started building and gluing the different objects together to create our piece of art. We had no idea what the Monster should look like, but we used a jaw-like piece of tubing as a starting point and just made it up from there. Eventually – tadah! – the final touches were completed and our **Monster of the Ocean** was ready to be taken back to its original habitat for a photoshoot. It was a metaphor for the threat of plastic to our oceans, and we were very happy with our "**ARTIVISM**" (art + activism = artivism).

Plastic irony in Brighton

A few years later, we had become much more aware of **plastic pollution**. So, after visiting an exhibition on ocean plastic at a museum in Brighton, we headed straight to the beach – fists clenched, feeling angry and determined – to see what state it was in. We found lots of what we would later to start referring to as the **Big 4** (plastic cups and lids, straws, bottles, and bags), as well as large quantities of Nylon fishing line and netting.

We felt compelled to try to do our bit to raise awareness and took all of the rubbish we'd cleared up to the promenade. We used the discarded netting to create a mesh onto which we added bottle tops, bottles, and bags. The strings of lids and bottles we tied onto it rattled annoyingly against the metal railings – perfect! We chalked slogans and stats about plastic onto the pavement.

As we walked away, we turned and looked proudly at our **artivism installation** – after all, we'd removed plastic that had been on that beach for years! The next day, however, we learned that the council had removed our installation. We were not happy at all, but were able to crack a smile at the irony of how the council only considered the plastic to be a nuisance once it was on the promenade, not when it was on the beach!