Who Polluted the Chesapeake Bay?

There was a time many years ago when Maryland was very wild. This was a time before roads and cars. Only a small number of people lived here then. These native people depended on nature for many of the things they needed to survive, but they lived simply and didn't change the natural surroundings too much. The people hunted in the forests, found food in the swamps, and caught fish in the Chesapeake Bay. The beautiful and sparkling bay was home to fish and other wildlife.

Imagine that the container of water in front of you was taken from the Chesapeake Bay a long, long time ago. Would you drink this water? Would you eat fish that came from it? Would you swim in it?

Over time, more people traveled to this land from across the ocean. They found rich soil for farming, forests full of wildlife and a bay that provided plenty of food and water. It was a perfect place to live. The Chesapeake Bay has changed a lot since that time, this is a story of those changes.

More and more people moved to the area. Gradually, a town grew up along the Chesapeake Bay. People drained swamps and cut down forests to build houses, schools, churches and many other buildings. Rain washes loose soil from these **BUILDING SITES** into the bay.

At first, the town was small. Upstream, farmers planted crops to feed all the people in the town. They used chemicals called fertilizers to make their crops grow faster. When it rained, the **FERTILIZERS** washed into the Chesapeake Bay. Some farmers also kept chickens and other animals. As rainwater drained out of the fields and barnyards, it carried some of the **MANURE** into a little creek behind the farm. The creek flowed into a river which drained in the Chesapeake Bay.

Would you drink this water now? Would you swim in it? Go boating on it? Is it safe for fish and animals?

Now, the small town along the Chesapeake Bay has grown into a city. Many people live and work in and around the city. Many business provided services for the people. Several factories make things that people want, like cars and furniture but the **FACTORIES** also leak paint and other chemicals into the Bay. As the city grows, the towns' sewage systems cannot keep up with the growing population and when it rains, the **SEWAGE** overflows directly into the Chesapeake Bay.

As people move about in their busy days, they often drive from place to place. Traffic jams are a big problem for **DRIVERS** who take their cars to and from work. If a car is not taken good care of, it might also leak oil or other fluids, which will be washed off the roads and into the Bay with the next rain.

People in houses wash their cars on the street. The **SOAPY WATER** rushes down the driveway into the storm drain by the curb; the storm drain empties into rivers that connect to the Chesapeake Bay. The grease and grime on the cars also contain tar from the roads and little bits of rubber from the wearing of the tires and rust. If people took their car to a local car wash instead, the water would have been cleaned before it entered the watershed.

On nice days, many people head down to the Chesapeake Bay. Some zoom up and down the Bay in **MOTORBOATS** and don't notice that a little engine oil leaks into the water. The oil will not mix with the water but will float on the surface. It will coat the feathers of ducks and other birds making it harder for them to float and fly. Some of these people also have left **TRASH** on the shore after eating lunch at the Annapolis Maritime Museum. When a gust of wind comes, the trash goes in the Chesapeake Bay. On the shore, people are **FISHING** and sometimes snag hooks. Instead of untangling it, people break the line, leaving the fishing line to fall into the Bay.

Would you drink this water now? Would you swim in? Go boating on it? Is it safe for fish and animals?