

When ideas are confronted with reality, there will always be surprises.

Boyan Slat

Life can surprise you. Like a maze, it can be unpredictable; full of flabbergasting twist and turns. You never know when inspiration may strike. For 16-year-old Boyan Slat, inspiration entangled him while scuba diving. In the waters near Greece, he noticed there seemed to be far more garbage than fish.

Boyan investigated. What he found greatly disturbed him. Colossal trash heaps were floating around the world's rivers and oceans. Some of those garbage patches were twice the size of Texas.

Boats and nets were slowly hauling the trash out of the waters. But this process was both slow and problematic. The same boats meant to clean the waters was spewing hazardous materials into the air. Nets meant to snag the trash captured wildlife. All the while, plastics were being broken down and entering the oceanic food chains.

Something had to be done or eventually there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Boyan pondered the problem. What if ocean currents could be **used** to gather trash? Boyan researched. He planned. And after several years, he launched a system of giant floating barriers.

These barriers were called booms. Acting like a filter, the mile-long filters skimmed waste from polluted waters.

Boyan's invention encountered many problems. In its first few weeks at sea, the barrier did not catch any garbage. It moved at the same pace as the trash. Boyan tinkered with his design. He considered his creation and-

created an underwater parachute to slow the boom down. The contraption captured the fast-moving trash. Things seemed to be going well until-

Out in the ocean, wind and waves pummeled the boom. It broke. Boyan and his team didn't give up. After four long months, they fixed the system and relaunched the barrier.

But these weren't the only complications. The booms also experienced **overtopping**. This happens when plastic is pushed over the line of floating corks by massive waves. The corks act as a wall to gather the garbage. But Boyan grew more determined than a hungry gull after bread. He would succeed. He would prove to all those who scoffed at his ideas that cleaning up the oceans was possible.

He re-examined his designs. He tinkered, and-

He added a second line of corks to prevent the garbage from going.

Millions of tons of plastic find its way into the world's oceans each year. That amount is like dumping millions of elephants into **the** ocean. To this day, Boyan still updates his design constantly. He improves it. Thinks about what is **key** to making it better.

Boyan cautions that removing the trash is only the first step in solving the plastic problem. He let inspiration and hard work guide him to change the world. Will you?

What should you do next? This story tells you what to do.