

RAFT IDEAS

Topics: Recycling, Waste Reduction, Observations, Written Communication

Materials List

- ✓ File folder (used)
- ✓ About 20 sheets of paper rescued from the trash or from a recycling bin (blank on 1 side)
- ✓ 2 Rubber bands
- ✓ 25 cm (10") long section of about 5 mm (3/8") diameter cable, rod, strip or similar material that is unneeded or would have become trash

This activity can be used to support the teaching of:

- Narratives and Descriptions (CA English Standards: Grade 1 and above, Writing Strand)
- Communicating Observations (CA Science Standards: Grade 1 and above)
- Resources (CA Science Standards: Grade 6, 6.0)

Trash Journal

Journaling Observations and Thoughts



Students create a journal out of reused materials, collect observations, and reflect on their trash attitudes and actions.

Assembly of the Journal

1. Punch 3 binding holes through the file folder cover and blank pages.
2. Bind the book together using 2 rubber bands and a length of cable. Thread one end of the rubber band through the top hole and loop it around the cable. Thread the other end of the rubber band through the second hole and secure into place by looping it around the cable.
3. Repeat step 2 using the middle and the bottom hole and sliding the cable along.

To Do and Notice

1. Use the Trash Journal to record observations about trash, litter, garbage, recycling, and reusing.
2. Optional: To guide student observations and standardize journal experience, provide any number of the following assignments and related journal topics (encourage inclusion of pictures, drawings, and artifacts whenever possible):
 - At the grocery store, search out and list 3 items that have inefficient/high waste packaging and explain the reasons for your choices.
 - At home, take a look at items in the family's garbage. List the kinds of items your family throws away, and comment on 2 items that particularly struck you as items that did not need to become trash.
 - Be aware of litter. Note 2 places that you notice a lot of litter; list the kinds of items that made up the litter (but don't touch the trash unless you are properly protected with rubber gloves); and comment on why you think that trash accumulated in those particular locations.
 - During an entire day, be aware of what you throw away. Include an inventory of thrown-away items in your journal and comment on 2 items that you might be able to avoid throwing away in the future.
 - At a store, find recycling symbols on products. Make a list of at least 10 different symbols, what products contained each symbol, and note whether they reference the packaging or the products themselves (i.e. – plastic food packaging vs. a ream of recycled paper).
 - Use the Internet to research how trash was handled in a different time. For example: Were there trash concerns in 19th century New York? If so, what specifically were the biggest concerns? What quantities and kinds of trash do we have now that were not a concern or did not exist in the past?
 - If possible, visit the local landfill. Reflect on the experience.

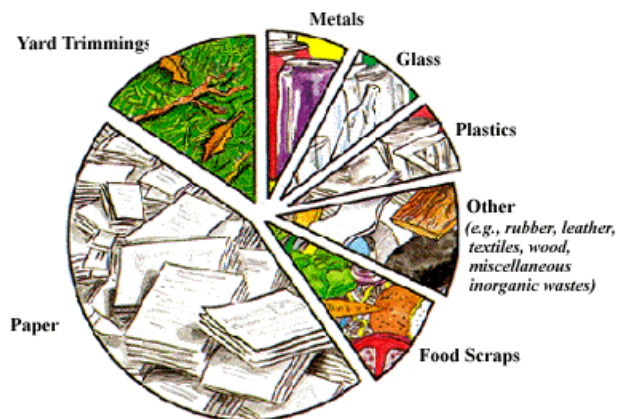
- Find a product that you feel has a large amount of packaging. Dissect the packaging and sort it into types of materials. List your findings in your journal. Include the raw material associated with each (e.g. – Cardboard box: raw material = wood)
- Collect all the junk mail that your household receives in a week. Sort and inventory the sample. Include a volume or weight measurement if possible.
- Visit a local whole foods store. Note differences in the way items are purchased and packaged.
- Discuss recycling, waste production, and potential reduction with your family. Reflect on the discussion and the feelings of the family members.
- Clip out a news story related to garbage, litter, landfills, or recycling. Summarize the story and write a comment on the situation in a journal entry.

The Content Behind the Activity

People have been collecting and recording thoughts, ideas, and information in written form for millennia. Although not always taking present-day book form (e.g. – clay tablets, scrolls), the concept of recording information in a book for remote retrieval was truly a giant leap for mankind. Major developments in book history include the first alphabets (appearing around 1000 B.C.) and mechanical printing (1455 A.D.) by Johannes Gutenberg) that helped spark the European Renaissance. Many famous naturalists, including Charles Darwin and Meriwether Lewis, used journal drawings and notes as a means of collecting information.

All animals, in a sense, produce “waste” and leave physical evidence of their existence. Humans are unique in our abundant tool use, consumerism, product production, and extreme environment modifications... to the point that our existence in such large numbers can have major effects on global and local environments. Human trash and waste production has been an issue in cities for thousands of years, leading to water pollution and a variety of health issues (e.g. – the Black Death). The trash problem is a larger concern today than ever before because there are more people, each person produces more waste, and the type of trash produced contains more non-biodegradable and potentially hazardous materials. U.S. citizens are among the highest waste producers, about 222 million tons of waste per year! Awareness is the first step. And then everyone needs to do their part to reduce, reuse, recycle, and respond.

What’s in our landfills?



Taking it Further

For other ideas relating to recycling, see the RAFT Idea Sheets: *Thinking Like a Real Survivor*, *Paper Recycling*, and *One Word... Plastics*.

Web Resources

- For ideas of how to reduce waste, visit the Alameda County website suggestion pages at: www.stopwaste.org And/or the EPA’s website at: www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/catbook/index.htm
- For information and links to companies that recycle plastics into consumer products, visit: www.plasticsresource.com/s_plasticsresource/
- For a variety of recycled symbols with background information, visit: www.earthodyssey.com/symbols.html
- For information on how landfills work, go to: <http://people.howstuffworks.com/landfill.htm>