

# A Fifth Grade Activity

# Fitting Trash

# Into Yesterday



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## Fitting Trash into Yesterday: A Fifth Grade Activity

### The East Baton Rouge Recycling Program

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#### Benchmarks:

- Science:**
- SE-E-A3** identify ways in which humans have altered their environment both in positive and negative ways, either for themselves or other living things.
  - SE-E-A4** understanding that the original sources of all material goods are natural resources and that the conserving and recycling of natural resources is a form of stewardship.

**Language Arts:** Identifies main ideas, supporting details, and author's purpose.

Recognizes and analyzes essential story elements (e.g., setting, plot, character, theme). Reads fiction and nonfiction text for specific purposes. Applies comprehension strategies (e.g., sequencing, predicting, drawing conclusions, comparing and contrasting, making inferences, determining main ideas, summarizing, recognizing literary devices, paraphrasing) while working both independently and as a member of a group to create; discuss; and critique oral, written, and visual text. Explains cause and effect. Explains author's purpose and viewpoint.

#### Objective:

- Students will learn how trash was handled in the past and how our current methods of disposal have evolved. Through dramatized examples, students will compare non-industrialized cultures with modern society.
- Students will see how the U.S. has evolved into a culture with an accelerating waste disposal problem.
- Students will discuss recycling is a solution to waste disposal.

#### Materials:

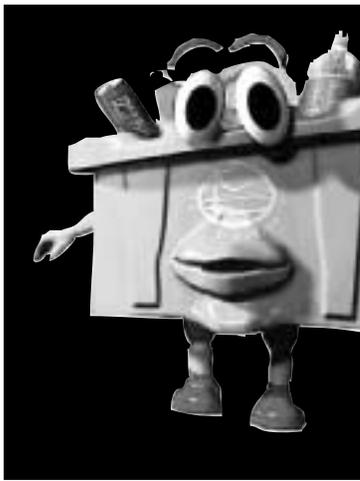
Per student: Play "Here Today, Still Here Tomorrow" Parts 1, 2, and 3

#### Summary:

Included are short skits on the history of waste that illustrate:

- how trash is part of the environmental cycle
- how trash was handled in the past
- reasons for our culture's accelerating waste disposal problem.

After the skits students are asked to write Scene 4 "Here Today, Still Here Tomorrow." This scene will indicate what students think will happen in the future.



# 5<sup>TH</sup>

# GRADE



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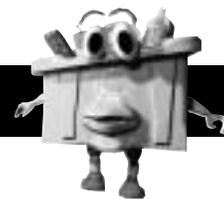
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## Procedure:

1. Explain to the students that each short play illustrates something about waste disposal and the environment and to watch for these messages.
2. Choose a narrator to set the scene for each part and cast the characters a day or two in advance of the dramatization. Pick students to create simple props, and be the set director.
3. You may elect to have the students memorize their parts. This is not necessary, but helpful for other students to better understand the lesson.
4. Rehearse the sections briefly as you see fit. Allow students to use props or make shift costumes to better display their characters.
5. Perform each part and go through the discussion questions between each dramatic section to make the point that there are ideas here beyond dramatic expression.
6. Discuss recycling as a solution to **“Here Today, Still Here Tomorrow.”**
7. After the skits students are asked to write Scene 4 **“Here Today, Still Here Tomorrow.”** This scene will indicate what students think will happen in the future.

### AFTER SCENE ONE

#### Discussion Questions

**What does this tell us about how people once lived?** People lived very simply in caves and ate what they could catch and kill.

**What did they throw away?** Very little. They used almost everything they had and left the scraps for wild animals.

**How did they use the items they had?** They used bones and stones for tools; they used wood for cooking and heating their caves.

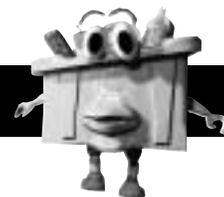
**What materials didn't the play mention that they probably used regularly?** Leaves, grass, teeth bark, insects, reeds, flowers, herbs, intestines for bowstrings, hemp for rope, logs for boats.

**What makes it hard for us to use our resources in the same way?** In many cases, we have found other materials that last longer than the materials people used years ago.

Now, let's go on to the next part of the play. We'll see how people in cities hundreds of years ago threw away their garbage.

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## AFTER SCENE TWO

### Discussion Questions

**Where did the spearhead come from?** It could be the one Junior lost in part one of our story.

**What would happen if we all threw our trash out the window?** If everyone threw their trash out the window, our cities and towns would look like garbage dumps.

**Is it healthful to throw trash out the window? Why?** No, it's unhealthy and it's ugly. Trash often contains decomposing food scraps, broken bottles, and rusty cans that are harmful to our health. Trash must be handled carefully. Today, most of our trash is sent to landfills; however, some goes to waste-to-energy plants. Organic waste can be used for composting and recyclables can be sent to collection or recycling centers.

**Let's see what happens when we don't dispose of our trash properly.**

## AFTER SCENE THREE

### Discussion Questions

**Where did the spearhead come from?** It may be Junior's spearhead that was picked up by the princess.

**What does this tell us about trash and our world?** Some trash decomposes into dirt or humus but that takes time. Some things take hundreds of years to break down. Our planet is alive, growing and changing. It continues to use its resources repeatedly to make new leaves, new grass, new trees, and new rivers. We need to take a look at what we use and how we use it to preserve the Earth.

**Why would someone throw trash under the tree like that?** Our attitudes toward trash and garbage have changed repeatedly over the centuries. Farmers commonly wasted very little and because they had a lot of land, they often used a small portion of it for an open dump to dispose of their own trash.

**What should we do with our trash?** Items that can be recycled, like aluminum cans, plastic milk cartons, and soft-drink bottles, can be separated from other trash and put in a green recycling bin or taken to a recycling center. It's important to remember that hazardous waste such as paint cans, chemicals, old medicines, motor oil, and many cleaning supplies should be disposed of separately from the rest of our garbage. They can cause harm to our environment if disposed of improperly. Baton Rouge sponsors an annual household hazardous waste day each spring to collect these wastes for proper treatment and disposal.

**What can we do to improve what happens to "trash?"** Reduce the amount of material we use. Reuse things as much as possible. Buy only what we need. Recycle whenever possible.

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