

# Class Activity

## Holiday Waste & Reuse

The purpose of this activity is to (1) demonstrate the waste generated during the holiday season, (2) provide an opportunity to discuss how waste affects our lives and our environment, and (3) to show the value of reuse and recycling.

Preparation/ Materials Needed: Pretend Gifts, Paper Bags

Have students bring an empty box wrapped in newspaper. For example an empty cereal box. An option would be to have a small surprise inside like a piece of candy or a pencil.

### Demonstration

Put all the pretend gifts in a pile at the front of the room. Allow students to select one gift and then have everyone open them. Gather all the trash at the front of the room in the paper bags (so everything can be recycled).

Discussion – Ask the following questions.

1. What do you think we can learn from the demonstration we just did?
  - Did we generate more trash than usual?
  - Was it just the paper?
  - When we buy things how much packaging is used? What do we do with the packaging?
2. How much waste do you think happens in our country over the Holidays? What are the things that cause extra waste?
  - Do we shop more? Do we bring reusable bags or tell store clerks you do not need a bag for small items? Do we combine purchases into one bag?
  - Do you make cookies or treats to give to family and friends? If so, do you put them in reusable containers?
  - At parties, do we use paper plates and plastic forks? If we do, are they recycled?

“The volume of household waste in the United States generally increases 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day – about 1 million extra tons.” Source EPA - <http://www3.epa.gov/region9/waste/recycling/>



Discussion – Continued

3. One of the best ways to reduce waste is to reuse things whenever possible. Why do you think this is?
  - Making a new product requires raw materials (natural resources) that are extracted from the earth. What raw material was Santa concerned with in the story? Can you name other raw materials?
  - It takes energy (electricity) to make the products that are often generated using resources (natural gas, coal, etc.).
  - New products are packaged in bags or boxes. Packaging also requires raw materials and ends up in landfills.
  - How do the products get to the store or to you? Transportation requires natural resources too. For example, trucks use gas.
  
4. We just put things in the garbage and it is picked up every week. Did you ever stop to think where it goes? That garbage is probably going to a landfill. Many people have worked to make landfills safe but there still can be problems.
  - Landfills are large and take up large areas of land. Land where animals may live, farms could grow food, or forests could be.
  - Our garbage includes many dangerous chemicals. When rain falls on a landfill, there is a risk it can wash the chemicals out into nearby lakes, rivers, and streams.
  - When garbage rots in a landfill, it creates gasses. These gasses are bad for the environment and can cause health problems for people that live near the landfill.
  
5. Why would you personally want to reuse?
  - Save natural resources
  - Protect the environment
  - Save money
  - Protect the Earth for future generations
  
6. Santa has thought of one way to help save some trees and help planet Earth. Can you think of a way that you can help your family reuse all year round?

The Applied Writing activity can be used after this discussion.

