

A Ton of Trash

A group of fourth graders witnessed firsthand proof that one person's junk is another person's treasure. *Weekly Reader* joined the students on their visit to the Garbage Museum in Stratford, Connecticut, where a giant, multicolored dinosaur molded out of garbage towered above them.



Don Heiny/Weekly Reader

The Trash-o-saurus was made out of a ton of trash, including false teeth, license plates, and tires.

Trash-o-saurus was sculpted out of a ton of trash! That is equal to 2,000 pounds of garbage—the amount of trash each person, on average, threw away each year in the late 2000s. Philadelphia artist Leo Sewell scoured city dumps and created *Trash-o-saurus* out of old junk, from false teeth and license plates to toys, tires, and tennis rackets.

"I think the dinosaur is one of the coolest things I've ever seen," said fourth grader Jahkwe Aquart from Park City Magnet School in Bridgeport, Connecticut. His classmate Julie Pham, 9, agreed. "Instead of throwing away our garbage, we can reuse it."

That is exactly the point. "The museum shows what happens to our trash, how we can reduce our trash, and what we can do instead of throwing our trash away," said museum director

Sotoria Montanari.

Garbage Trail

Americans created more garbage than ever before in the 2000s. In the early 1900s, most items were packed in containers that could be used again. In the 2000s, most of the food people bought, from cereal to milk, came in boxes and cartons that could be thrown away.

So what happens to trash after it is tossed out? Some trash ends up in **landfills**. In a landfill, garbage gets buried between layers of soil. Because many states have been running out of room for landfills, more and more garbage goes to **waste-to-energy** (or resource-recovery) plants. At these plants, garbage is burned and converted into electricity that people use to power their lights, TVs, and video games.

The Three R's



World Almanac for Kids

Plastic bottles can be recycled at centers like this one

Garbage is a form of solid waste. The Garbage Museum and its recycling plant, which are run by the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority, provide visitors with ideas to cut down on solid waste. One way is to **reduce**, or make less, trash-by throwing away fewer napkins when you eat, for instance. Another way is to **reuse**, or find new uses for, old items. Paper bags, for example, can be reused to make book covers or wrap gifts.

People also help decrease their solid wastes when they **recycle**. Recycling refers to putting old objects, such as glass, plastic bottles, newspapers, and aluminum cans through a special process so that they can be used again.

Recycling has many benefits. Did you know that recycled plastic soft-drink bottles can be made into park benches, carpeting, and backpacks? The more people recycle, the less garbage ends

up in landfills or waste-to-energy plants.

Recycling also helps protect **natural resources**, or materials from Earth. To make an aluminum can from scratch, for example, the metal needs to be mined from the ground. That process harms the land and pollutes the air and water. Making aluminum cans from recycled cans uses 95 percent less energy and protects Earth's natural resources. In fact, the energy saved each year from recycled cans could light Washington, D.C., for nearly four years!

As part of their visit, the fourth graders got a look at the museum's recycling center. Here, they discovered that one **bale**, or bundle, of recycled newspapers can save 17 trees! The message seems to have stuck with 9-year-old Arron Smith. "When you recycle, you save trees and animals' homes."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The author wrote this

- A. to explain the negative consequences to recycling.
- B. to get towns to expand their recycling centers.
- C. to get the reader to reuse, reduce and recycle.
- D. to invite the reader to the Garbage Museum.

2. The following is an example of reducing:

- A. bringing newspapers to a recycling center.
- B. using plastic bags as small garbage bags.
- C. using less water when you shower.
- D. all of the above.

3. The following is an example of reusing:

- A. using fewer napkins when you eat.
- B. using less water when you brush your teeth.
- C. bringing cans back to a recycling center.
- D. washing zip top bags after use so they can be used again.

4. People made more trash in the 2000s than before. This is because

- A. food had more packaging than in the early 1900s.
- B. there were more people than in the early 1900s.
- C. there were more stores than in the early 1900s.
- D. landfills were bigger than in the early 1900s.

5. Give an example of recycling.