



A Careful Consumer's Trip To The Grocery Store*

Activity E.n

Grades 4 - 6

OBJECTIVE:

Students will understand:

- How recycled materials are used in packaging
- Which natural resources are used in packaging and how these resources can be conserved through careful buying and recycling.
- That, because approximately 30 percent of municipal waste consists of containers and packaging, responsible buying choices can reduce our waste stream.

RATIONALE:

Careful buying is the first solution to the problem of too much solid waste. An individual's careful buying decisions can significantly reduce the volume of household waste.

MATERIALS:

Survey 1 -- Product and Packaging Chart

Survey 2a and 2b -- "A Potato By Any Other Name"

TEACHER BACKGROUND:

Nearly \$1 out of every \$10 spent for food and beverages in the United States pays for packaging. The packaging bill in 1986 in the United States totaled \$28 billion. Americans spent more for food packaging in 1986 than farmers received in income.

PRE- & POST-TEST QUESTIONS:

1. Approximately what percentage of the cost of packaged foods you buy goes for packaging?
2. How can you reduce the amount of packaging you throw away?

PROCEDURE:

1. For homework, have students conduct a survey of some grocery store products and packaging.
2. Review definitions of survey terms:

ORGANIC: derived from living organisms

RENEWABLE RESOURCES: naturally occurring raw materials derived from an endless or cyclical source such as the sun, wind, falling water (hydroelectricity), fish, and trees. With careful management, the consumption of these resources can be approximately equal to replacement by natural or human-assisted systems.

NONRENEWABLE RESOURCES: naturally occurring raw materials which, because of their scarcity, the great length of time required for their formation, or their rapid depletion,

are considered exhaustible. In other words, when they are gone, they are gone. Example: petroleum.

3. Review how to identify packaging made from recycled materials -- look for the recycling symbol. The gray paperboard used for cereal boxes is made from recycled paper.

4. Review survey forms, distribute surveys -- "Product and Packaging Chart" and "A Potato By Any Other Name."

5. Give assignments:

Survey 1: Product and Packaging Chart

1. Choose ten products and complete the Survey 1 chart for each.
2. Choose at least two products available in a choice of packaging.
3. By examining the products you chose, answer the following questions:
 - Which products need special packaging to protect public health?
 - Which product's packaging was made from recycled materials? (Look for recycling symbol.)
 - Which products could be bought in bulk or in large containers?
 - Which products could be bought in a less processed or packaged form?
 - Which product's packaging could be improved to save energy and resources and reduce waste?

Survey 2:

Find as many potato products as you can, at least ten. Use the chart, "A Potato By Any Other Name" as a guide. Fill in the chart on Survey 2.

NOTE: Price-per-pound listing can be found on shelf labels beneath products. Analyze and discuss your findings:

1. What effect does processing and packaging have on a product's cost?
2. What effect does package size have on price?
3. What effect does package size have on the amount of waste?
4. What else is added to food as it becomes more highly processed?
5. List examples of recyclable packaging.
6. List examples of products for which recyclable packaging is not even a choice.
7. List examples of packaging made from recycled materials.
8. List ways people can reduce waste and increase recycling through careful buying.

EXTENDED LEARNING:

Visit a food co-op and see their solution to the problem of too much packaging.

*Source: Washington State Dept. Of Ecology A-Way With Waste