



## Throwaway Three\*

### Activity E.w

Grades 4-6

A short skit by Fay Bradley

Reprinted from "Lessons from Litter" by permission of the Atlanta Clean City Commission.

"Throwaway Three" is a skit in rhyme written for three actors. To involve a larger number of students, a different person may be used for each of the ten roles.

Each part has three notations beneath it. The first is the character's date in history. Make signs for each of these dates and have one person hold up the appropriate sign at the appropriate time in the skit. The second notation is the name of the character (Monkey, Cave Dweller, etc.). the third notation describes the props. These include both the costume for the person in history and the articles thrown away.

The central idea is that as the skit progresses, each person throws more trash on the pile in the middle of the room so that a high stack is created. The skit suggests that one way to solve the problem is to recycle. A discussion of ways to solve the problem of too much garbage and trash might follow the performance.

#### PROPLIST:

Monkey masks

Three sweaters: one handmade, two machine made

Banana peel

Lab coat

Orange peel

Nylon stockings

Skins

Plastic bags and containers

Roman helmet

Perma-pressed shirt

Bag of trash

TV dinner

Sack of trash

Small broken appliance

Pilgrim hat

Toy car

Quilt

Indian headband

Coonskin hat

Cola bottle

Leather harness or belts

Clear bottle

Engineer's cap

Flower

## THE THROWAWAY THREE

**Person 1** This is the tale of the Throwaway Three  
Of humans and garbage throughout his-to-ry:  
Now they're very nice people, just like you and me,  
Who all have a problem, as you will soon see --  
What shall they do with their garbage and trash?

**All** Why, throw it! Or bury it! Or burn it to ash!

**Person 2** I represent people when we lived in a tree.  
90,000 BC I get rid of my garbage so easily!

**(Monkey)** It's a snap! It's no problem -- to me, or to him.  
We just let it go, plop! Down through the limbs!

**Props** (Monkey masks, banana peel, orange peel)

**Person 3** I am a Cave Dweller who lives on the ground.  
50,000 BC What do I do with old stuff all around?

**(Cave Dweller)** Why bury it like bones, in the muck and the mire.  
Or burn it with leftover skins in the fire.

**Props** (Skins)

**All** Yes, throw it, or bury it, or burn it to ash!  
That's how we always get rid of our trash!

**Person 1** I am a Roman who lives in the town.  
200 BC Our laws won't allow we to just throw it down.

**(Roman)** I have to drag it away for a mile.  
And then I can dump it, forget it, and smile!

**Props** (Roman helmet, bag of trash)

**Person 2** I am a Briton, wary and quick  
1200 AD Down on our street it can get pretty thick,

**(Briton)** When housewives above want to pitch out their goo,  
They just heave it out here and yell "Gardy-loo!"  
(Person 1 stands on chair and yells "Gardy-loo!")  
It will stay in the alleys until the next rain,  
Or until our fair London should burn down again.

**Props** (Sack of trash)

**All** Oh, what do we do with our garbage and trash:  
We throw it, or bury it, or burn it to ash!

**Person 1** I am the settler. I came without much,  
1630 Oh, a rifle, an axle, a few tools and such.

**(Settler)** But everything else I must make with my hands.  
So I don't throw out much -- I use all I can.  
Cloth scraps become quilts; I reuse my bent nails.  
It will be a long time 'fore the next trade ship sails.

**Props** (Pilgrim hat, quilt)

**Person 1** I am a colonist; now life's not so tough.  
1700 We have trade between cities that brings lots of stuff.

**(Colonist)** And some things are made by our townfolk today,  
I could buy a new harness, throw this old one away.  
We have pigs and hogs running loose in our street,  
If I toss it out there, they'll eat it up neat!  
Or I might bury it right over there.  
Or I could burn it; no one would care.  
You see, the New World is the same as the Old!  
We trashmakers come from a time-honored mold.

**Props** (Coonskin hat, leather harness or belts)

**All** What do we still do with garbage and trash?  
Right! Throw it or bury it or burn it to ash!

**Person 2** I'm the industrialist and new on the scene,  
1890 I mass-produce goods with my trusty machine.

**(Industrialist)** This sweater, handmade, took a week, even more,  
But now in one hour, I can make forty-four.  
I make things so cheaply, you can now afford two,  
And throw out twice as much as you used to do.

**Props** (Engineer's cap, three sweaters: one handmade; two machine-made)

**Person 3** I am the scientist in the new post-war age.  
1950 We've learned a few tricks while the war shortage raged.

**(Scientist)** When we couldn't get natural stuff to process  
We invented synthetics to replace the rest.

**Props** (Lab coat)

**Person 2** Rayons and nylons, acrylics and plastics

**(Industrialist)** For furniture and clothing and even elastics;  
Discard your old woolens and silks and your cotton;  
Real wooden toys and washboards are forgotten.

**Props** (Nylon stockings, plastic bags and containers)

**Person 3** Our new stuff will last till forever, you see

**(Scientist)** Even when it's worn out to you and to me.  
Permanent pressed, pre-sized and pre-shrunk,  
When dingy and old, it's still permanent "junk."  
(Person 1 yells, "Junk.")

**Props** (Perma-pressed shirt)

**Person 2** We make instant menuse that come in a pack.

**(Industrialist)** You just boil the food in its own plastic sack.  
Or heat our TV dinner in its tinfoil tray.  
It's quick; you don't wash it; just throw it away!

**Props** (Plastic bag, TV dinner)

**Person 3** We make lots of TVs and clothes dryers, too.

**(Scientist)** Don't ask for a trade-in; you're kidding, aren't you?

**Props:** (Small broken appliance)

**Person 2** Our new cars all change with each model year,

**(Industrialist)** Don't try to repair them, the cost's much too dear.  
Besides, we don't bother to make last year's parts,  
For Skylarks or Novas or Cougars or Darts.

**Props** (Toy car)

**Person 3** It's the New Thing, the NEW that America craves.

**(Scientist)** So out, out with the old stuff, away to their graves.

**Person 2** So what if there're more of us buying more goods?

**(Industrialist)** So what if they won't rot away as they should?

**Person 1** Now wait just a minute! You cannot fail

**(Indian)** To include me in your historic trash tale.

We Indians lived simply, on prairies, in woods,  
We made no high trash piles, nor mass-produced goods.  
Let me be your critic, show you where you stand;  
And tell you just how you're defiling our land.  
Your new-fangled goods will not rot away.  
When you throw them all down they remain where they lay.  
Then you say you will bury them deep in the ground:  
All your urban trash will make quite a mound!  
And fill up our air with smoke, deadly gases!  
Oh, all of your answers have faults everywhere:  
You'll ruin the water, the land or the air.  
What's more your resources -- you lumber, your ore --  
Get smaller each year than the year just before.  
And what's more -- this old earth's not making any more.

**Props** (Indian headband)

**Person 2** You're right. Our resources are shrinking away

**(Industrialist)** While our garbage problem grows bigger each day.

We're always converting resources to refuse  
Instead of recycling them all for reuse!  
(Throw out cola bottle)

**Props** (Cola bottle)

**Person 3** Oh stop it! Don't drop it! We'll think of a way

**(Scientist)** To make food for cows that's much better than hay.

Don't burn it, return -- we'll make something new,  
A vase for your mother, a spyglass for you.  
Don't bury it, carry it -- back to the mill.  
We'll make a new blanket to ward off the chill.  
(Pick up old quilt and wrap around shoulders.)

**Props** (Clear bottle, flower)

(Flower in bottle for vase, flower out, bottle held up to  
eye for spyglass)

**Person 2** It's time to progress past the Disposal Age

**(Industrialist)** And make recycling the popular rage!

We'll have to give up old solutions for trash  
And all realize that its pure balderdash -- to just

**All** Throw it, or bury it, or burn it to ash!

## DISCUSSION

This skit shows the students that people have historically gotten rid of solid waste successfully by throwing it out, burying it, or burning it. But none of these methods solves modern urban garbage problems. The discussion should attempt to reinforce this concept. One way this can be done is to discuss the characters in the skit: how they disposed of their garbage or trash and why their method of doing so was either satisfactory or not satisfactory.

Monkey: Threw it down.

*No problem developed because no large concentration of monkeys existed. The garbage disintegrated.*

Cave Dweller: Threw it, burned it, buried it.

*These acts still did not cause a problem for the same reasons.*

Roman: Threw it.

*A problem grew because more and more people moved to the cities, thus producing more trash than they could get rid of in the city.*

Briton: Threw it.

*A problem grew because more and more people moved to the cities, thus producing more trash than they could get rid of in the city.*

Settler: Had virtually no garbage.

Colonist: Threw it, burned it, buried it.

*Greater trade resulted when people did not use goods until they wore out, but then discarded things began to accumulate.*

Industrialist: With a greater concentration of people in cities than ever before and more buying because machine-made goods were cheaper, much more was thrown out.

Scientist: The big change to synthetics plus the use of enormous amounts of natural resources are causing tremendous problems.

*We can't throw away our trash. There simply is no such place as "away." Care is always required to prevent our trash from having bad effects on our lives.*

*We can't bury it all. Not enough places are available. Besides, the modern synthetics do not rot when buried.*

*We can't burn it all. Some of the synthetic goods simply won't burn. Most of the burning requires expensive and often elaborate controls to prevent air pollution. And there is always ash or something left over which must be buried.*

*We are literally running out of some natural resources so that any form of disposal of certain goods is self-defeating.*

