



The Components of Solid Waste*

Activity M.f

GRADE LEVELS: 7 - 8

OBJECTIVE: To acquaint students with the components of solid waste.

VOCABULARY: municipal solid waste stream

PROCEDURE:

Reproduce the “pie chart” trash can on pg. 2 of this activity, showing the constituents of the municipal solid waste stream. Ask the class the following question:

- What percentage of the total solid waste stream represents nonrenewable resources?
- Remind students that the total amount of waste generated by Americans each year is 180 million tons. Based on that figure, ask students to calculate approximately how many tons we generate of each of the materials on the chart.
- Have the students imagine the land space required to dispose of these items. Also remember that these are only final products; much more waste is generated in the manufacturing processes for many of these items.

* Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Let's Reduce and Recycle: Curriculum for Solid Waste Awareness