



Changes In Lifestyle And Waste Production*

Activity P.g

GRADE LEVEL: K-3

OBJECTIVE: To explore changes in lifestyle that have led to increased production of waste.

VOCABULARY: disposable, product, durable

PROCEDURE:

- What do you do when your pen runs out of ink?

Most children will say that they throw it away or get a new one. Explain that an item that is made to be used once or for a short period of time and then thrown away is called disposable.

- What are some examples of disposable products that you have used? (Diapers, pens, razors, cameras, shopping bags, wrapping paper, fast food containers, plastic eating utensils, paper plates, paper napkins, paper towels)
- Why do you think people use these disposable products rather than more durable, or long-lasting, alternatives?

Help children to understand that people often use disposable items because it is easier, and sometimes cheaper, to replace these items than to clean, refill, or repair nondisposable products. However, although it may be more convenient to throw out paper plates, paper cups, and plastic utensils than to wash dishes, these disposables create a tremendous amount of waste.

- Do you think people have always thrown away as many things as they do now? Why or why not?

Discuss with children what kinds of changes in lifestyle have caused us to create more waste in our day-to-day lives. Some examples might include:

- Buying new clothing instead of mending socks and patching worn clothing.
- Eating prepared foods or “fast foods” rather than cooking food from scratch.
- Buying individual servings or amounts convenient for storage instead of buying foods in bulk quantities.
- Getting plastic or paper bags with each purchase instead of shopping with basket or reusable bags brought from home.
- Replacing broken items rather than repairing them.

This would be a good opportunity to read the skit “Throwaway Three” (Activity E.w), focusing on the issue of waste production through the ages. You might also conduct this activity in conjunction with a social studies unit on how people lived at a certain period of time in history. Compare their use of resources and generation of garbage with our own. Have children work in groups to prepare skits showing the contrast between the two societies.

* Adapted from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Let’s Reduce and Recycle: Curriculum for Solid Waste Awareness