

Every "Litter" Bit Hurts Lesson Plan

This lesson addresses the ever-growing problem of litter. Students will rank items of litter from least harmful to most harmful. Students will realize that all litter is harmful to our environment and that littering is a bad habit that is "learned" and can be changed. This lesson plan is based on the "Waste in Place" curriculum copyrighted by Keep America Beautiful. It uses and adapts material from "Waste in Place" with permission from Keep America Beautiful. (Environmental Education)



Primary Learning Outcomes

1. What types of litter have harmful effects?
2. Why is litter undesirable?
3. What are the causes of litter?
4. How can litter be prevented?

Additional Learning Outcomes

1. Is littering a behavior that can be changed?
2. Does litter have a negative impact on our community?
3. What is litter?

S3L2. Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information about the effects of pollution (air, land, and water) and humans on the environment.

- a. Ask questions to collect information and create records of sources and effects of pollution on the plants and animals.
- b. Explore, research, and communicate solutions, such as conservation of resources and recycling of materials, to protect plants and animals.

SS3CG2 Explain the importance of Americans sharing certain central democratic beliefs and principles, both personal and civic.

- a. Explain the necessity of respecting the rights of others and promoting the common good.
- b. Explain the necessity of obeying reasonable laws/rules voluntarily, and explain why it is important for citizens in a democratic society to participate in public (civic) life (staying informed, voting, volunteering, and communicating with public officials).

Procedures/Activities

Step: 1 Duration: 5 minutes

Divide the class into small groups of four to six each. Give a "litter" bag of items to each group. See "materials" for list of items to use. Explain that the bag and the items are commonly littered items. Assure the students that their bags are filled with "clean" trash, and not items that were actually

littered. Note: each item can be placed in a separate clear baggie so the students do not have to actually touch the items.

Step: 2 Duration: 10 minutes

Instruct the groups to empty their trash bags and arrange the items so everyone can see them. Write a list of items on the board and don't forget to include the paper bag. Tell students to rank the items from "least harmful" to "most harmful." Ranking should be a group decision. The students might ask if they are to rank the items regarding the harm to people or the environment. Do not give any further guidelines on ranking the items. Let them discover their own criteria for labeling items. Students should also discuss (optional to write) why they chose one item over another as harmful.

Step: 3 Duration: 15 minutes

After all the groups have finished, have them report their decisions to the class. On the board, keep track of the reasons groups are giving for choosing items as undesirable. Look over and discuss the list of reasons on the board. Stress the fact that there is no "correct" ranking. All litter is harmful. Reinforce the concept that littering is an inappropriate behavior and a bad habit that people have learned. Define the word "litter" as: human-generated waste (or trash) that is discarded in an inappropriate place (streets, playgrounds, streams, etc.), or improperly stored trash which has escaped from its container (trash can, dumpster, back of truck, etc.).

Step: 4 Duration: 10 minutes

Ask the class to expand on why litter is undesirable. Many of the following points may be raised: litter is pollution; it is an eyesore that destroys the beauty of a place. Litter can be dangerous; broken glass or metal can injure. Litter is often eaten by wildlife and this can lead to injury or death. Litter can be a threat to public health; illegally dumped tires are breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and rodents frequent waste piles. Even the odor of trash piles can be offensive.

Step: 5 Duration: 5 minutes

Have students brainstorm ways they can help prevent litter in their community. Write student responses on the board. Using a show of hands, have the students choose their three favorite ideas/methods for preventing litter. Consider choosing one or all three of the ideas to implement on your school grounds or in your school community. Contact Emma Wells at Keep Rome-Floyd Beautiful to learn more about how you can help stop littering!

Web Resources for Step 5

Title: Keep America Beautiful Kid's Page URL: <http://www.kab.org/partners.asp?id=200&rid=201>

Annotation: This link provides background information for the teacher to help facilitate the student brainstorming session. This link also lists ideas on how students can help take care of their environment.

Materials and Equipment

One set per group of the following:

1. paper sack
2. disposable cup
3. small glass bottle
4. plastic six-pack ring
5. string
6. snack bag
7. cigarette butt (place in clear baggie)
8. banana peel
9. balloon
10. straw
11. beverage can
12. writing materials are optional

Total Duration 45 minutes

Assessment

Using attached "student quiz," have students answer the following:

1. Name three sources that contribute to litter.
2. State three reasons litter is harmful to people, wildlife, and our natural resources.
3. Name three ways they can help "reduce" litter in their community.

Extension

Group the items into categories: items that could be reused, recycled, or landfilled. Develop a presentation that will convince people not to litter. For a one-week period, instruct students to keep track of the number of times they see someone litter or see litter escaping from its container. For additional activities to extend students' learning about litter and waste management in general, please refer to Keep America Beautiful's "Waste in Place" curriculum supplement (see Web resource below).

Web Resources

Title: Keep America Beautiful's "Waste in Place" Curriculum URL: <http://www.kab.org/wip2.cfm>

Annotation: The Keep America Beautiful "Waste in Place" interdisciplinary curriculum supplement is for

grades K-6 and has 33 lesson plans grouped by subject. You may order the curriculum online. Teacher workshops are also available.

Remediation

Take students on a "litter" hike and identify (and pick up with gloves, of course) littered items found along the way. Bring bag of littered items back to the class and illustrate proper ways to dispose of unwanted items.