

# “ONE PERSON’S TRASH”

Classroom Guide

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## Spring 2007



With this issue, we celebrate the 37th anniversary of Earth Day. The first Earth Day in 1970 was planned as a nationwide “teach-in.” Your students may not be familiar with the terms *teach-in*

or *sit-in*. Maybe this anniversary of

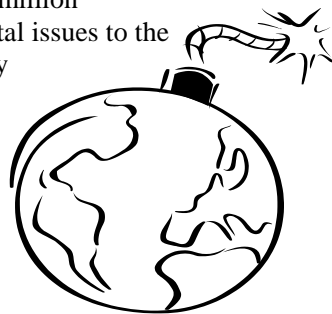
Earth Day would be a great time to discuss these forms of peaceful protest and consciousness raising.

If you have suggestions or comments for improving the newsletter or this Classroom Guide, please call or write us.

## Earth Day matters

What began in April of 1970 was no ordinary celebration. The first Earth Day involved 20 million Americans bringing environmental issues to the forefront of public awareness. By 1990, the celebration was international, involving more than 200 million people. This year will find more than 500 million environmentally concerned people celebrating around the world.

The number of citizens participating worldwide is impressive. However, the



success of Earth Day is not measured only by the number of people who participate in the annual events. Since 1970, there have been many changes that have benefitted the environment.

At the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s website, [www.epa.gov/earthday/history.htm](http://www.epa.gov/earthday/history.htm), there is a timeline of significant environmental achievements since 1970. Have your students go to this site and also the Earth Day Network site, [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net).

### Discussion Starters



- ▶ The huge success of the first Earth Day surprised its organizers. What about the 1960s (culturally, environmentally, politically) may have contributed to the success of the April 1970 event?
- ▶ On June 23, 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio caught fire. River fires had not been uncommon in the 19th and early 20th century when many industrial chemicals were dumped directly into our nation’s waterways. However, by 1969, many homes had televisions—making the Cuyahoga River fire more than just a local event. How does media attention of events affect what we discuss and what we do? Can media attention “make” things important to a large group of people? How is this good? When is it not so good?
- ▶ How many students have seen the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*? How many others have heard of the movie or know people who have seen it? Most movies screened at our neighborhood theaters are

works of fiction. *An Inconvenient Truth* is a documentary. (If needed, discuss what a documentary is.) Documentaries are common on TV, such as on the History Channel, the Discovery Channel, or PBS. They are much less common at commercial theaters. Why was this documentary in “wide-release” (available at most American theaters)? How has the wide-release of this film increased the level of dialogue about the topic of global climate change? (For instance, *Sports Illustrated* magazine recently featured climate change and sports on its cover.)

- ▣ Brainstorm a list of “Earth Day” actions that your students might take at school, at home, and in our community. These should be activities that raise awareness about our environment or improve it in some way.

### ***Extension Activity: Outreach***

One way to improve our environment is to recycle. Recycling, which includes manufacturing new products using recyclable items as “raw” materials, uses less water, demands less energy, creates less pollution, and results in fewer harmful emissions than making the same products from raw materials that came directly from nature (“natural resources”). In addition, recycling reduces the amount of waste bound for disposal, leaving space in disposal facilities for non-recyclable items and further protecting our air, water, and soil resources.

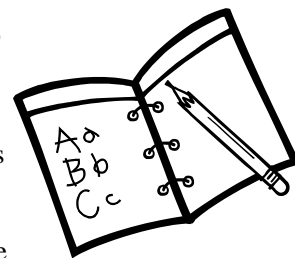


Ask your students to help educate students in their school, children at an elementary school, or members of their community about recycling and its positive impact on our environment. With the resources in our newsletter and other information that they find, ask your students to create posters that communicate this message. Their posters should be highly graphic, well-illustrated, and use only brief text, such as slogans (short, catchy phrases or sentences). Remind them that, like billboards or bumper stickers, posters which effectively raise awareness or call for action need to make only one or two points.

Because it is often difficult to communicate a complex message with only a few words, this activity will help your students expand their vocabularies, eliminate wordiness in their writing, use active (instead of passive) verbs, and coordinate visual and textual elements to convey a concise message.

## **Cleanup time**

Are you counting the days, eagerly anticipating the end of this school year? We bet you are. But before you head home for the summer, you and your students are probably responsible for quite a bit of classroom, hallway, and locker cleanup.



End-of-year clean-outs don’t have to be a huge trash fest. Follow our advice for a waste-reducing, environmentally friendly cleanup:

- ▶ Sort papers. Unused paper and notebooks can be saved for next year. Paper used on one side can become a summer supply of scratch paper and art paper. Put non-reusable recyclable paper in a separate bin.
- ▶ Save reusables. These include binders, pencils, pens, rulers, erasers, markers, and other supplies. Put these in a box for next year, or donate them to the school or another organization that accepts supplies for needy students.
- ▶ Clean lockers and desks without wasting paper towels or throw-away wipes. Use a rag, soap, and water, and start scrubbing!
- ▶ Find recyclables and keep them separate from trash. You can recycle newspaper, water bottles, and more.
- ▶ Encourage students to clean out backpacks at the end of the school year. By wiping out the inside, the backpack can be used during the summer and again next fall.
- ▶ Donate books that are no longer wanted or needed to a library or charitable organization. Or, give them to another teacher or student who wants them.
- ▶ Coordinate a schoolyard cleanup. Pick up the litter that has collected, and dispose of it properly. Be sure that any recyclables go into a recycling bin.

## **Reader Redux**

Incorporate this newsletter into your classroom as you might use a newspaper. Here is an idea to help you get started:

- ▣ John Ruskin wrote: “Every increased possession loads us with a new weariness.” In your journal, write about a possession that you got that created extra work or trouble for you.

