

Litter monsters

Get rummaging for rubbish to make these monster creations!

Many children will be aware of the idea of recycling materials such as glass, newspaper or garden waste. However, they may not have much idea about what happens to these items once they have been taken to a recycling centre, nor the extent of the problems people create by throwing away huge amounts of litter.

The activities on these pages will encourage children to think about the amount of waste we produce. It will also get them to consider whether once something is finished with, does it automatically become rubbish? Why not make it into a piece of art instead?

Getting started

- Start by explaining to the class that the society we live in can be enormously wasteful, and that recycling is important. If children are to really appreciate the extent of the problem, though, it needs to be demonstrated to them in a visual way.
- Bring two bags into the classroom: one containing a selection of items from the week's shopping, another containing the 'leftovers' of last week's shopping. Ensure that this second bag has a range of materials in it – glass bottles, plastic containers, newspaper, cardboard, vegetable peelings. Ask the children to suggest which of the items could be recycled – they may know that vegetables can be composted and that bottles can be taken to a bottle bank – and record their suggestions on the board.

- Encourage the children to reflect on the amount of rubbish that is thrown away every day in the classroom and around the school. Download the **online photocopiable** 'School litter survey' from www.scholastic.co.uk/magazines/worksheets-jet.htm to help. There is potential here to draw links with other curriculum areas:

in science, the children could categorise the different materials that they find in various bins, while a maths lesson could focus on handling the data that emerges from their research, such as which class produces the most rubbish.

- If some of the children don't like rummaging through rubbish, give

them a more creative task. The practice of recycling materials to make art dates back to Picasso, who memorably transformed a bicycle saddle and a pair of handlebars into a bull's head, while Tony Cragg's *Britain Seen From the North* (view it at www.tate.org.uk) is a particular favourite of young visitors to the Tate Britain. An internet search for 'rubbish art' will also lead you towards contemporary artists such as Tim Noble and Sue Webster. Their sculptures, carefully constructed from piles of rubbish, provide the inspiration for the following activities.



Ages
7–9

Collaged creatures

Learning objective: to make creative use of rubbish produced in the classroom.

- Show the children some images of silhouetted objects. You can make your own collection by tracing around everyday objects (or their shadows) onto paper.
- Ask the children to identify the objects, and talk about the features that make some things instantly recognisable.
- Provide a selection of pictures of creatures, either real or imagined. The children can then make small drawings of individual creatures, reducing them to simple silhouettes by avoiding too much detail, but including essentials such as horns and spikes.
- Each child should then select their most interesting silhouette

and draw it on a larger scale, ideally on a piece of recycled cardboard.

- Provide the children with a collection of items that would otherwise be thrown away; the items need not be completely flat, but larger ones should be cut into smaller pieces.
- They can arrange the items onto the card so that they fill the silhouette – remember that some pieces could overlap each other if necessary.
- When the children are happy with their compositions, they can use PVA glue to stick the pieces in place.
- After the glue has dried, they can cut around the outline of the creature. They could also attach a piece of card at right angles on the reverse of the collage to make it free standing.
- Should any children want to make their pieces more permanent, they can do so by covering them with strips of newspaper coated with PVA glue or wallpaper paste.

Ages
9–11

A monstrous sculpture

Learning objective: to recycle materials to make a free-standing sculpture.

- Begin by persuading the children to collect quantities of rubbish from the classroom bins (compost – anything slimy!) and to sort it. Some items of rubbish will be more suitable for use as a construction material than others.
- Ask the children to plan a design for a monster (see figure 1). Encourage them to avoid too much detail and to identify some of the materials that they intend to use.
- Explore ways of fixing two or more pieces together. Masking tape will initially fix joints more securely than glue, but a combination of the two should work well on most materials.
- Once the children are happy with their fixing methods, encourage them to work in groups on larger pieces, building the structure up from the base to the top. The finished piece need not be particularly strong, but it should be able to stand unsupported – long cardboard tubes, with flaps cut into each end for extra stability, are ideal for legs and arms (see figure 2).
- Once the structure is taking shape, place it against a window to see its silhouette more clearly – this will make it easier to identify any changes that need to be made (see figure 3).
- Finally, the children could use a software package, such as Photoshop, to superimpose photographs of their monsters onto a photograph of the school playground. Older children could even experiment with layers, creating the illusion that the monster is emerging from behind a building.

Differentiation

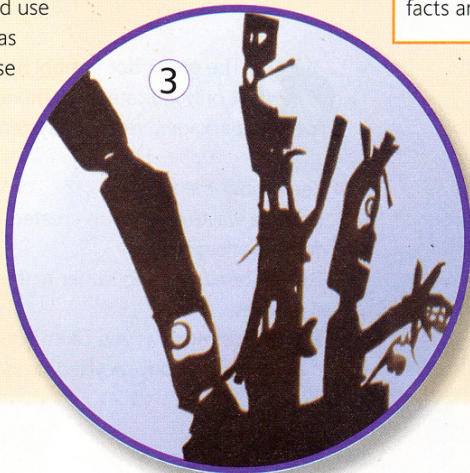
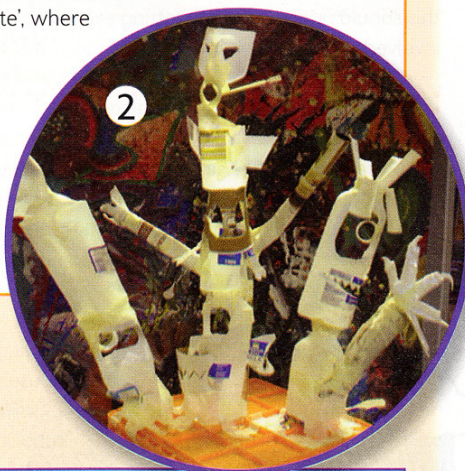
Support: Children who struggle to make secure structures can build a silhouette of a city skyline from cardboard boxes.

Extension: Children could sketch an outline of a creature onto paper, and gather a collection of textures such as corrugated cardboard. They should use wax crayons to make rubbings of the textures, then cut around the outline and mount the image onto recycled card.



ICT link

Visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk and go to the 'fun and games' section. Choose 'Resources and waste', where you'll find animated clips about waste, reuse and recycle information, as well as downloadable PDFs and environmental facts and figures.



Curriculum links

NC: Geography 1a, b, c

QCA: Geography Unit 8 – Improving the environment



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