

LESSON 5: Promo and Play on Composting

LESSON'S CONCEPT

People can reduce the volume of household solid waste that goes to landfills by composting organic waste and then using the compost to enrich soil.

PURPOSE

Students encourage others to compost organic waste as they complete compost-related projects and produce a play about the importance of composting.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will:

- Complete a project on some aspect of composting to make others aware of the importance of composting.
- Write, rehearse, and perform a play, “By the Skins of Our Bananas,” to encourage people to divert their food waste through composting.

CORRELATIONS TO CALIFORNIA'S CONTENT STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS

- Students complete a project to make others aware of the importance of composting.
 - Students “choose the form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, report, narrative) that best suits the intended purpose.” (*English–Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, page 37)
- Students work together to write a play

about the importance of composting.

- Students “select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements.” (*English–Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, page 23)
- Students perform the play they wrote.
 - “Students convey the emotional qualities of given characters through simple dramatizations.” (*Visual and Performing Arts Framework, Theatre Education: Creative Expression Component, Goal 3*, page 83)

SCIENTIFIC THINKING PROCESSES

observing, communicating, ordering, relating

TIME

20–30 minutes to prepare for the lesson; 60 minutes per day for a week to implement the lesson

VOCABULARY

Select vocabulary words that students come across as they complete their projects and the play.

PREPARATION

- ___ 1. Read the “Background Information for the Teacher” on page 497.
- ___ 2. If possible, videotape some commercials targeted for children. For example, tape some samples from Saturday morning cartoons.
- ___ 3. Make a copy of “Project Proposal Form” for each group of students (page 499).
- ___ 4. Make a transparency of “The Recycling Logo” (page 498).
- ___ 5. Make several copies of “Outline of the Play, By the Skins of Our Bananas” (pages 500-502).

MATERIALS

- ___ Paper
- ___ Drawing materials
- ___ Samples of child-centered logos and slogans from newspaper and magazine advertisements
- ___ A copy of the “Project Proposal Form” for each group of students
- ___ Several copies of “Outline of the Play, By the Skins of Our Bananas”
- ___ The transparency of “The Recycling Logo”

Note: The play will require costumes, scenery, and some props. The specific materials needed for the play will depend on the script written by the students. However, the emphasis should be on good action and dialogue, not on fancy props. Be certain to encourage students to use recyclables, existing materials, and reusable materials—try to avoid new materials—to maintain the spirit of the play’s message.

PRE-ACTIVITY QUESTIONS

- A. Pretend to be an advertising executive looking for new television (TV) advertisements.
 - Ask students what they know about commercials.
 - Show them a couple of commercials taped from a children’s TV show.
 - Ask them what they remember from the commercials.
 - Introduce slogans and logos.
 - Show the advertisements again and ask them to raise their hands each time they see a logo or hear a slogan.
- B. Discuss with students some other well-known slogans and logos. Show students

the transparency of “The Recycling Logo.” Ask students:

- What does the recycling logo represent? *It represents an endless cycling of materials.*
 - What makes it effective? *It is seen everywhere; it is simple.*
 - What does each arrow mean? *The first is don’t throw away what can be put in the recycling bin; recycle it! The second is remanufacturing the recyclables. The third is buying recycled goods, which closes the loop. This process is a cycle.*
 - How does this symbol apply to composting? *When composting, we recycle; and when we use the compost, we close the loop.*
- C. Discuss and write students’ ideas on the chalkboard.
 - How can we get others to compost?
 - How can we sell compost?

Homework Assignment: Ask students to bring in advertisements from magazines or newspapers and to identify the products, ideas, or programs which are being promoted.

- D. After students have brought some advertisements to class, discuss the following:
 - What is the image or idea used to convince people to buy the product, idea, or program?
 - What audience is being targeted in particular; e.g., children, teenagers, women, people who own pets?
 - What logos or slogans are used?

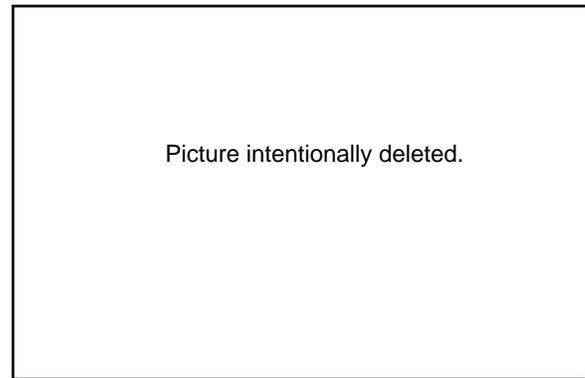
PROCEDURE

Part I, Completing Compost-Related Projects

- A. Ask students to select one of the projects on composting listed below and to work in groups to implement it. Students can also develop one of their own ideas for a project. Provide a copy of the “Project Proposal Form” for each group.
 1. Create a logo and/or slogan to encourage people to compost.
 2. Create a logo and/or slogan for packaged compost that can be sold as a fund-raiser. (The profits can be used to beautify the school grounds.)

3. Design a package made of recycled materials or reused materials for compost that will be sold. For example, decorate the outside of milk cartons to use as containers for compost.
4. Use compost to enhance soil in planter boxes or the school's garden.
5. Create a brochure and include the following information: What is compost? Why compost? How to compost. Questions and answers about compost.
6. Prepare a "Composting Fact Sheet" and distribute these to classmates and family members.
7. Educate younger students about composting. For example, develop a children's book explaining why and how to compost. (Encourage students to look at other children's books first.)
8. Design posters to display around the school or town about the importance of composting. Students should first brainstorm why people should know about composting. Then they should decide what people should know about composting and develop posters with logos and slogans that advertise one of the key concepts. For example:
 - Kitchen scraps and garden waste can be mixed with soil and decomposed by decomposers to produce compost.
 - Compost is rich in organic matter and soil nutrients and can be used as a soil amendment.
 - Composting kitchen scraps and yard waste saves space in landfills.
9. Decorate compost buckets for the cafeteria to be used for food waste collection.
10. Research, design, and make an outdoor composting bin.
11. Research what other schools are doing concerning compost. Surf the internet for information.
12. Conduct experiments using compost to grow plants.
13. Grow something in compost.

14. Ask students how they could set up a composting bin at school. Ask them to write the pros and cons of doing so.



Students in Carolyn Ann Weiss's fifth-grade class at Jefferson Elementary School give a report to the class about the project on composting that they completed.

- B. When students have completed their projects, display their work around the school or conduct an event in which students can share their projects with other students.
 - C. Discuss with students:
 - How do any of the projects that students did (e.g., designing slogans and logos) help to advertise the importance of composting?
 - What do you think other students will notice about the projects?
- Homework Assignment:** Ask students to write about the importance of composting.
- D. Have students share their homework assignments.

Part II, Producing the Play, "By the Skins of Our Bananas"

Note: Students will write and present the play, "By the Skins of Our Bananas." Make certain to use the talents of everyone in the class—those who are good in art, writing, acting, singing (if you choose to have music), and overall creativity. Try to videotape the play so students are better able to understand the message they are supposed to be conveying and can make adjustments before the final production. Invite a parent or volunteer to help students with the play.

- A. Provide copies of the "Outline of the Play, By the Skins of Our Bananas" and allow students to review these. Note that included in the outline of the play are a story idea, a list of characters, and some suggestions for costumes and scenes.



Two buckets painted by students are used in the lunchroom at Cesar Chavez Elementary School.

B. The following are recommended steps that students might want to go through for producing the play. The “Outline of the Play, By the Skins of Our Bananas” can be used as a guide.

1. **Writing the play:** Students should begin by deciding what message they want to convey, who the audience will be, and roughly how many minutes the play will last. Once these decisions are made, a writing team can begin sketching out ideas, based on the existing outline. Students should write stage directions and dialogue for each character.

Throughout this process, the playwrights should make certain that their script is adaptable to the spoken word. The lines should be easy to say and realistic in terms of who is saying them. One way to make certain that the play works well verbally is to read it out loud at regular intervals throughout the writing process and to make revisions, as necessary. The overall challenge is to craft a play that will be both entertaining and informative.

2. **Casting the characters:** Once the script is finished, students can begin casting the characters. Through this process students are matched with characters in the play.
3. **Rehearsing the play:** Once the characters have been cast, it is time to begin rehearsing. Under the leadership of the stage director, the cast will begin to work through the play, practicing the lines and rehearsing the accompanying actions.

4. **Making the props:** At the time the cast is rehearsing, the stage crew should construct the necessary props and scenery. These preparations will culminate in a dress rehearsal in which the cast and the stage crew run through the entire play together.
5. **Performing the play:** Once all the preparations are complete, the students will perform their play for another class or for the rest of the school.

DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS

After the performance, ask students the following questions:

- A. What was the Everybody Family’s understanding about solid waste at the beginning of the play? *The family was not aware of the solid waste problem and what it could do to lessen the amount of trash that goes to landfills.*
- B. What was the Everybody Family like at the end of the play? *The family realized how easy it is to keep organic waste from going into the landfill by composting.*
- C. Have you seen anyone in your life who acts like the Everybody Family at the beginning or the end of the play? What were they doing that reminded you of the Everybody Family? *Yes, my family now recycles and we want to get a worm bin. I have friends that do not think that solid waste is a problem.*
- D. What is the difference between organic waste in a compost pile and organic waste in a landfill? *When organic waste is composted, it can be used to enhance soil, which in turn provides nutrients for plants to grow. When organic waste goes to the landfill, it will not be used to enhance soil but remains in the landfill and is essentially “wasted.”*
- E. What was the most important part of the play for you?
- F. What were the major problems and solutions that you encountered while writing the play or making the production materials? *Costumes, props, sets, writing the big ideas for the play. What do you think caused these problems? The playwrighting process itself was difficult, because we had never written a play before. We had to learn to work as a team and realize that we were all important, whether we had a leading role or not.*
- G. How did parents, teachers, students, and others respond to the production?

- H. What would you do differently the next time you take on a project like this? *We would write it differently. We would try to find a play that was already written and concentrate on producing the play. We would write the play and then direct another class to perform it.*

APPLICATION

- A. In this lesson the projects themselves allow students to apply what they have learned in this unit.
- B. Discuss with students how they know whether the message in their play got across to the audience.

Project Idea: Have students develop a composting plan for the school. Encourage the class to develop a test to see whether students are properly disposing of food waste.

EXTENSION

Before presenting the play to the school, coordinate with the food service staff to have students collect waste from the cafeteria at one lunch period. Place two types of clearly marked containers where the trash cans are typically located: one for food waste and one for nonfood waste.

Make certain that this activity is announced to all students eating lunch both at the beginning and toward the end of the lunch period; explain the reason for doing it.

- Weigh the food waste and the nonfood waste generated. Go through the nonfood waste to determine how much of the waste could have been recycled.
- Students could present this information to other classes to educate them.
- Repeat this process after the play is presented at school and compare the results.

RESOURCE

Environmental Education Compendium for Integrated Waste Management and Used Oil. Sacramento: California Department of Education and California Integrated Waste Management Board, 1999. Copies are available through the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

Contains information about and evaluations of many curricula on waste management and used oil.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

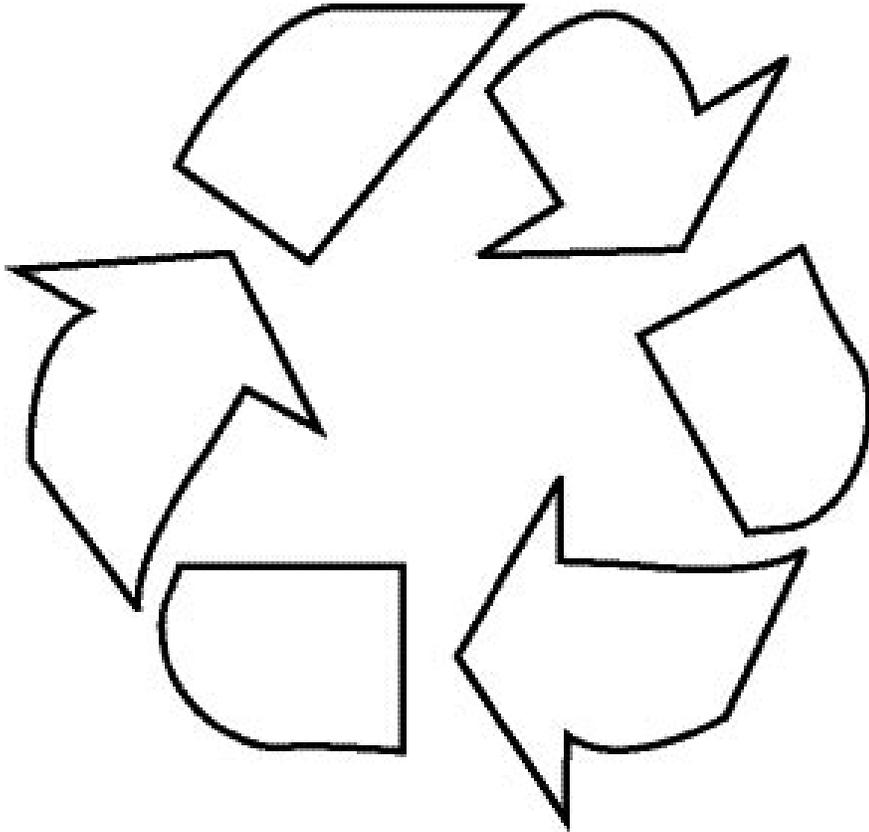
For centuries, people have used posters with pictures, and often with slogans on them in order to advertise products, ideas, or a program. Pictures can show an ideal of some sort, whether it is of physical beauty, good health, or an image of a healthy environment and the actions that go along with it. These ideals, associated with a product, idea, or program are meant to sway one's thoughts about the product, idea, or program so they will buy or accept it. A play can also be used as a form of advertisement.

Slogans (catchy phrases) and logos (simple symbols) are valuable because they promote a program with a simple symbolic representation. They are attractive and grab one's attention. They stimulate instant recall and promote personal identification with the program.

In this lesson students will complete a project to teach others about composting and will also write a play about the importance of composting.

Transparency

THE RECYCLING LOGO



PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Project name: _____

What is your project? Briefly describe your project in complete sentences:

What will your project look like? Draw a sketch.

What materials will you need? List them.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

OUTLINE OF THE PLAY, BY THE SKINS OF OUR BANANAS

Comedy About a (Possible) Tragedy

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Banana Bunch

- Beulah—strong-willed, loud-voiced, a leader
- Bitsy—shy, sweet, small-voiced
- Biggy—big but very agile and sweet tempered
- Bopper—a rocker, a roller
- Blamid—an artist, a dreamer
- Bubba—a joke-teller, a clown
- Bix—musical, mature, easy (This character has a saxophone, clarinet, and flutaphone—wind instrument of choice, real or imagined; the sounds from it are real or vocalized by Bix to sound like the instrument he or she plays.)

They are all dressed as bananas. Being dressed as a banana is hard work, so part of the charm of each character is dealing with the costume while staying in character.

The Landfill

Approximately ten students whose roles are unspoken but central to the play. They are dressed in black trash bag tunics and wear plastic mesh potato or onion sacks over their heads, with the face area cut out in a rectangle so that the audience can see their ever shifting expressions. Throughout the play they stand in a semicircle, absolutely still; they look straight ahead at the audience, never at each other. Their faces bear unhappiness and misery; they are continuously changing, from scowl to scariness, then boredom, anything unpleasant.

The Compost Heap

Approximately ten students who are dressed in newspaper tunics and wear hats adorned with flowers, grasses, wheat, leaves, and other natural materials. Throughout the play they stand in a semicircle and sway gently, their faces full of happiness and pleasure, their expressions continuously changing as they look at each other and at the audience, one bright, content face after another.

The Everybody Family

- Everybody mom
- Everybody dad
- Everybody brother
- Everybody sister

They are dressed in street clothes. They begin as environmentally disrespectful, irresponsible waste-generators and, in the course of the play, grow to become responsible stewards of the Earth's natural resources, beginning with composting banana skins.

The Recycling Worm

Male or female, the Recycling Worm is dressed in recyclables from head to feet. (The challenge to props and costumes is to fashion a body suit and cape that will be both hilarious and instructive; as a suggestion, leaves and other objects representing compost can be pinned to the cape.) The Recycling Worm wiggles, crawls, and gestures. The worm is patient and loving, but firm about getting the Everybody Family to do its part.

The Plants

Several bright flowers

A tree

THE PLOT

The Bananas all want their skins to go to a compost heap, not a landfill. They know that their skins will become part of some wonderful new plant some day. But in the landfill, nothing good will come of them. They will just sit there for years, uselessly. Because the Everybody Family is not informed about composting, nor makes wise choices concerning natural resources, the family throws everything in the trash to go to the landfill.

The Banana Bunch decides to call on the Recycling Worm to help educate the Everybody Family about the virtues of composting and the vices of landfilling those items that can be composted.

In the end the Everybody Family—young and old—understand the importance of composting and begin to run an environmentally responsible household. One by one the banana skins jump gleefully into the compost pile. Immediately afterward, a bright flower and a tree grow up out of the pile.

All is well. The Bananas are together in the compost, and the members of the Everybody Family are model recyclers and waste reducers. The Recycling Worm squirms happily through the audience passing out instructions on how to compost.

SCENE 1

Takes place at a table in the Everybody Family's kitchen. The Banana Bunch all sit "bunched" together, apparently joined at their heads to a common stem. They separate as each disengages to get up and present his or her perspective about wanting his or her banana skin to go to the compost heap, not the landfill, after being used by one of the members of the Everybody Family on breakfast cereals.

The four members of the Everybody Family come in and eat breakfast. Then they throw everything into one trash can, including the banana peels. This is clearly a household waiting for a visit from the Recycling Worm.

SCENE 2

The next day in the Everybody Family’s kitchen.

All over the table and floor are pieces of “trash” that they threw into the garbage can. The family members come into the kitchen and are shocked by what they see. The Recycling Worm explains that all of this trash was in the garbage can on its way to the landfill, yet there are items in that trash that could have been reused, and most of the food waste, like the banana peels, could have been composted. “What’s composted?” asks an Everybody.

“What’s the problem?” asks another Everybody.

“Come with me and let me show you a landfill and a compost heap,” says the Recycling Worm.

SCENE 3

The Recycling Worm leads the Everybody Family to the next scene. They watch the conflict between the landfill and the compost heap.

The semicircle of the landfill and the semicircle of the compost heap are the two central images on stage. It is here that the play’s main conflict and action take place. The landfill wants the banana peels and so does the compost heap. Each offers reasons why the banana peels should be in placed in its area. With the help of Recycling Worm as a mediator, they eventually come to a compromise. The compost heap will get all of the food waste, and the landfill will get all the nonreusable and nonrecyclable items. After all, if the landfill becomes too big too fast and fills up, no more waste will be taken to it.

SCENE 4

Back in the Everybody Family’s kitchen.

Everybodys are sorting their trash, checking with the audience as to where each piece of trash should go. The Recycling Worm, the compost heap, and the landfill look on. All are smiling.

One of the Everybodys places all the banana peels in the compost heap. The Recycling Worm waves a wand and turns the banana peels into compost. Immediately afterward, a bright flower and a tree grow up out of the pile.

All participants clap.