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## TALKING TRASH

For many children (and adults), trash is often out of sight, out of mind. But when we throw our trash out, where is it? According to *Trash Talk*, by Amy Tilmont and others, “On average, people in the United States create 4.4 pounds (2 kilograms) of garbage a day, and every bit of it has to go somewhere.” The books in this annotated bibliography explore a range of trash-related issues, including how trash is picked up, the problems around the world that too much trash has created, and ways to reduce and reuse the trash we produce. A few even touch upon the magical possibilities of trash. Together, these titles help children see the difference they can make in cleaning up the planet and disposing of trash responsibly.

### Picture Books

**Bag in the Wind.** By Ted Kooser. Illus. by Barry Root. 2010. 48p. Candlewick, \$17.99 (9780763630010). Gr. 1–3.

Set against a spare, plains landscape, Kooser’s story follows a plastic bag as it travels from landfill, to tree, to stream, and among the various citizens of a nearby town. Root’s muted gouache illustrations are a perfect complement to Kooser’s text, which celebrates not only the virtues of economy and ecology but, moreover, the interconnectedness of all things.

**Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth.** By Mary McKenna Siddals. Illus. by Ashley Wolff. 2010. 32p. Tricycle, \$15.99 (9781582463162); lib. ed., \$18.99 (9781582463414). PreS–Gr. 2.

Detailed gouache and collage artwork of children in action illustrates this alphabetical look at ways to turn organic household trash into compost. Simple, rhyming text (“Jack-o’-lanterns / Kitchen scraps / Laundry lint from dryer traps”) gives numerous examples of items to save for a composting bin.

**The Dumpster Diver.** By Janet S. Wong. Illus. by David Roberts. 2007. 32p. Candlewick, \$16.99 (9780763623807). Gr. 1–3.

“Our neighbor Steve the Electrician dives for buried treasure right smack here in our backstreet alley” begins this title

about recycling and reuse. Grown-up Steve enlists a “Diving Team” of children, who invent ways to reuse his finds, including a blender lava lamp. Wong’s dry humor and Roberts’ kinetic artwork keep things light, but teachers will find plenty of topics for class discussion, especially the value of creative conservation.

**Here Comes the Garbage Barge!** By Jonah Winter. Illus. by Red Nose Studio. 2010. 40p. Random/Schwartz & Wade, \$17.99 (9780375852183); lib. ed., \$20.99 (9780375952180). Gr. 1–3.

Innovative photographs of polymer-clay models and found materials put a humorous spin on this slightly fictionalized account of a 1987 incident in which a Long Island town tried to send more than 3,000 tons of trash down to North Carolina. Instead, the scruffy captain is refused at port after port—all the way down to Belize—until the trash ends up back where it started.

**I Stink!** By Kate McMullan. Illus. by Jim McMullan. 2002. 40p. HarperCollins, \$17.99 (9780060298487); paper, \$6.99 (9780064438360). PreS–Gr. 3.

A revved-up, personified city garbage truck tells readers that he eats their trash while they’re asleep. His alphabet-soup diet includes everything from apple cores to puppy poo to zipped-up ziti with zucchini. With words that pop off the page and illustrations rendered in heavy colors and dark backgrounds, this humorous story also explains where we’d be without him: “on Mount Trash-o-rama, baby.”

**Joseph Had a Little Overcoat.** By Simms Taback. Illus. by the author. 1999. 40p. Viking, \$16.99 (9780670878550). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this Caldecott Medal-winning edition of a title that was first published in 1977, Joseph makes a jacket from his old, worn coat. When the jacket wears out, he makes a vest, and so on, until he has only enough fabric to cover a button. Based on a Yiddish song, the simple text underscores the goal of creative reuse, rather than just throwing things away.

**My Forever Dress.** By Harriet Ziefert. Illus. by Liz Murphy. 2009. 40p. Blue Apple, \$16.99 (9781934706459). K–Gr. 2.

A thrifty and creative grandmother sews a party dress for her six-year-old granddaughter. Over the next several years, they help the environment by recycling the dress in various ways (e.g., wearing leggings and adding more fabric) rather than throwing it away as the girl grows taller. Patterned collage illustrations add pockets of color and texture as they also reinforce the theme.

# Book Links

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:  
TALKING TRASH WITH BOOKS FOR KIDS  
BY ANGELA LEEPER

**Recycle Every Day!** By Nancy Elizabeth Wallace. Illus. by the author. 2003. 32p. Marshall Cavendish, \$16.95 (9780761451495); paper, \$5.95 (9780761452904). K–Gr. 2.

When Minna, a bunny, has to make a poster about recycling for the Community Recycling Calendar Contest, the whole bunny family pitches in every day to give her ideas, from turning yard waste into compost to donating used books to a local book bank. Accompanied by collage art from recycled papers and materials, the text ends with recycling activities and a game.

**Stuff! Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.** By Steven Kroll. Illus. by Steve Cox. 2009. 32p. Marshall Cavendish, \$16.99 (9780761455707). PreS–Gr. 2.

Pinch is not a pack rat in name only; his hoarding habits have left his house overflowing with stuff. In this light story, illustrated with colorful digital art, his animal friends convince him to have a tag sale to make some extra money. When his friends later suggest using the money to buy a new tree for their community, Pinch realizes the real value of the three Rs—reduce, reuse, recycle.

**The Terrible Trash Trail: Eco-Pig Stops Pollution.** By Lisa S. French. Illus. by Barry Gott. 2009. 32p. ABDO/Magic Wagon, lib. ed., \$19.95 (9781602706637); e-book, \$19.95 (9781602709164). PreS–Gr. 2.

When Eco-Pig discovers that his town is covered in discarded trash, he convinces the culprit to join his crew, begin recycling, and keep not only their town but the entire earth litter-free. Brightly colored digital designs illustrate this rhyming Eco-Pig title, which ends with a glossary, “Green Facts,” and practical ecotips for students.

**Trashy Town.** By Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha. Illus. by Dan Yaccarino. 1999. 32p. HarperCollins, \$17.99 (9780060271398). PreS–K.

Bold, geometric artwork illustrates this now-classic story of Mr. Gilly, the trashman, who cleans up trash around such familiar town locales as the school, park, and fire station and then comes home to clean up himself. The simple, repetitive text encourages a choral response from young listeners.

## Novels

**Just Grace Goes Green.** By Charise Mericle Harper. Illus. by the author. 2009. 192p. Houghton, \$16 (9780618959570); paper, \$4.99 (9780547248219); e-book, \$4.99 (9780547391649). Gr. 2–5.

Grace learns how to “go green” in this lively installment in

the Just Grace series featuring short, snappy sentences and lots of small, black-and-white cartoons. As Grace becomes concerned about pollution, the text offers specific suggestions that kids can do, from recycling and decorating plastic bottles to helping save endangered red pandas and switching off lights at home.

**Trash.** By Andy Mulligan. 2010. 240p. Random/David Fickling, \$16.99 (9780385752145); e-book, \$8.99 (9780375898433). Gr. 6–9.

In an unidentified Third World city, Rat, Raphael, and Gardo live with thousands of other kids like them in a garbage dump, where they dig through the detritus looking for anything that could be profitable. When an important person loses something valuable in the refuse, the three boys embark on an engrossing mystery, told from multiple perspectives.

## Turning Trash into Treasure

Filled with hands-on suggestions, these ecofriendly titles will help students experience the fun of creative reuse.

**Earth-Friendly Crafts: Clever Ways to Reuse Everyday Items.** By Kathy Ross. Illus. by Céline Malépart. 2009. 48p. Millbrook, paper, \$7.95 (9780761374091); lib. ed., \$26.60 (9780822590996); e-book, \$39.93 (9780761351931). 745.5. Gr. 3–6.

Commonly discarded items, such as marker caps, puzzle pieces, and greeting cards, can be transformed into decorative craft projects with the help of this easy-to-follow book.

**Make It! Don't Throw It Away—Create Something Amazing!** By Jane Bull. Rev. ed., 2011. 64p. illus. DK, \$12.99 (9780756682286); e-book, \$7.99 (9780756643867). 745.5. Gr. 1–5.

Following an introduction to recycling, Bull groups dozens of craft projects by their reusable base: paper, plastic, metal, and fabric.

**ReMake It! Recycling Projects from the Stuff You Usually Scrap.** By Tiffany Threadgould. 2011. 128p. illus. Sterling, paper, \$12.95 (9781402771941). 745.5. Gr. 3–up.

Almost 100 projects, from a simple ice-cream-container bank to a more elaborate CD lampshade, make recycling household items a fun activity.

**What Can You Do with an Old Red Shoe? A Green Activity Book about Reuse.** By Anna Alter. Illus. by the author. 2009. 32p. Holt/Christy Ottaviano, \$16.95 (9780805082906). 745.5. Gr. 1–3.

A rhyming poem and adorable animal illustrations introduce simple crafts made from an old shoe, broken crayons, an outdated calendar, and other reusable items.

# Book Links

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## Informational Books

**Garbage:** Investigate What Happens When You Throw It Out with 25 Projects. By Donna Latham. Illus. by Beth Hetland. 2011. 128p. Nomad, paper, \$15.95 (9781936313464). 363.72. Gr. 4–6.

Through 25 activities and experiments, students learn about today's throwaway society, where trash is taken after it leaves homes and businesses, hazardous waste, and the four Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, and rethink) of trash. Also packed into this Build It Yourself title are "Trash Flash" facts, more tips for reducing waste, a glossary, a bibliography, and a list of related websites.

**Human Footprint:** Everything You Will Eat, Use, Wear, Buy, and Throw Out in Your Lifetime. By Ellen Kirk. 2011. 32p. illus. National Geographic, paper, \$6.95 (9781426307676). 304.2. Gr. 3–7.

Based on the National Geographic documentary of the same title, this eye-catching book uses double-page, color photographs to represent what Americans consume and throw away, including 694 plastic bottles per second and, individually, 3,796 disposable diapers in a lifetime. Sidebars add more facts and suggestions for reducing these numbers and saving the planet.

**Magic Trash:** A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art. By J. H. Shapiro. Illus. by Vanessa Brantley-Newton. 2011. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$15.95 (9781580893855). 709.2. Gr. 2–4.

Fascinated with found art since youth, artist Tyree Guyton returns to his Heidelberg Street neighborhood in Michigan and uses art to transform the ailing community. Rhyming refrains add punch to this picture-book biography, complemented by vibrant, mixed-media illustrations featuring found objects.

**Recycling:** Reducing Waste. By Buffy Silverman. 2008. 48p. illus. Heinemann, paper, \$8.99 (9781432911065); lib. ed., \$32 (9781432910907). 363.72. Gr. 4–6.

As this Do It Yourself title encourages students to think about where their trash goes and explains methods of recycling, it also includes several recycling activities, such as determining which materials are biodegradable and discovering how cans are sorted before they are recycled. A glossary, a bibliography, and related websites and organizations round out the text.

**Tracking Trash:** Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion. By Loree Griffin Burns. 2007. 64p. illus. Houghton, \$18 (9780618581313); paper, \$8.99 (9780547328607). 551.46. Gr. 7–10.

This Scientists in the Field book looks at separate ships

carrying sneakers and bathtub toys that spilled overboard and the two oceanographers who devised experiments to predict the landfall of these drifting objects. A final section describes the mounting problem of plastic trash in the oceans and shows how this debris is destructive to marine life.

**Trash Talk:** What You Throw Away. By Amy Tilmont and others. 2011. 48p. illus. Norwood, lib. ed., \$19.95 (9781599534596); e-book, \$19.95 (9781603573467). 363.72. Gr. 4–6.

Emphasizing trash as a global problem, this Second Nature title presents various waste issues, such as floating garbage in the Pacific, seepage in landfills, and refuse floating in space. It looks both at the historical treatment of trash and how scientists are developing ways to combat the growing problem. A glossary, a bibliography, and further resources conclude the text.

**Waste and Pollution.** By Rufus Bellamy. 2010. 48p. illus. Amicus, lib. ed., \$34.25 (9781607531395). 363.7. Gr. 5–7.

From greenhouse gases to contaminated drinking water to mountains of garbage, this Sustaining Our Environment title tackles the challenge of global waste and pollution and their effects on the environment. Case studies from around the world, such as "Is Nuclear Power Polluting?" and clean initiatives expand the topic. A glossary and a list of websites are included.

**Waste and Recycling.** By Sally Hewitt. 2008. 32p. illus. Crabtree, paper, \$8.95 (9780778741053); lib. ed., \$26.60 (9780778740988). 363.72. Gr. 3–5.

With this Green Team title, students learn how paper, plastic, cooking oil, and other waste items are produced and can then be recycled after use. Short case studies and "Action!" and "Challenge!" boxes offer a plethora of recycling ideas. A culminating recycling party as well as a glossary and a list of websites close out the book. Jen Green's *Garbage and Litter* (2010) provides similar information.

**Waste Management.** By Cheryl Jakab. 2010. 32p. illus. Marshall Cavendish, \$28.50 (9781608700936). 363.72. Gr. 4–6.

Using case studies—the Long Island barge that sailed for five months trying to find a landfill to unload its garbage; food-waste recycling in Alameda County, California; waste incinerators in Japan; and more—this Environment in Focus title looks at the dilemma of worldwide waste. It concludes with waste-reduction tips, waste-management websites, and a glossary.

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## Common Core Connections

Encourage hands-on learning and implement the Common Core State Standards with these interactive activities.

**In the Classroom:** Read J. H. Shapiro's *Magic Trash: A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art* aloud. Ask students to describe what they learned about Guyton and his work from both the text and from the illustrations. Next, have students collect unwanted classroom items (e.g., scrap paper, Popsicle sticks, and glue-stick caps) and household items (e.g., paper-towel rolls, buttons, and beads) to create a trash-to-treasure station. Follow with a classroom art show.

### Common Core Connections

- **RI.3.2.** Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

**In the Classroom:** Have students locate information about landfills in *Trash Talk*, by Amy Tilmont and others; *Waste and Pollution*, by Rufus Bellamy; *Waste and Recycling*, by Sally Hewitt; and *Waste Management*, by Cheryl Jakab. In written reports or in discussions, ask students to share what they've learned from their reading. Next, organize a hands-on activity to help students understand why landfills are filling up quickly. First, have them dig a large trench and line it with black plastic to simulate a landfill. Then, students will bury a plastic grocery bag, a plastic trash bag, and a plastic trash bag labeled as biodegradable, all filled with identical waste. They can make predictions about which bag will break down faster, check the progress of the bags every month, and record their results.

### Common Core Connections

- **RI.4.3.** Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
- **RI.4.9.** Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

**In the Classroom:** Read *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion*, by Loree Griffin Burns, and have students summarize several ways in which scientists in the book have recorded the movement

of trash. Just as oceanographers used experiments with floating trash to determine ocean currents, students can then simulate these findings by filling a small pool with water, spraying a handheld hose to create a current, and adding a plastic toy. They can also determine if such variables as heavier objects, seaweed, or saltwater make any changes.

### Common Core Connections

- **RI.4.1.** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **RI.5.2.** Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

**In the Classroom:** Share key spreads from Ellen Kirk's *Human Footprint: Everything You Will Eat, Use, Wear, Buy, and Throw Out in Your Lifetime* with students, and ask them to record information that they learn from both the text and the images. Next, have students record how many plastic bottles, newspapers, and other items their families use and throw out in a week and develop a chart based on their results. Teams of students can use their results to form a life-size display of consumed trash, modeled after Human Footprint, and present it to the entire school.

### Common Core Connections

- **RI.4.7.** Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

**In the Classroom:** Read Janet Wong's *The Dumpster Diver* aloud and follow with a discussion about the concept of Dumpster diving as it's described in the story, in both text and images. Next, students can find out what mysteries await in their own classroom and household trash. After salvaging printed items from trash cans (or paper recycling bins), they can cut out random words and phrases and use them to create found poetry.

### Common Core Connections

- **RI.3.7.** Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).