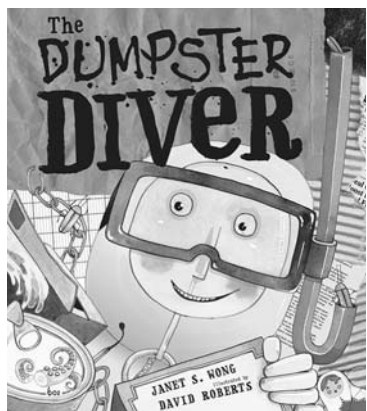


One person's junk is another person's treasure!

The Dumpster Diver: An Activity Guide

About the Book



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Janet Wong has written a delightful picture book about Steve, an electrician also known as the Dumpster Diver. He searches for treasure in a dumpster and transforms the “junk” he finds into innovative creations.

Simply Symbolic

Ask students to draw the recycle symbol (three arrows in a circular formation). As a homework assignment, have them search their pantry and refrigerator for items with that symbol. Have them bring their lists of items to school to share and discuss. Encourage students to turn the recycle symbol into a work of art of its own, perhaps by including drawings of the items from their homework lists or by gluing on pictures cut out of magazines.

Good Neighbor, Good Junk, Goodwill

Steve and his friends have many ideas for reusing an old computer but finally decide to give it to a neighbor who needs it to practice her typing. Discuss the notion of goodwill and generosity. Ask students if they or their parents have ever done something nice for someone in need. What was it? Establish a class campaign to collect and donate old clothing to Goodwill Industries International or a similar organization. As an extension or prelude to this activity, you could have students research the history of Goodwill or of whichever organization you choose.

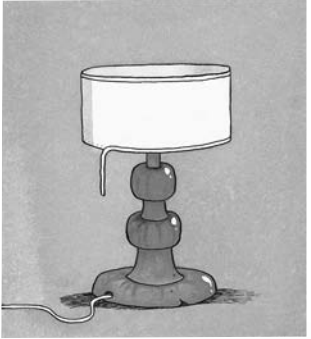
In the Classroom

The Dumpster Diver opens the door for classroom discussion regarding the environment, recycling, and creativity. The activities in this guide also explore themes of friendship, teamwork, and goodwill. If you really want to have some fun, dress up like the Dumpster Diver to launch this unit on recycling.

Are You Sure You Want to Throw That Away?

Begin with a classroom discussion about recycling. Why is it important to recycle? What effect does it have on the environment? Ask students to list the types of items that need to be recycled (such as paper and plastic). Start a school-wide campaign to recycle. Have students make “Are You Sure You Want to Throw That Away?” posters to hang around the school. They can also create buttons, banners, and flyers to aid in the campaign.





What Happens to My Garbage?

Have the class brainstorm the answer to the question above. Where do recycled items go? What about trash that is not recycled? Does it go to the compost, a landfill? Try to get a local representative to come to the school and talk to the class about this topic. If no one can come, research the answers together as a class. For example, write a class letter to the local sanitation department.

Are You Full of Junk?

The Grouch, who lives next door to Steve, thinks Steve's apartment is full of junk. Have students survey their parents and/or grandparents to see if they are junk collectors. You can create a survey together as a class. Some sample questions may include the following: Have you ever collected items that some consider junk? If so, what are/were they? Are there items in your house or garage that should get thrown away? What are they? Did you ever come up with a creative reuse of an everyday item?

A Delightful Redesign

Steve and his friends transform an old blender into a lamp and an old lamp into a table. Challenge students to invent new uses for common household items such as old clocks, toasters, or sports equipment. Have them draw and write about their transformations.

Anything You Want

A table + two skateboards + a ripped crib mattress + 32 screws + a roll of duct tape can become . . .

ANYTHING you want it to be! To prepare for this activity, collect a variety of used or broken items. Then practice teamwork by breaking the class up into groups of three or four and presenting each group with the opportunity to invent anything they want out of four or five discarded items. Discuss how each member of the team needs to have a specific role, just as Steve's friends do ("Johnny drew. Lina measured." p. 16).

Treasure of the Day

To help students continue to think about recycling, have them keep a Treasure of the Day Journal. Each page should have the following entry: Today I saw a _____, followed by ideas for reusing the observed item. Items could be natural objects, recyclable or reusable materials, or anything observed in their environment.

Garbage Art

Explain to students that art can take on many forms and that many media may be used. To prepare for this activity, collect an assortment of items that would otherwise be discarded, such as bottle caps, paper towel tubes, and broken pencils. Use the items you've collected to create unique pieces of art. You might want to collaborate with the school's art teacher for this activity.

