

LITTER AS A VISUAL POLLUTION PROBLEM

TEACHER NOTES

WRIGLEY – 'There's a Place for Everything' Unit Two

In this second unit we focus on the following ideas:

- litter as visual pollution in our local community
- how litter affects our enjoyment of a place and our feelings about being in that place
- litter encourages more litter – devising practical actions that the students can take to break the litter cycle.

We explore these ideas in the context of:

- 'green' areas of our environment such as parks and streams
- 'built' areas such as streets, shopping malls, town squares

Activities Related to Curriculum Areas

- **Social Sciences:** *Place and Environment, Social Inquiry*
- **English:** *Listening, Viewing, Speaking, Writing, Presenting*
- **The Arts:** *Communicating Ideas through Drama, Music and the Visual Arts*

Links to: *LEOTC, Mathematics, Science,*

TIME TO EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

Listening, Speaking, Writing and Presenting

- Remind students that when they began their litter and gum study they collected and displayed a week's school litter at assembly and presented a series of gum litter report graphs. As a class, discuss the following:
 - *How big a problem did they decide litter was at school?*
 - *The most common types of litter found – the worst offenders?*
 - *Are they more aware (they notice and see) of litter themselves than they were before? What has caused this awareness?*
 - *Have they made any special efforts personally to lessen the amount of litter they create – both at school and at home?*
 - *Have they noticed any changes in the amount of litter found around the school since their presentation?*
- Have each student write a short paragraph about their assessment of any changes noted in the playground. Have them focus on positive changes and actions they have seen, **eg**
 - *the lunch area outside is much cleaner now*
 - *we are pleased to see that lots of children are picking up litter and putting it in the bin.*
- Using a roster system, have several students at a time read out their positive statements at each school assembly to keep the message fresh in the minds of other students.

WHAT IS VISUAL POLLUTION?

- Introduce the idea that we usually think of pollution:
 - *as chemicals and farm run-off that poisons the environment, including streams, lakes and rivers*
 - *as smoke from factories, fires, and exhaust fumes from cars that harm the quality of the air we breathe.*

- Tell students that visual pollution is anything we think is unattractive and is spoiling the look of a landscape or an area. Point out that people can have different ideas about what visual pollution is. How do they feel about:
 - *wind turbines on hills to generate power*
 - *large billboards and advertising signs*
 - *a large modern sculpture in a street or a park?*
- Do students think that graffiti is another form of visual pollution? How big is the problem of tagging in the local community? In groups, have students list ways that graffiti spoils the look of a local community. Are there any other effects that graffiti can have? **eg**
 - *it costs home and building owners a lot of money to clean it up!*



- Have groups brainstorm a list of other forms of visual pollution. Report back. Is litter on their list? Do they agree that litter is a form of visual pollution? How does it spoil our local environment? Discuss.

HOW DO WE USE OUR LOCAL GREEN AREAS?

Maths Activity. Visual Arts Activity

- Introduce the concept of 'green areas' as places in a local community where people can enjoy recreational activities or just simply places where they can get away from it all!
- Can students say how a community benefits from having green areas? Identify the green areas in the local community such as: *streams; beaches; parks; bush areas; gardens ...*
- Conduct a school-wide survey to find out who uses these green areas and how they use them. Display results in bar graph and pie graph form. What do the graphs tell us? **eg**
 - *the green area/s that are used the most*
 - *the activities that are carried out in these areas*
- Have groups paint a co-operative mural of one of the local green areas that they enjoy. Take photos of them and make a wall display of the murals. Invite other classes to visit and explain to them the benefits of these green areas.
- Each group now covers their mural in a collage of common (clean) litter. How do they feel about this area now? Invite other classes back to view the murals? How do they now react?
- Have students consider how litter would affect people's enjoyment of these green areas.



A SAD SIGHT AT A LOCAL GREEN AREA

LITTER PILES UP ON BEAUTY SPOT ROADS

(Recent Dominion Post Newspaper Headline)

Atlas Skills. Mathematics

- Using atlases, trace the route from the Desert Road to Tirau. Point out that this area contains a World Heritage area, the Desert Road and National Park and the scenic Lake Taupo.
- Develop the idea that these are special green areas used by New Zealanders and thousands of overseas tourists.
- Tell students that contractors working for Transit New Zealand (the road people), pick up 3 cubic metres of litter on this stretch of State Highway 1, **every day**.
 - Measure out 3 cubic metres in the classroom, **eg** 3 metres high X 3 metres wide X 3 metres long
- Tell students that this is only litter found on the road and back one metre from the road markers – a lot of litter is not picked up as it is further back from the road than this. Calculate how much litter would accumulate in a week, month and year if it was not picked up daily. Speculate on the following:
 - How does it get there?
 - What impressions would tourists get about our country?
- Can the students come up with a very simple solution to prevent litter in these special areas? **eg**
 - taking a litter bag when going on a car journey and emptying it when they get home.

WE USE 'BUILT' AREAS TOO

- Introduce the idea that as well as green areas, our towns and cities have other important areas that people use and enjoy such as a shopping mall, civic squares, sport stadiums, playgrounds, train stations, bus stops, waterfronts, footpaths etc. These are often called 'built' areas. Why are they given this name? Discuss.
- Brainstorm and list all the built areas in the local district and how people use them. Why do they think it is just as important to keep built areas free of litter as it is for green areas?
- As a class or as a homework assignments, have students visit local built areas and take careful note of the amount and type of litter found (Note: students shouldn't touch the litter). Chewing gum litter is particularly noticeable in the built environment. Discuss with the class that unlike other litter which can be more easily removed, chewing gum litter, as well as sticking to our clothes and shoes, sticks to the pavement and stains it and needs special equipment to remove it.
- Using a bar graph, students can compare the different kinds of litter found and present to the class. Count each blob/stain...

...of gum as 1 piece of gum litter. Because gum is not biodegradable (it doesn't break down in the sun), gum litter accumulates until someone scrapes it off or steams it off which is very expensive.

- In groups have students discuss and answer the following questions. *How does litter affect our enjoyment of being in a green or built area? How do they personally feel about being there if it is covered with litter? Why do you think people litter? What can be done about it?*

THINKING ABOUT SLOGANS

Speaking, Writing, Visual Arts

- Talk about the use of slogans – what are they and why do we use them? Introduce students to the idea that a slogan is an easy-to-remember and catchy way to get a message across. Brainstorm a quick list of easily remembered slogans such as: *Slip Slap Slop, Make it Click, Keep New Zealand Beautiful ...*
- Tell the students that Wrigley – the chewing gum manufacturer has been asking people since 1933 (75 yrs) to wrap up their used gum and put it in a bin. A slogan they use to get this message out is **BIN IT**.
- Challenge the class to come up with simple and catchy slogans of their own to get out the anti litter (visual pollution) message to all the classes in the school. Try humorous slogans as well.
- Take a class vote on the top ten slogans and design and paint colourful and eye-catching posters for display around the school and in all classrooms.

DRAMA AND MUSIC CHALLENGES

- Introduce the idea that while slogans will help us get the anti-litter message out to all the students at school, we need to develop other exciting and interesting ways to keep the message fresh in their minds. Try the following group and individual activities

MINI DRAMAS and MOVEMENT SEQUENCES

- Script and write mini dramas to perform for different class levels that show positive anti-litter behaviour, **eg**
 - a car journey where they stop for food and drinks and have a rubbish bag in the car to empty at home
 - a puppet show for junior classes where litter is declared public enemy number 1
 - the untidy town that cleaned up its act
 - a dance, drum and chant sequence using positive anti-litter slogans.

MUSIC CHALLENGES

- change the words of a well-known song to turn it into an anti-litter song for all classes to learn and sing it at the school assembly
- run a school-wide competition to compose anti-litter raps
- become creatives at advertising agencies and compose anti-litter radio and television jingles
- compose sound pictures using clean litter such as plastic bottles, paper, tins etc.