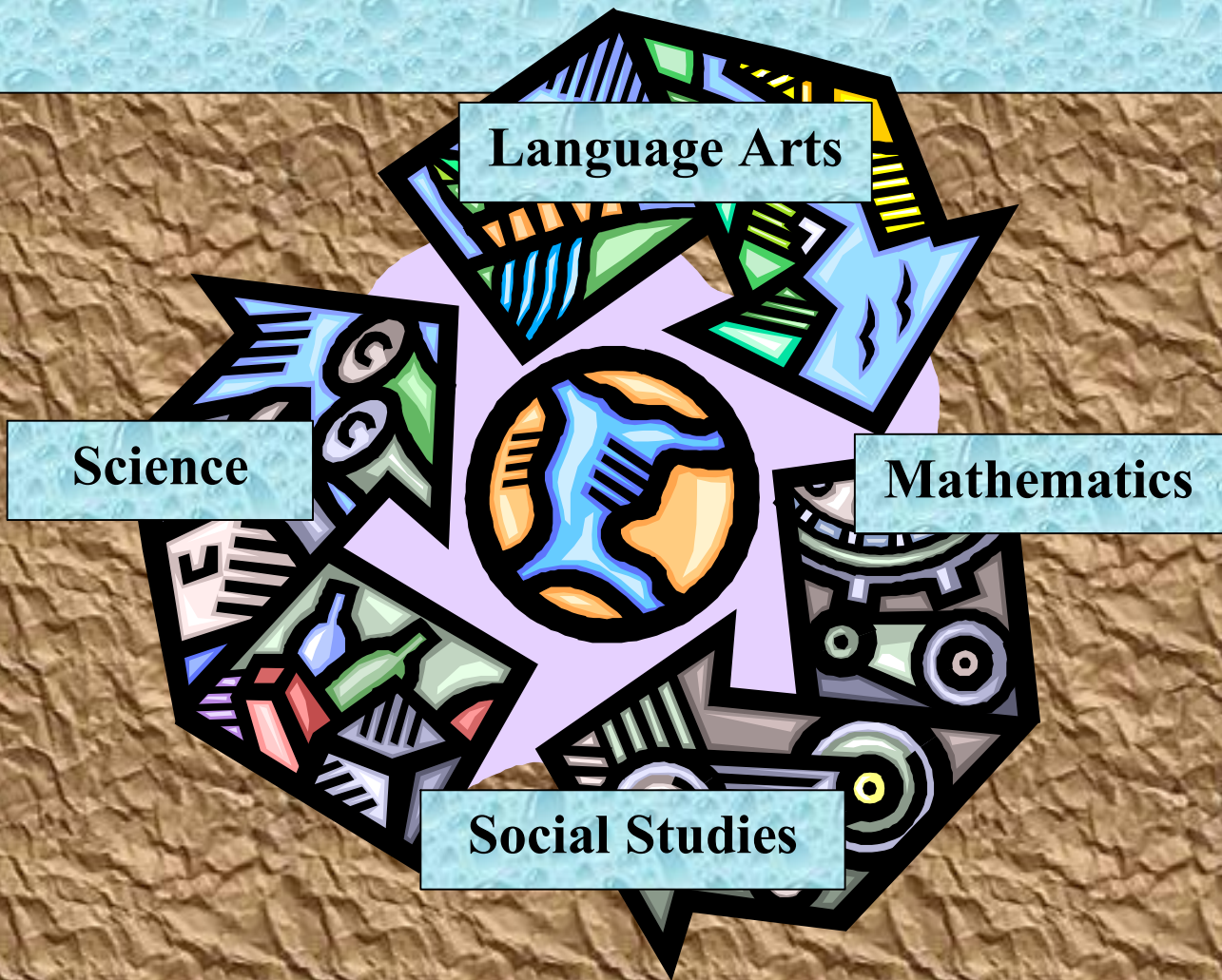


Garbology

A Thematic Unit about Trash

By Nancy L. Wilkinson



Garbology
Social Studies Activities
Lesson 18
A Cafeteria Problem

Objective:

Students will investigate a problem and create a solution.

Materials:

Internet access if available or a telephone to call local supply stores and recycling centers.

Opener:

Show the students a Styrofoam, a plastic and a hard plastic lunch tray. The hard plastic is the type of tray that is washed.

Activity:

- 1) Tell the students that the school cafeteria cannot decide whether to use plastic, Styrofoam or reusable lunch tray. The cafeteria staff will ask students to recycle Styrofoam and plastic trays. Reusable trays will be washed.
- 2) The students job is to find out which tray would be the most economical to use.
- 3) Students should consider the following questions when researching their response:
 - a) How much does each type of tray cost?
 - b) Is there a demand for the Styrofoam and plastic trays at the recycling center?
 - c) What is the cost of washing the reusable trays? Consider the costs of hiring someone to wash the trays and the cost of the equipment needed to wash the trays.
- 4) Once the students have gathered all of the statistics, they should decide which type of tray is best for the cafeteria. The students should write their answer in the form of a business letter addressed to the school cafeteria manager. The letter should include all of the necessary facts and support for their conclusion.

Closure:

The teacher can read the letters to the class.

Household Wastes Facts and Figures

- Americans generate 1.6 million tons of HHW per year.
- The average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of HHW in the basement and garage and in storage closets.
- During the 1980s, many communities started special collection days or permanent collection sites for handling HHW. In 1997, there were more than 3,000 HHW permanent programs and collection events throughout the United States.