A Trash-Free Future? classroom activities

For use with "A Trash-Free Future?" *ASK*, March 2019, pages 23-25

The Trash Problem

What happens to things when we throw them away?

Why is it difficult to recycle large items, such as shoes, furniture, or even cars?

What's different about plastic that makes it useful, but also creates a special problem?

Rethinking the way we build things can make them easier to reuse, repair, or recycle. Why?

How can mushrooms and plants reduce what goes into the landfill?

Activity

Objective: For students to evaluate how well an item can be recycled.

Materials:

household items, such as a small appliance (e.g., toaster), piece of furniture, toy

Procedure:

1. Have the students study the item; examine all sides and peek at the insides (if possible).
2. Identify the different types of materials used to make the item. Is there metal? Plastic? Fabric? Foam? Other materials?
3. How easy would it be to replace broken parts on this item?
4. How easy would it be to recycle the item?
5. What changes would the students make to make the item less likely to wind up in the landfill?