**The Garbage Diet: A Skit**

*(Adapted from Wrap Sessions: Town of Islip Recycling Curriculum*

*Dept of Environmental Control, Town of Islip, NY)*

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**GRADE LEVELS:** 4-6

**SUBJECT AREAS:** social studies

**CONCEPT:** We all can work to reduce the amount of waste we produce.

**OBJECTIVE:** To help students to think of lifestyle changes that would produce less waste.

**MATERIALS:** table and chairs, garbage can, and old radio

**KEYWORDS:** reduce, reuse

**PROCEDURE:**

**CAST**

1) Mother - 42 years old, Mrs. Linda Green, Engineer  
2) Father - 42 years old, Mr. Ken Green, Teacher  
3) Teenager - 16 years old, Maria Green  
4) Elementary school-age child - 8 years old, Joseph Green  
5) Neighbor - Mrs Gray  
6) Relative - Aunt Alice, from New Jersey  
7) Grandparent - Grandma (or Grandpa) 70 years old  
8) Dawn (Maria's friend) - 16 years old  
9) Narrator

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**MOTHER**: Mrs. Green works as an engineer. She works hard at her job because she wants her family to have things. She leaves home about 7 a.m. each day and returns about 6 p.m. She commutes to her job.

**FATHER**: Mr. Green works as a teacher. He leaves home about 7:30 a.m. and returns about 3:30 p.m. Then he starts to cook dinner and do other household chores.

**MARIA**: High School student. Very popular. Does well in school.

**JOSEPH**: Third grade student. Very interested in the environment, which he is now learning about in school.

**GRANDMOTHER**: Born in 1918. She has seen many changes. When she was born there was no TV or radio and almost no one owned a car.

**THE PLAY**

**NARRATOR**: The play begins with Mr. & Mrs. Green, Maria, and Joseph sitting around the table eating dinner.

**MR. GREEN:** What did you do in school today, Joseph?

**JOSEPH:** Well, we learned about garbage, Dad.

**MR. GREEN:** Garbage? Are you kidding? I don't think that's a subject for the dinner table, Joseph.

**JOSEPH:** Oh, but it is. Mrs. Driscoll says each person makes 3-4 pounds of garbage everyday. For homework she told us to make a list of some of the things in our garbage.

**MARIA:** I don't make four pounds of garbage a day.

**JOSEPH:** Mrs. Driscoll says teenagers make more than four pounds of garbage a day.

**MARIA:** I don't believe that. I'll bet you make more garbage than I do.

**JOSEPH:** Bet I don't.

**MRS. GREEN:** Why don't you have a contest to see who can make the least amount of garbage in a week?

**JOSEPH:** We could all do it.

**JOSEPH:** Could we Dad? Could we? I could write about it and get extra credit.

**MR. GREEN:** Well, OK, but just for a week.

**MRS. GREEN:** I suggest that instead of a contest we make it a family project. OK? Let's separate things that get thrown out from things that could be reduced, re-used, or recycled.

**JOSEPH:** That will reduce the amount of trash that goes to the landfill, Mom!

**MRS. GREEN:** Is everyone agreed?

**EVERYONE:** "OK"

**NARRATOR:** It's now a quarter to seven in the morning. Maria and Joseph are eating breakfast.

**JOSEPH:** Now remember, Maria, newspaper in one pile, then there are cans for deposit, no-deposit cans, bottles for deposit, no-deposit bottles, food scraps, plastic...  
**MARIA:** I can't remember all that. Who cares about garbage anyway. I'm too busy.

**JOSEPH:** It's important, Maria. If we don't do something about the garbage, we're going to have serious problems.

**MARIA:** Like what?

**JOSEPH:** For one thing, we won't have any place to put it!   
For another, it really hurts the water.

**MARIA:** That's not my problem. Is it?

**MRS. GREEN:** Hey kids - it's getting late. Joseph your lunch is on the counter.

**JOSEPH:** But Mom, you used plastic. Plastic is not recyclable.

**MRS. GREEN:** Joseph, what should we do?

**JOSEPH:** Maybe I'll save this clean plastic bag and re-use it tomorrow.

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**NARRATOR:** It is now evening. Grandmother, Aunt Alice (from New Jersey), and a neighbor have come to visit.

**AUNT ALICE:** I hear you folks are going on a garbage diet.

**MRS. GREEN:** Yes, but it's so much extra work.

**GRANDMOTHER:** Well, this might surprise you, but when I was a child we had no garbage at all.

**MARIA:** No garbage? How come Grandma?

**GRANDMOTHER:** Well, there was just about no plastic at all, and bottles and cans were pretty scarce too.

**MRS. GREEN:** What about spoiled leftovers or scraps? Who collected that?

**GRANDMA:** Well no one did. We just put it in a compost pile.

**NEIGHBOR:** I've got one of those. I just throw the food in a bin in the corner of my backyard. Then later, I put it on my flowers. Sure makes them grow.

**MRS. GREEN:** I don't want a smelly pile of food rotting in my backyard.

**NEIGHBOR:** It doesn't smell as long as someone remembers to "TURN" it with a shovel every month, or more often if you have time.

**MARIA:** But that's work!

**GRANDMA:** Well, Maria, most worthwhile things do involve some work. But the work has to be shared. For example, your parents work away from home all day so it might be up to the rest of you to help out.

**NEIGHBOR:** Here in our community recycling's easy. All you need are two pails. One for things that can be recycled, the other for things that cannot.

**MARIA:** But Grandma, what did you do with all the packages after the food was all gone?

**GRANDMA:** Well, there were almost no packages.

**JOSEPH:** You must have starved!

**GRANDMA:** It wasn't as easy to get food as it is now, but we managed.

**MARIA:** What did you do?

**GRANDMA:** Well, just about everyone grew a lot of food in the backyard. Then we cooked the food and stored them in special jars. That's called "canning." Just about everyone had a canning closet full of food which they hoped would last a long time. Potatoes, turnips, carrots, and sweet potatoes were kept in the basement. No plastic bags, no metal cans, no cardboard boxes.

**MRS. GREEN:** And no food in February.

**GRANDMA:** Oh, it rarely got that bad, but it's like anything else...there are advantages and disadvantages to having packages.

**JOSEPH**: Weren't there stores when you were young Grandma?

**GRANDMA:** Oh there were stores, but you had to bring your own container in which to take the food home. Or, the store gave you a container which you had to give back later.  
**AUNT ALICE:** It seems to me that you people in cities have more garbage problems than in other places.

**MRS. GREEN:** That's because our drinking water is under the ground. When garbage is thrown out on the ground, any parts that dissolve can go into the water if not properly managed.

**MARIA:** But that means we can never throw anything out!

**MRS. GREEN:** That's not as hard as it sounds, Maria. Take that old radio you threw away this morning.

**MARIA**: Oh, that radio was broken, Mom.

**GRANDMA:** Yes, but I'll bet your school has a course in electricity.

**MARIA:** Why didn't I think of that? They could probably have fixed it. But I don't want that radio anyway.

**GRANDMA:** Yes, but there are people who don't have any radio at all. I'll bet they'd be happy to get a fixed-up old radio.

**MARIA**: How come you're so smart, Grandma?

**JOSEPH**: She's not smart, Maria. She's just old.

**MR. GREEN:** JOSEPH!

**GRANDMA**: Joseph is right. People learn by making mistakes. The older you are, the more mistakes you've made, and the more you've learned.

**MR. GREEN**: That's why we have recycling. It's as though everyone is saying, "we've made mistakes, but now we've learned." But even if we repair, recycle, and reduce, we still will have some garbage that will need to be incinerated or sent to a landfill.

**GRANDMA:** What have you learned, Ken?

**MR. GREEN:** I was afraid you were going to ask me that. I've learned that going on a garbage diet isn't easy.

**JOSEPH**: But it's important. Right, Dad?

**MR. GREEN:** Right, Joseph.

**NEIGHBOR**: It's not enough to talk about it. Everyone has to do something about it. Wouldn't it be great if every family went on a garbage diet?

**MARIA**: We would have the world's smallest garbage dump!

**MRS. GREEN:** And the cleanest water. Joseph has taught us that.

DOOR BELL RINGS...

**MRS. GREEN:** Maria, it's your friend, Dawn.

**DAWN**: Hi, Maria. Want to go to the mall?

**MARIA**: OK, Dawn, but first I have to go through my garbage pail.

**DAWN**: Your garbage pail????

**MARIA**: Yes. I want to find an old radio I threw out this morning.

**DAWN**: OK, but some people are weird.

**MARIA**: It's not weird. You want clean water, don't you?

**DAWN**: Well, sure, I guess.

**MARIA**: Well it's not enough to talk about it. We have to do something about it.

**MR. GREEN:** We ALL have to do something about it.

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