

Here Comes the Garbage Barge!

A Guide for Teachers and Parents



Written by Jonah Winter

Illustrated by Red Nose Studio

THEMES

Environment & Conservation

STEAM

Social & Emotional Learning

Story Discussion Guide

Lesson plan

This story will help students critically think about waste—where it goes, who deals with it, and how our actions affect the planet. The activities explore the science behind decomposition, the social responsibility of communities, and the artistic value of reusing junk to tell stories.

Learning Outcome

Before Reading:

- What do you know about where our garbage goes after we throw it away?
- Why do you think waste management is important for a city or town?

During Reading :

- How do the different states respond to the garbage barge's request to unload?
- What do you notice about the artwork in the book?

After Reading :

- What surprised you most about the story?
- Why do you think the author chose to tell this story in such a playful way?
- What are some ways we can reduce our waste at school or home?

Activities:

1. Map the Barge: Use a U.S. map to trace the route of the garbage barge. Which states or countries rejected the garbage?
2. Trash Timeline: Research how long it takes different kinds of garbage (plastic bottle, banana peel, etc.) to decompose.
3. Junk Art Challenge: Create a 3D character or scene using only items from the recycling bin, inspired by Red Nose Studio's style.
4. Classroom Waste Audit: Track your class waste for a day or week. What could be reduced, reused, or recycled?

Expected Outcomes

Students will gain a deeper understanding of the global waste crisis, the importance of local action, and how creative thinking can drive environmental change. They will also be encouraged to consider their own role in producing or reducing waste—fostering responsibility and empathy.

Applicable SDGs

- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 13: Climate Action

SDG Explanation

- SDG 11: Highlights the challenge of managing waste in urban areas.
- SDG 12: Focuses on reducing waste generation through the principles of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.
- SDG 13: Implicitly warns of environmental impact through the lens of excessive waste.

Curriculum Alignment

- Bye-Bye Plastic Bags: Two Balinese sisters take on plastic pollution.
- The River Warrior: A boy takes on industrial pollution in Indonesia.
- RJ the E-Waste Hero: Tackling electronic waste with innovation.
- The Big Dreamer: A boy protects his village with mangrove forests.
- Sharing Hope: Turning used cooking oil into biodiesel to protect the ocean.

ABOUT ZAMASAMA

Zamasama is a nonprofit initiative that curates children's stories from diverse cultures and lived experiences around the world. It gives children a window into other communities—and a mirror that affirms their own, helping children recognize the shared humanity that connects us across differences.

Through narratives that gently challenge biases and broaden worldviews, Zamasama helps children see difference not as a barrier but as a bridge. Through the power of stories, we sow the seeds of pluralism that can grow into a more harmonious world for all.