



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

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Study Questions on *Garbage Land*

1. Does Elizabeth Royte's exploration of the disposal process change how you view your garbage? What did you find most surprising?
2. If the average American creates 4.5 pounds of trash a day, do you create more or less than average? After reading this book, what plans have you made to reduce your garbage output?
3. If someone was digging through your trash, what items would you find most embarrassing? What does your trash say about you?
4. "Reduce, reuse, recycle." Which of these three is the most important? Why?

"Much has been made, in certain circles, of humanity's connection to the nature world. Enlightened consumers, we don't want to eat endangered fish or buy rare hardwoods. We care about animal rights and clean water. But it wasn't fair, I reasoned, to feel connected to the rest of the world only on the front end, to the waving fields of grain and the sparkling mountain streams. We needed to cop to a downstream connection as well. Our lifestyles took a toll on the planet, and that toll was growing ever worse." (pp. 18-19).

"In an EPA ranking of the twenty chemicals whose production

5. How does the American lifestyle of regularly eating away from home impact the trash we create and how we recycle?
 6. How do the following industries or items impact the things we throw away?
 - a. Fashion Industry
 - b. Fast Food
 - c. Personal Computers and Printers
 - d. Automobiles
 - e. Holiday Gifts
 - f. Music Industry
 - g. Publishing Industry
 - h. Bulk Mail Advertising
 - i. Shopping for Groceries
 7. After reading *Garbage Land*, how do you think that recycling programs in cities impact the amount of garbage that individuals create?
 8. Do you think that the “zero waste” concept is possible in the United States? If it is not possible, what will the consequences be for future generations?
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Broader Study Questions on the One Book Themes

1. What does it mean to live a sustainable lifestyle?
2. What does it mean to live in a culture of consumption? How do the things we buy define who we are, and how does the accumulation of “stuff” impact our world? Is consumer culture inherently destructive to our environment?
3. How can one person have an impact against climate change? How can you reduce your carbon footprint?
4. Economic health has become tied to our personal well-being in terms of income and jobs. We are encouraged to buy things to keep the economy healthy, but, at the same time, we are concerned that our appetite for more and more things is destroying our planet. How can we deal with the market forces that appear to be a part of our environmental worries?

generates the most total hazardous waste, five of the top six are chemicals commonly used by the plastics industry... Of all of the materials we throw out, plastic is among the hardest to kill. It doesn't biodegrade in any conventional sense; sunlight causes it to photodegrade into ever-smaller pieces of polymers...It's estimated that Americans go through about a hundred billion polyethylene bags—the ubiquitous eighteen-microns-thick grocery sacks that snag on branches, skip along on the breeze, and clog sewers and storm drains, and burrow into ditches and dunes—a year. Although plastic bags don't take up a lot of landfill space, they persist in the environment for decades, if not centuries” (p. 191).