



A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

(adapted from Project Learning Tree, PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide, 2012)

Objective: To identify the many natural resources that make up the items we use every day and discuss how recycling conserves our natural resources

Grades: 2nd – 5th

Time: 1 – 2 class periods

Vocabulary: Conserve, natural resources, non-renewable, renewable, recycle, upcycle

Materials: Favorite item from home, recyclable items (optional extension)

Background:

Natural resources are naturally occurring materials provided by the earth that humans use to create the many products that we use everyday. Trees, oil, ore, and glass are four examples of natural resources that can be recycled. Trees produce paper, paperboard, and cardboard. Oil makes the different plastics. Ore gives us metals. Sand produces glass.

Lesson:

The day before the lesson, ask students to bring in one of their favorite objects from home. During the lesson, have the students make a list of what their item is made of and where that material comes from. For example, a student with a Frisbee might say that the toy is made of plastic which comes from the natural resource oil. At first students may not know which natural resources were used to make their items, but the next discussion will help them answer that question.

After the students have identified the materials that make up their objects, create a list of these materials on the board. As a class, now discuss what natural resources these materials came from. Are these natural resources unlimited? Are they renewable (able to be replenished) or non-renewable (will eventually run out)?

Now look at your items again. Can you recycle that item? Recycling allows us to conserve (use wisely so that it doesn't run out) our natural resources. Only objects made of one type of material can be recycled. Can you break apart that item so it can be recycled? If it can't be



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recycled, think about how it could be reused or upcycled (creative reuse, making something useless into something useful again).

Extensions:

Have students complete this exercise with both their favorite item from home and a recyclable object. What comparisons can be made between the natural resources used for both items? Only items made of one material can be recycled. Often the item from home will be made of multiple materials. In that case, reuse or upcycling may be an option to best conserve our natural resources.

Have students bring in an item from home that they no longer want for an upcycling garage sale. Host an exchange to see if other students could use this item. If no one wants it, be creative and think of some other use or way to change it so that you can use it again.

Host a “trashion show” in which students take trash from home or school and remake it into something useful again.

Schedule a tour of your local Recycling Center through Kent County at [RecycleKent.org/parents-educators/facility-tours/](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/recyclekent.org/parents-educators/facility-tours/).