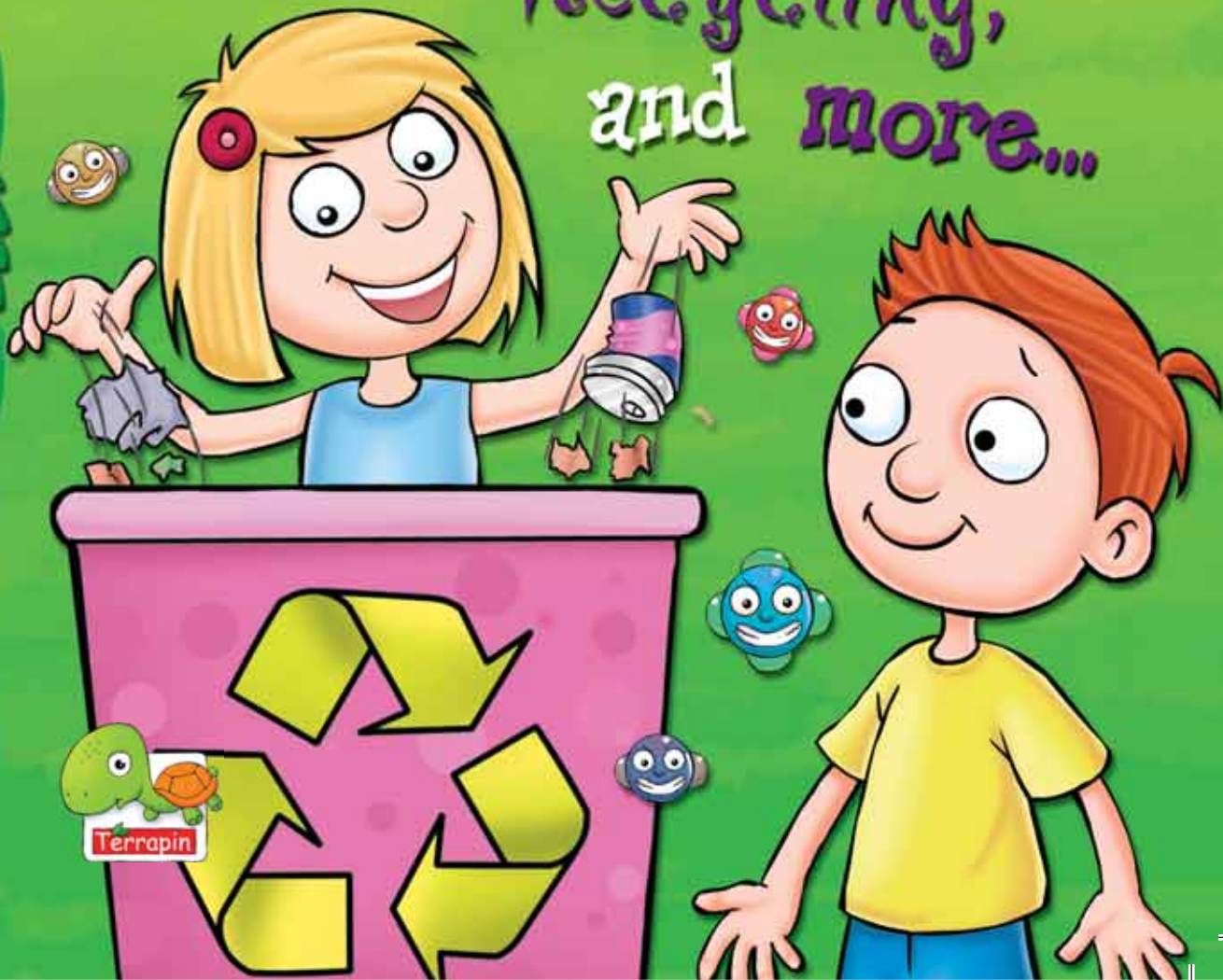
Green Genius Guide

What are Landfills, Vermicomposting, Recycling, and more...



An imprint of The Energy and Resources Institute

First Reprint 2013

Published by
TERI Press
The Energy and Resources Institute
Darbari Seth Block, IHC Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110 003, India
Tel. 2468 2100/4150 4900, Fax: 2468 2144/2468 2145
India +91 • Delhi (0)11
Email: teripress@teri.res.in • Website: http://bookstore.teriin.org

ISBN 978-81-7993-161-5

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Printed and bound in India

This book is printed on recycled paper.

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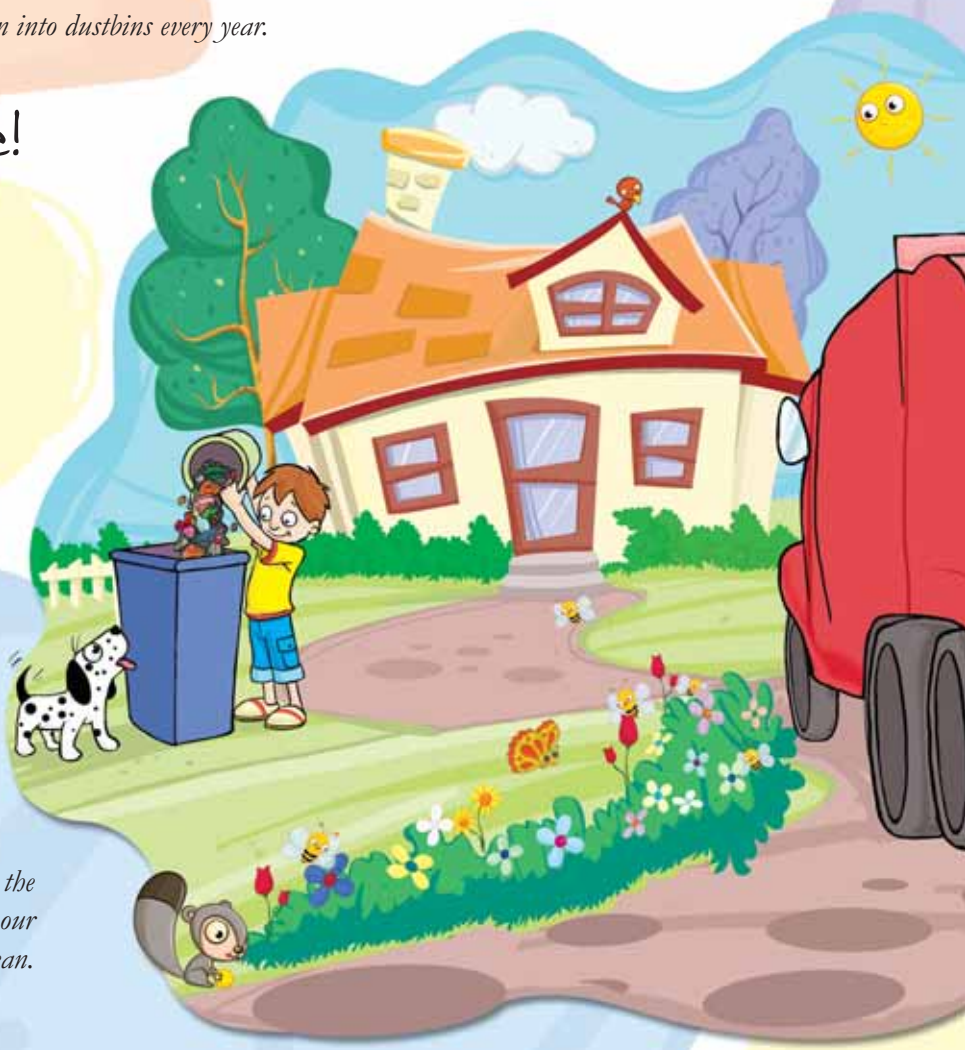
Waste not!

We all have waste bins in our houses, and every day, we empty this bin in a larger bin outside our house. The garbage van collects waste from these bins. Later, different kinds of wastes are treated differently. But before we find out what happens to each kind of waste, it is important to know what waste exactly is.

Five billion aluminium cans are thrown into dustbins every year.

All that waste!

Anything that we no longer need and throw away is called "waste". It could be that banana peel, that empty can of juice or those clothes that don't fit you any longer. In Europe, each person, on an average, generates 3,500 kilograms of waste in a year!



The garbage van that takes the waste away helps us keep our neighbourhood clean.

Did you know that a rotting banana peel can turn into manure for your garden!

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In 2005, six million Christmas trees were bought and later discarded, adding to the already huge pile of waste. People can, instead, buy potted trees and watch them grow!

Raising a stink

Waste directly affects our environment. If you don't take out the garbage, the waste will pile up and begin to stink, and germs will start growing in that pile of filth. That's why it is important that this waste be managed properly, so that it does not harm our environment or our health.

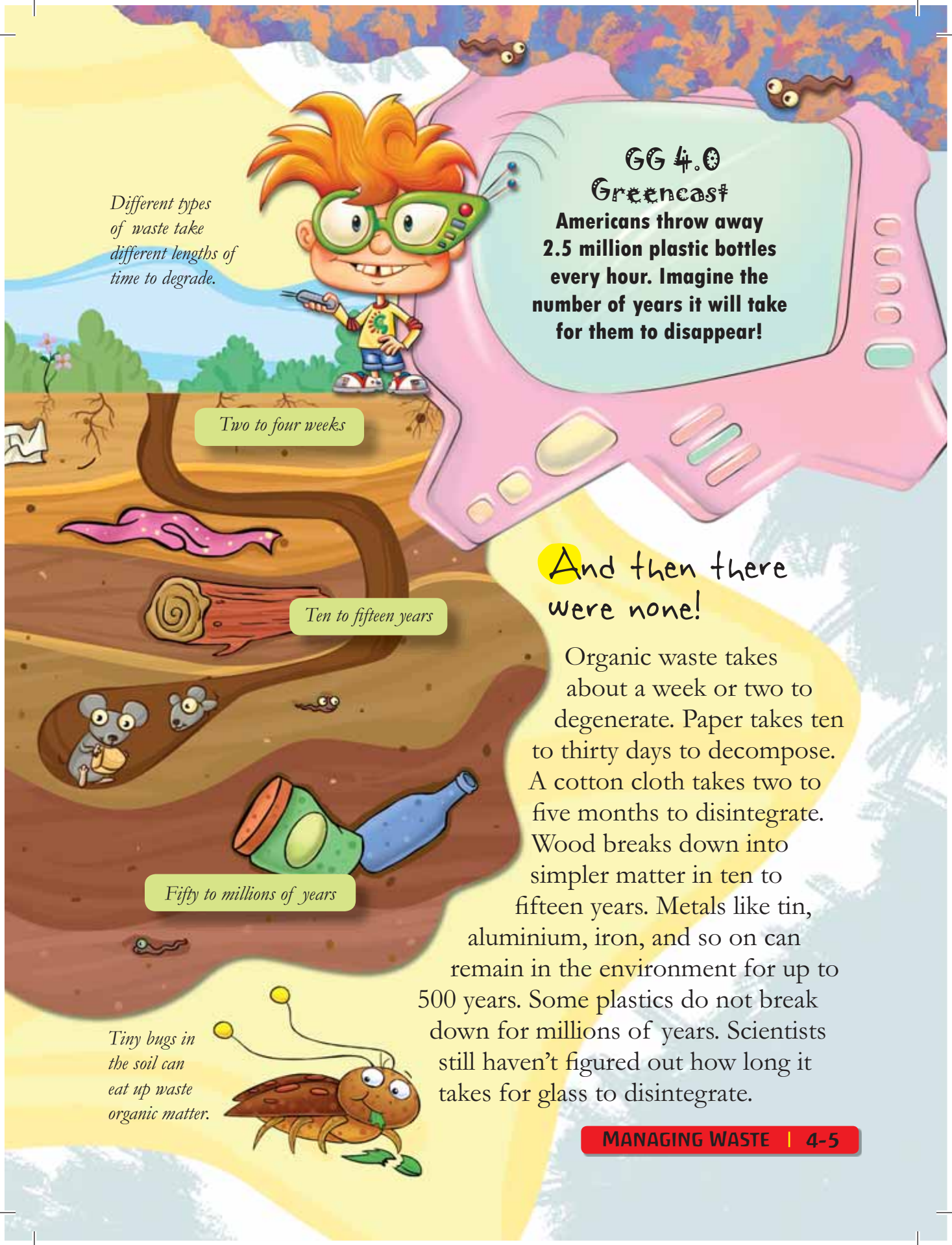
Kinds of waste

Some kinds of waste can be broken down into simpler forms, either naturally or by tiny creatures called microbes. Non-biodegradable waste, on the other hand, does not decompose, or rot.

Which is which

Leftover food, vegetable and fruit peels, paper, and so on are biodegradable. They are harmless to the environment and do not cause pollution. Plastics, batteries, electronic items like cell phone, computers, and televisions are all non-biodegradable. They remain in the environment for hundreds of years, causing pollution.

Do not throw out batteries with your kitchen waste. Microbes cannot break batteries down. As a result, they remain in the environment for a long, long time.



Different types of waste take different lengths of time to degrade.

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Americans throw away 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour. Imagine the number of years it will take for them to disappear!

And then there were none!

Organic waste takes about a week or two to degenerate. Paper takes ten to thirty days to decompose. A cotton cloth takes two to five months to disintegrate. Wood breaks down into simpler matter in ten to fifteen years. Metals like tin, aluminium, iron, and so on can remain in the environment for up to 500 years. Some plastics do not break down for millions of years. Scientists still haven't figured out how long it takes for glass to disintegrate.

Tiny bugs in the soil can eat up waste organic matter.

It comes in all shapes and size

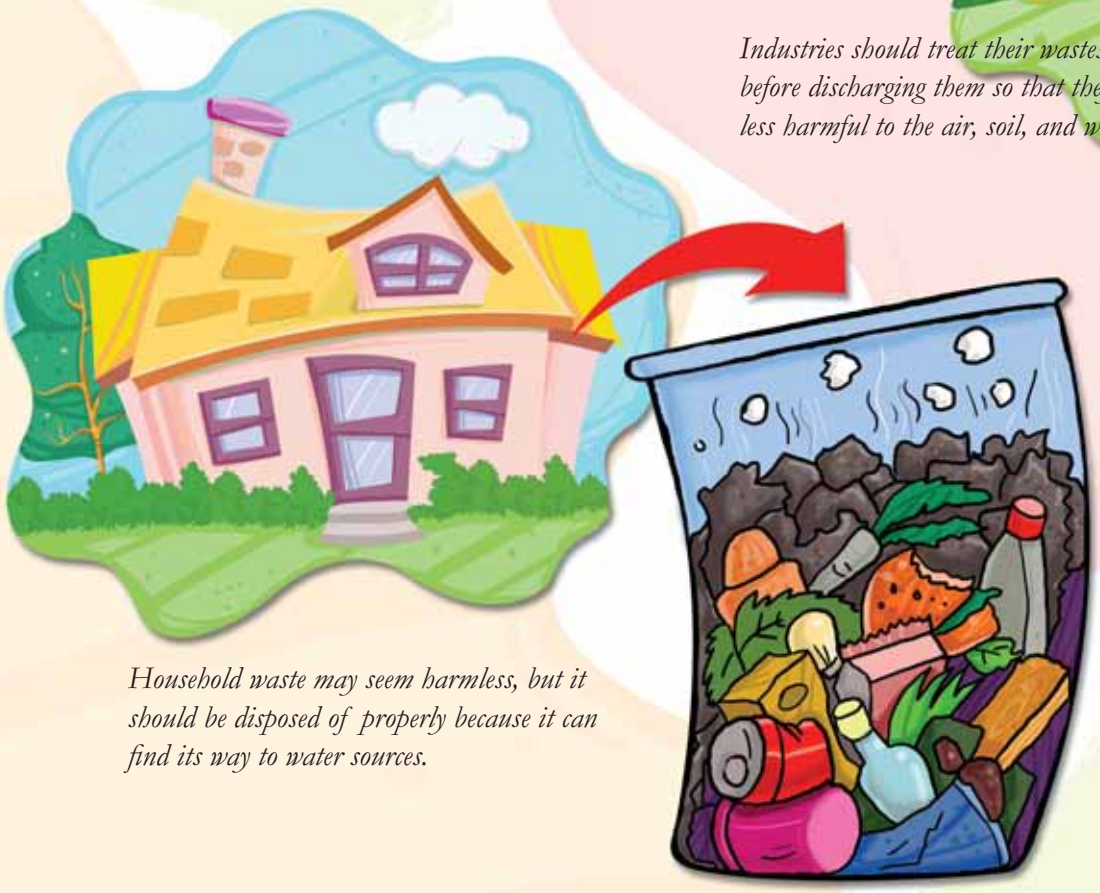
Everything we do creates waste, whether it is eating lunch or using the cell phone. Waste comes from many sources—homes, schools, factories, and hospitals.

From home to school

The waste that comes from households, schools, hotels, and shops in a particular area is called municipal solid waste. It generally consists of vegetable and fruit waste, paper, plastics, cloth, and so on.

Even cell phones, computers, and other electronic items become waste after some time. This type of waste is called e-waste.

Industries should treat their wastes before discharging them so that they are less harmful to the air, soil, and water.



Household waste may seem harmless, but it should be disposed of properly because it can find its way to water sources.

Hospital waste can spread diseases. So it should be handled carefully.

Factories, cars, and mines

Industries, factories, mills, and mines pollute air, water, and land by letting out fumes and chemicals into the surroundings. They also produce various kinds of waste such as plastics, metals, and other harmful material.

Hospital waste

Hospital waste, or bio-medical waste, comprises disposable needles, syringes, blades, and broken glasses. It also includes waste medicines and drugs. Hospital wastes contain germs that are capable of causing dangerous diseases.

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A child who carries lunch to school in a disposable bag creates almost thirty kilograms of garbage in the school year. That's more weight than s/he can put on in ten years!

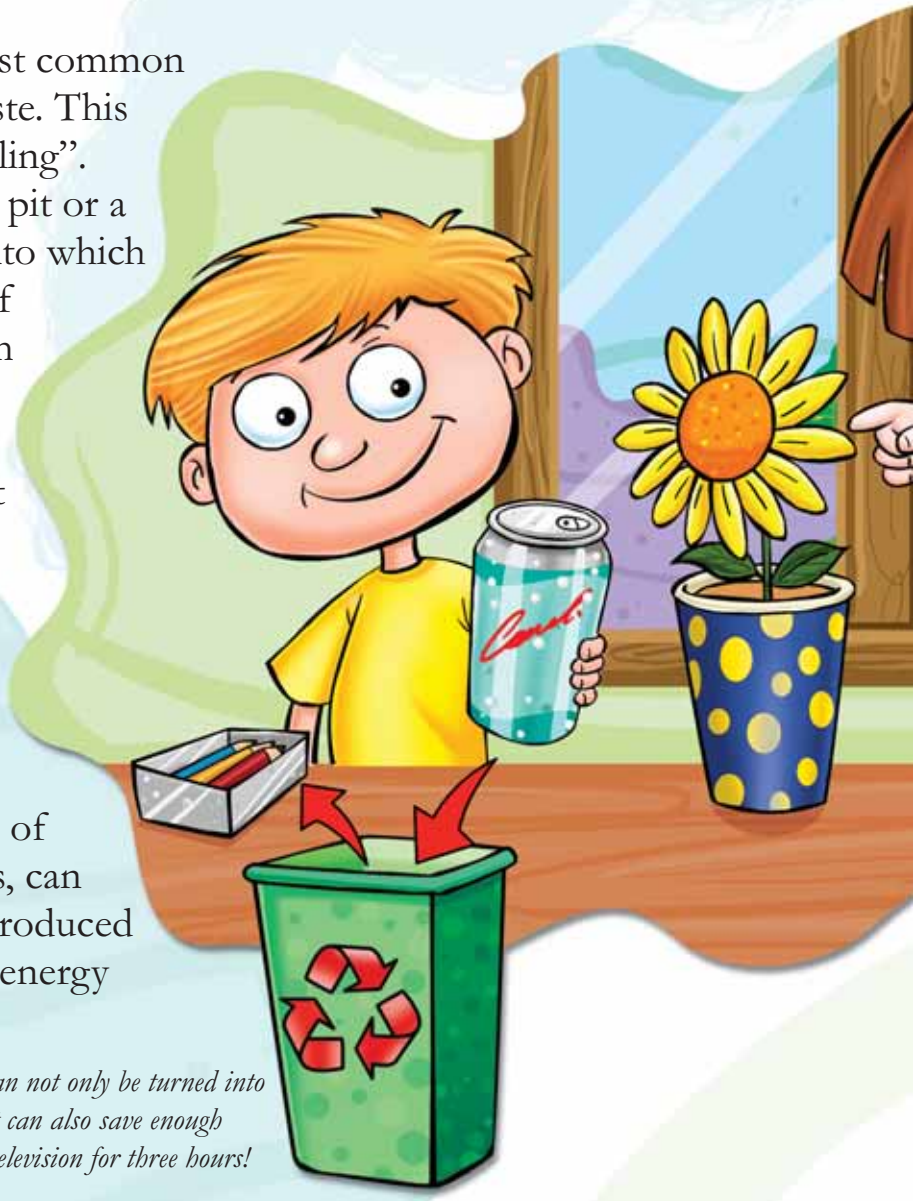
Good Riddance!

How do we get rid of the waste that we generate? There are many ways to do this. Burning, burying, and recycling are a few.

Bury it, burn it!

Burying waste is the most common way of disposing of waste. This process is called "landfilling". Earlier, this dump was a pit or a field outside the town into which people tossed all sorts of waste. Today, the bottom and sides of modern landfills are lined with clay or plastic to prevent harmful materials from seeping into the soil.

Burning is another method to get rid of waste. This is called "incineration". Organic waste, which is made up of plant or animal products, can be burnt, and the heat produced can be used to generate energy or electricity.



A recycled can can not only be turned into a new product, it can also save enough energy to run a television for three hours!

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Publisher : TERI Press ISBN : 9788179931615 Author : Richa Sharma