



UNTAMED S2E6: Critters Don't Need Litter

Classroom Activity

This classroom activity is designed to be used as a resource that inspires conversation, critical thinking, and promotes a "big picture" understanding of topics covered in each episode. Questions may be answered individually, or out loud in a group setting. Key terms and vocabulary that will help educators and students engage in discussion include:

[Litter, pollution, watershed, single-use, recycle, decompose, biodegrade]

Group Size: Small

Materials Needed: A collection of trash that might be commonly found in your area (paper, cardboard, newspaper, plastic drinking straws, bottle caps, food wrappers, single-use plastic bags, etc.), a collection of recyclable items (plastic bottles, tin cans, aluminium cans, glass jars, pictures of fruits or vegetables, etc.)

Time: 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

This activity helps students to understand that litter is more than an eyesore -- it poses a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of wild animals everywhere, and can remain in an environment for far longer than individuals may realize. One small act of littering can have consequences that last hundreds of thousands of years (and beyond) into the future.

Begin by passing out collections of litter and recyclables to each group of students. Have them examine the contents, and arrange the items in a line of quickest to break down to slowest to break down. During this time, prompt students to think of what each item is made of.

Once students' break down timelines are completed, review the following chart with the class:

Produce (fruits and vegetables)	1 week - 2 months
Paper	2 - 5 months
Cardboard	3 months
Candy wrapper	15 years
Plastic bag	20 years
Tin can	50 - 100 years
Aluminium can	80 - 200 years
Single-use plastic (container, bottle, straw)	500 - 1,000 years
Glass bottle or jar	1 million years - never

To conclude the activity, speak about each individual item in students' collections and discuss how they might end up in the environment. As a group, brainstorm whether an item could be recycled, reused, or its consumption reduced or completely eliminated from their daily lives (for example, reusable water bottles instead of single-use plastic).

As an optional extension, have students choose one piece of litter from the activity. Guide students in writing a background story or narrative on where it may have come from, who it belonged to, how they used it, and how it ended up where it did.