

Waste Not- Want Not

 Name _____

First read the story. Then use the circled words to decode the Environmental Anagram.

America is blessed with many natural resources. These are things that nature provides for our use and enjoyment. The forest is one of our major natural resources. We are lucky to have a great many forests and trees, but we need to be careful how we use them.

In America, we use more paper than anywhere else in the world. Each of us uses almost 700 pounds of paper a year. Where does it all go? You guessed it—landfills. About four out of every ten solid things put into landfills are made of paper, and most of that is newspapers.

Luckily, Americans know they must show responsibility by making wise choices to protect our natural resources. One way is by recycling. We have learned that many products can be recycled to make other items. About a quarter of all the paper that is made in the U.S. today is made from re-used paper.

Americans have also learned that if we make things from a resource that is renewable, like trees, that resource will grow back. It will be available to use again and again. Things made out of ores, such as steel or aluminum, or out of petroleum products, like plastics, are not renewable. Once the ores or petroleum sources are used up, they are gone forever. Most of these products are also not biodegradable.

Even Mother Nature recycles. Pine needles, cones, leaves, dead trees and plants may seem like useless forest waste, but they are really important to the forest. These bits of organic matter fall to the ground. With the help of sunlight, air, water, bacteria, worms, and insects forest waste begins to decay and decompose. As it breaks down, the waste acts as a fertilizer to help trees and other plants grow. Forest waste holds the soil together to prevent erosion.

People now imitate Mother Nature. Many farmers and gardeners stack organic matter together to form a compost pile. In this pile, food and garden scraps will decay and produce fertilizer just like forest litter does in the woods.

Our natural resources are a wonderful gift. We need to use them wisely. Each of us should try to follow the "Three Rs" whenever possible. Can you guess what they are? Renew, Recycle, and Responsible Use. If we follow those simple guidelines, we all will be able to enjoy Nature's Treasure Chest and still make sure that our natural resources are available today, tomorrow, and forever.

