Shame On You: That Can Be Reused!

An EVC Study Guide

A Co-Production of

120 West 30th Street, New York, NY 10001
tel 212.465.9366  fax 212.465.9369
www.evc.org  info@evc.org

AND

Office of Recycling Outreach & Education, a program of Council on the Environment of New York City
51 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007
tel 212.788.700  fax 212.788.7913
www.cenyc.org
Acknowledgements

STUDY GUIDE

Writers: Educational Video Center Staff
Michael Rieser, Office of Recycling Outreach & Education, a program of Council on the Environment of New York City

Editor: Sheila Aminmadani, Educational Video Center

SHAME ON YOU was produced by 9 New York City youth who participated in EVC’s Fall 2007 Documentary Workshop.

Tiffany Agosto
Jazmin Carrington
Priscilla Felix
Crystal Henriquez
Henry Kim

Rhodine Louisaire
Oddette Melenciano
Ashley Nieves
Anna Resnikoff

Original Music: Kyle Lorde

Documentary Workshop Instructor: Kellon Innocent
Documentary Workshop Manager: Christine Mendoza


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Introduction

The Educational Video Center (EVC) is a non-profit youth media organization dedicated to teaching documentary video as a means to develop the artistic, critical literacy, and career skills of young people, while nurturing their idealism and commitment to social change. Founded in 1984, EVC has evolved from a single video workshop for teenagers from Manhattan’s Lower East Side to become an internationally acclaimed leader in youth media and education. EVC’s teaching methodology brings together the powerful traditions of student-centered progressive education and independent community documentary.

EVC CORE PROGRAMS

Documentary Workshop is a 15-week credit-bearing course that teaches high school students from undeserved communities across New York City to research, shoot, and edit compelling documentaries that examine issues of immediate relevance in their lives.

Youth Organizers Television (YO-TV) is a ten-month pre-professional paid internship that jumpstarts the college and media careers of graduates of the Documentary Workshop.

External Education Programs provide workshops and resources in media production and EVC’s methodology, including EVC’s Youth-Powered Video DVD Curriculum, for K-12 teachers and after-school educators, nationally and abroad.

Community Engagement promotes dialogue and social change through the screening of EVC’s youth produced documentaries in collaboration with strategic partners. An important component of the Community Engagement program is the Youth Speakers Bureau, a group of EVC alumni who receive training in public speaking and facilitation skills and who use this training to lead screenings in local schools and community organizations and encourage audience members to engage with important social issues.
The Office of Recycling Outreach and Education

The Office of Recycling Outreach and Education (OROE) helps New Yorkers understand what, when and how to recycle, and works with residential buildings to create their own recycling plans. OROE was created in 2006 by the New York City Council, when it passed Mayor Bloomberg’s landmark Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). OROE is a program of the Council on the Environment of NYC, a privately funded citizens organization in the Mayor’s Office.

OROE works to improve the City’s recycling rate by educating residents about recycling and waste prevention, and working with landlords to make sure building recycling programs are adequate. OROE’s free services include apartment building waste audits, recycling workshops and training on other waste reduction, reuse and composting programs available to residents.

The Council on the Environment of New York City

The Council on the Environment of NYC (CENYC) is a hands-on non-profit that has been improving New York City’s environment for over thirty years. CENYCs dedicated staff green NYC neighborhoods, create the environmental leaders of the future, promote waste prevention and recycling, and run the largest farmers market program in the country. CENYC achieves its mission through the following projects and programs:

- The Open Space Greening Program (OSG)
- Greenmarket
- The New Farmer Development Project (NFDP)
- Environmental Education Training Student Organizers (TSO)
- Learn It, Grow It, Eat It
- Office of Recycling Outreach and Education (OROE)

For more information on CENYC or on individual programs, please visit www.cenyc.org.
Guidelines For Using This Tape

EVC documentaries are powerful, and often deal with sensitive issues. For this reason, we recommend that you preview the *Shame On You* documentary and supporting materials before using them in the classroom. The curriculum we’ve prepared represents suggestions for using *Shame On You*. If any of the activities are not useful to you, feel free to modify them and design your own.

Before using these materials, consider the following questions:

- How similar/different are your students and their experiences from the students who made this video?
- How does this video relate to the subject you are teaching?
- What results do you hope to see from using this video?
- What concerns do you have about your students’ responses to the issues raised in this video?
- What background information will your students need before viewing this tape?

Assumed in this guide are the following beliefs about teaching and learning:

- Writing deepens thinking and is one of the best ways to explore sensitive issues, even before discussion.
- All learning starts from the students’ own experiences.
- Diversity of opinion is useful in a classroom and must be respected.
- Students can make a difference in the world.
- Students can learn from each other.
- Social issues and community problems are an integral part of the school curriculum.
- Students learn from a variety of methods.
- Students learn best through experience.
- An active viewing experience leads to a richer understanding of the documentary.

For many teachers, having students write or take notes while viewing is not something new. For others, this aspect of active viewing is a bit controversial. Some feel it gets in the way of their viewing experience, while others feel it enhances it. You may want to show the tape twice: the first time to view it, and the second time to complete the viewing exercise. Your comments and questions are always welcome. Contact us at info@evc.org.
Background Information

RUNNING TIME: 20 minutes

SYNOPSIS: Shame on You: That can be Reused! explores the issue of environmental justice and attitudes toward recycling in low income communities. Ms. Sarah Martin, a determined resident of Grant Houses - a New York City Public Housing Development in Harlem, describes how waste travels through, is processed and ends up in low income communities that are inhabited by people of color. Heavy diesel truck traffic brings pollution and increased rates of asthma to low income communities such as the South Bronx, which has the dubious honor of being the poorest district and home to the largest concentration of waste transfer stations in the country. Yet despite the deleterious impact that the large quantity of waste brings to people who live in the South Bronx, this same community has the lowest recycling rate in New York City, oftentimes for reasons that are out of their control. Through a series of interviews with young residents, we learn about both the environmental and social value of recycling.

BACKGROUND ON RECYCLING: Each day in New York City twelve thousand tons of waste are collected at curbside from residents, delivered to transfer stations, loaded on to long haul trucks and driven to incinerators or landfills in other states. The pollution that is caused by the transfer of waste contributes to the poor quality of the air we breathe. The New York City Department of Sanitation Residential Waste Characterization Study estimates that fully 35% of residential waste could be recycled, yet the diversion rate has been stuck at about 17% for several years. Recycling seems unattractive to some people for whom it seems to contradict one of the benefits of communal wealth that we believe is ours as American citizens. Rich and poor Americans alike believe that it is a right to throw things “away.”

And yet, communities that have accepted waste at their landfills in the past are beginning to resist or prohibit having waste disposed of in their communities. Increasing tipping fees at available landfills will sap municipal funds that could be used for more productive endeavors. The cost of throwing our trash “away” is rising. In 2007, New York City paid almost three hundred million dollars to transfer residential waste to out-of-state landfills. Citizens are becoming aware that there is no “away.” In 2001, after 54 years, Staten Islanders won the right to close the last dump in New York City.

While we are paying to throw our waste in landfills, the value of recyclable commodities is rising. Paper, cardboard, metal and plastic are commanding record prices as feedstock for new products.
If there is a good side to this story, it is that recycling is an activity that each of us can do every day. If you didn’t recycle so well yesterday, you can recycle better tomorrow.

Recycling conserves natural resources. For each piece of paper, metal, glass or plastic that is recycled, an equivalent natural resource is preserved. Trees and metal ore are raw materials that are harvested, mined or drilled from low-income communities around the globe.

Reducing the volume of packaging and the use of “disposable” items, reusing as much as possible, and recycling what cannot be reused are three ways that people can reduce their impact on the environment. When people are unsure about how to recycle, they are more likely to dispose of items in the trash. Conversely, knowing exactly what can be recycled gives people a sense of competence that strengthens their determination to recycle.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS (in order of appearance):
• Omar Freilla, Founder and Director of Green Worker Cooperatives
• Neil Seldman, President of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance
• Sarah Martin, President of the Tenants’ Association of Grant Houses in Harlem

RELEVANT STATISTICS:
• Recycling one aluminum can save enough energy to run a TV for 3 hours.
• 350,000 aluminum cans are produced every minute.
• In one year, people in the United States use 80,000,000,000 aluminum cans.
• In one year, the recycling of steel in the US saves enough energy to provide heat and light to 18,000,000 homes.
• Every ton of steel recycled saves 2,500 pounds of iron ore and 1,000 of coal.
• People in the US use approximately 2,000,000,000 trees worth of paper products each year.
• Each ton (2000 pounds) of recycled paper can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, three cubic yards of landfill space, 4000 kilowatts of energy, and 7000 gallons of water. This represents a 64% energy savings, a 58% water savings, and 60 pounds less of air pollution!
• Every minute, 100 acres of rainforest get cut down.
• Americans use 2,500,000 plastic bottles every hour, and throw away most of them.

These facts can be found on the following websites: http://members.aol.com/ramola15/funfacts.html and http://www.oberlin.edu/recycle/facts.html. The last two are from The Point in the South Bronx, www.thepoint.org.
• Recycling plastic saves more than twice as much energy as throwing it away.
• A modern glass bottle can take over 4000 years to decompose, even longer if it is in a landfill.
• The US produces the most garbage per person in the world—1,609 pounds of trash per person per year. We make up 5% of the world's population but produce over 40% of the world's waste.
• On average, it costs $30 dollars to recycle a ton of trash, but sending it to a landfill can cost over $50 dollars, and incinerating it can cost over $75.
• According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, recycling creates 36 jobs per 10,000 pounds of material recycled, compared to just 6 jobs per 10,000 pounds when you just throw the garbage away.
• A single quart of motor oil can contaminate up to 2,000,000 gallons of water.
• You can walk down an average highway in the United States and see almost 1,500 pieces of litter.
• One in four children in the South Bronx has asthma.
• On any given day, over 13,000 trucks drive through the South Bronx, 3000 in the Hunts Point area alone.
Before Viewing the Tape

**PREPARATION:** It is important for you to watch *Shame On You* before showing it in class. This will make your preparation and post-discussion more fruitful. Make sure your students will have paper for note taking and that you will have markers and poster paper (or you can use the chalkboard). Test out the TV and DVD player and make sure the TV volume is set to a good level. Ideally, all students will sit close enough to the TV that they can read all the captions in the video. If this isn’t possible, we recommend that you use your remote to pause the video long enough to read important captions aloud.

**UNDERSTANDING DOCUMENTARIES:** If necessary, familiarize your students with the concept of documentary film. Here are a few guiding questions:

- Have you seen a documentary film before?
- Based on what you have seen, what is a documentary film?
- Why do you think someone would want to create a documentary?
- How are they different from other kinds of films?

Here are some points that you may want to incorporate into this discussion:

- Documentary films are often referred to as "documentaries" or "docs."
- Docs are significantly different from narrative or fiction feature films (even the feature films that are based on true stories).
- Mainly, documentaries are different because they record events as they happen, without a script or actors.
- Documentary filmmakers incorporate several resources in order to accurately report the truth. Examples include the use of archival footage (of past and present people or events); interviews with experts in the field they’re working on; interviews with the general public or members of a community to gather opinions or information on a subject.

**OPTIONAL BRAINSTORM WARM-UP ACTIVITY:** Have students say the first thing that comes to their minds when they think of recycling. Take a minute to reflect and make a list. Using your list as a beginning, have students discuss or write about the following topics:

- What does recycling mean to you?
- What do you do with the plastic bags you get from the grocery store after you put your groceries away (or with shopping bags)?
- What about magazines, plastic bottles, glass bottles, old school papers?
- What do you think are the benefits of recycling?
Lesson Plan

**FOCUS QUESTION:** How does municipal waste impact your community? What can your community do to reduce waste, reuse items that would otherwise become waste, and recycle items that cannot be reused?

**OBJECTIVES:**
To actively engage students in gaining an understanding of the following questions:
- What are the sources of waste?
- How does waste impact your community?
- How can waste be reduced from its source?
- What is the meaning of reuse?
- How does recycling work in your community?
- What actions can you take to reduce waste in your community?

**EDUCATION STANDARDS**
NYS Language Arts Standard 3; NCTE Standard 12; NYS Arts Standard 3; NETS Technology Standard 3; NYS Mathematics, Science, & Technology Standard 7; NYS Health, Physical Education and Family and Consumer Sciences Standard 3

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**
- Before starting the lesson, make sure your students have paper for note taking.
- Prepare markers and large newsprint for note taking during the post-screening discussion (or you can use the chalkboard).
- Test out the TV and DVD Player and make sure that the TV volume is set to a comfortable level.
- Ideally, all students will sit close enough to the television so that they can read all the captions in the video.
- If this is not possible, we recommend that you use your remote to pause the DVD long enough to read important captions aloud while the video plays.
- See the "Recycling Game" section below, as there are several materials listed there.
- See the "Take Action" section below as an example of resources you may bring in to strengthen the discussion, or you may have the students bring in to prepare for discussion.
INTRODUCING THE DOCUMENTARY: (3 minutes)
It may be helpful to say a few words before watching Shame On You. Here are a few suggestions.

• Nine high school students from the Educational Video Center in New York City produced this video.
• In the fall of 2007, these youth studied the impact of waste on the community of the South Bronx.
• They tried to understand and document the attitudes toward recycling of people who live in the low-income communities of Harlem and the South Bronx.
• They also explored the social value of recycling for young people, and how to recycle more effectively in the New York City Recycling Program.

SCREEN SHAME ON YOU: (23 minutes)
Write the following question on the board and ask students to write down their responses while they watch: “What is the impact of waste on your community?”

AFTER VIEWING THE DOCUMENTARY: (20-30 minutes)
Use the following questions as a guide to understand and discuss the following:

• What waste is and how it impacts your community;
• Where waste comes from and how it can be reduced; and
• How to define, understand and practice reuse.

Ask students to share their responses either as a group or in small groups.

Questions to help identify what waste is and how it impacts your community:

1. According to the film, what is the impact of waste on the South Bronx?
2. What constitutes waste?
3. What is the impact of waste on the community where you live?
   Possible responses include the following:
   • Bags and cans of waste
   • Vermin
   • After going shopping, people dispose of packaging
   • Litter
   • Dumping waste along the roadside

Comparative Analysis Exercise to go along with the above questions:

Break up into groups. Take 5 minutes to list the things that the students come up with that constitute waste. Classify your waste by type. Estimate the percentage of each type of waste. Visit the NYC Dept of Sanitation website and browse through the pie charts that summarize what is in New York City’s waste stream: http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/recycling/wcs_charts.shtml
As a class discuss how you classified your waste and how New York City classifies its waste. Were your percentage estimates similar to those in the New York City Waste Characterization Study? How does your community waste compare to the South Bronx as described in the documentary?

### NYC Waste Characterization Study

**2004/05 Waste Composition Annualized Results**

- Organics 38.89%
- Other Paper 6.76%
- Recyclable Paper 22.78%
- Recyclable Plastic 2.14%
- Recyclable Beverage Cartons 0.50%
- Recyclable 0.00%
- Miscellaneous Inorganics 0.70%
- Other Plastic 11.93%
- Household Hazardous Waste 0.25%
- Appliances/Electronics (incl. metal appliances) 1.24%
- C & D Debris 5.20%
- Metal 4.92%
- Glass 4.49%

**Questions to help understand where waste comes from and how it can be reduced:**

4. **What are the major sources of waste that come into your home?** Discuss where waste comes from.
   - Possible responses include the following:
     - Grocery store
     - Shopping mall
     - Garden

5. **How can waste be reduced from its source?**
   - Possible responses include the following:
     - Bring your own bag or box when you go shopping
     - Identify the types of packaging that are reusable or recyclable versus those that must be thrown away
     - Choose products that come with less packaging
     - Design lighter packaging
Questions to help define and understand reuse:

6. What does reuse mean, and what is the difference between reuse and recycling?
7. Why is the film titled *Shame on You: That can be Reused*?
8. What are the attitudes toward reuse expressed in the film? What are the attitudes toward reuse among your friends, family and community?
9. List the benefits of reuse.
10. Make a list of resources in your community to reuse items that might otherwise become waste.
11. Describe the experience of finding a treasure, or something you liked at Goodwill, Salvation Army or other thrift store.

**DAY TWO:** If time allows, we strongly recommend the following activity as a follow-up class.

**OBJECTIVE:** To strengthen students' understanding of recycling and its benefits, and to encourage them to look into their own communities to see what they can do.

**RECYCLING GAME** (20 minutes)

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** As many of the following materials as possible…

**Plastic:**
- Water bottle
- Frozen food pan*
- Berry box*
- Milk jug
- Yogurt cup*
- Margarine container*
- Detergent bottle*
- Plastic bag*
- Styrofoam*
- Plastic hanger*
- Vitamin bottle*
- Styrofoam egg carton*
- Styrofoam dish*
- Plastic fork, spoon, and knife*
- CD*

**Beverage cartons:**
- Milk carton
- Juice carton
- Juice box

**Paper:**
- Frozen food box
- Paper towel roll
- Newspaper
- Paperback book
- Pizza box (with no food, melted cheese stuck to the box)
- Kitty litter bag*
- Egg carton (cardboard only)
- Junk mail
- Catalog
- Shredded paper
- Cardboard
- Toilet paper roll (cardboard only)
- Cereal box
- Paper towel*
- Hardcover books*
- Spiral notebook*
Metal:
• Hangers
• Carbonated beverage can
• Food can
• Foil
• Misc metal, (keys, etc)

You will also need three bags: one blue, one green, and one black (or any trash bag).

After explaining what is recyclable and what is not, place all 3 bags in the front of the room. Have students come up to the table and put the materials in the appropriate bag.*

**TAKING ACTION:** (30 minutes)
The Following section offers various options for a homework assignment, a follow-up class or a combination of the two.

Look at your town, city or county website to explore the questions below and come up with a recycling plan of action in your community. If you cannot find the answers, identify and contact the government entity that oversees recycling.

First, find out how recycling works in your community and how to easily describe it:

1. How does recycling work in your community? List the types of materials that are collected.
2. Bring in literature that is provided by your municipality to explain the recycling program in your community. Could the students describe it better? Ask students to create a poster to better illustrate what items can be recycled, and how they should be sorted.

Second, find out what items can be recycled and where they go once recycled:

3. Have each person in the class bring in an item from their waste and identify if it can be recycled. Find out where the recyclable items go and if it is it possible to tour the recycling facility in your community.

* All items marked with an asterisk cannot be recycled and must be thrown in the trash bag. You may use the following website as a guide to what exactly can and cannot be recycled. Although it is New York standards, it serves as a useful guide for all US cities.
Third, explore its benefits and what's stopping your community from recycling:

4. Identify how much of your municipality’s waste is actually recycled and how much could potentially be recycled if everyone recycled everything that they could?
5. Is recycling profitable for your community?
6. Identify the biggest impediment to recycling in your community.

Fourth, find out exactly where your waste goes and what it costs to transport:

7. Where is your waste disposed of? Identify the landfills, incinerators and communities that accept waste from your community.
8. How far are those communities from your own? How many miles do trucks drive each year to dispose of your waste?
9. How much does it cost your community each year to transfer and tip waste at the incinerator or landfill? Can you identify non-monetary costs similar to those identified in the film?

Fifth, find out how communities that house waste facilities compare to yours:

10. How do the communities that house these facilities compare to yours?
11. Conduct an Internet search to identify organizations in those communities that you might contact to ask about the benefits and impacts of waste on their communities? What search terms would you use?

**CREATE YOUR ACTION PLAN:** After discussing some or all of the "Take Action" questions above, you are ready to write an action plan to recycle in your community. You can use the questions below as a guide:

- What actions could you take to reduce the waste that your community produces?
- Identify a starting point. At what level can you have a successful impact on reducing waste (individual, household, apartment building, block or neighborhood).
- What is the easiest thing you could do to take this one step further?
Resources

As a follow-up assignment, you can ask your students to research one of the organizations listed below and write a short paper that includes what these organizations are doing to raise awareness and promote recycling and what people can do to get more involved.

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES:

The Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), Office of Recycling Outreach & Education (OROE)
www.cenyc.org
The Council on the Environment of NYC (CENYC) is a hands-on non-profit that has been improving New York City's environment for over thirty years. The OROE works to improve the City's recycling rate by educating residents about recycling and waste prevention, and working with landlords to make sure building recycling programs are adequate. Our free services include apartment building waste audits, recycling workshops and training on other waste reduction, reuse and composting programs available to residents. OROE's five borough-wide coordinators are conducting intensive outreach efforts on a Community Board by Community Board basis, starting in CBs 1 in Brooklyn (Greenpoint, Williamsburg), Queens (Astoria, LIC, Sunnyside), Bronx (Port Morris, Mott Haven and Melrose) and Staten Island and CBs 10 and 11 in Manhattan (Central and East Harlem).

The Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC) at Clark Atlanta University
http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/Welcome.html
The Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC) at Clark Atlanta University was formed in 1994 to serve as a research, policy, and information clearinghouse on issues related to environmental justice, race and the environment, civil rights and human rights, facility siteing, land use planning, brownfields, transportation equity, suburban sprawl and smart growth, energy, global climate change, and climate justice. The overall goal of the center is to assist, support, train, and educate people of color students, professionals, and grassroots community leaders with the goal of facilitating their inclusion into the mainstream of decision-making. The center is multi-disciplinary in its focus and approach. It serves as a bridge among the social and behavioral sciences, health professionals, natural and physical sciences, engineering, management, and legal disciplines to prevent and solve environmental and health problems. The center's programs build on the work that it staff has been engaged in for over two decades.
**Green Worker Cooperatives**
greenworker.coop
Green Worker Cooperatives is a South Bronx-based organization dedicated to aiding in the creation of worker-owned and environmentally friendly cooperatives in the South Bronx. Their approach is a response to high unemployment and decades of environmental injustice in the South Bronx community. Their goal is to create a sustainable green economy in the South Bronx through the generation of a large amount of green-collar jobs.

**The National Recycling Coalition**
www.nrc-recycle.org
The National Recycling Coalition (NRC) is a national non-profit advocacy group with members that span all aspects of waste reduction, reuse and recycling in North America. The Coalition represents advocates from every region of the country, in every sector of the waste reduction field. Local recycling coordinators, state and federal regulators, corporate environmental managers, environmental educators and advocates, consumers and waste management professionals are all members of NRC.

**The National Resources Defense Council (NRDC)**
www.nrdc.org
The NRDC was founded in 1970 and is now one of the most powerful environmental action organizations in the nation, with a list of members numbering 1.2 million. They have helped write some of the country’s laws regarding the environment and work to fight issues such as global warming and environmental justice, and have extensive information on both topics. Called "A credible and forceful advocate for stringent environmental protection" by The National Journal, their website also features detailed guidelines of what is acceptable to recycle and what cannot be recycled in New York City.

**OurEarth.org**
www.ourearth.org
OurEarth.org, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental organization based in Baltimore, MD. The purpose of the OurEarth.org website is to raise awareness, educate the public, and ultimately make it easier for everyone to be environmentally responsible. To do so, we have created a website that enables individuals, organizations, and communities from across the country to share environmental information and ideas which we hope will both aid their efforts and provide the public with a useful resource. They have an extensive section detailing local and national recycling programs in the US.
Recycle This!
www.recylethisnyc.org
Recycle This! is a grassroots waste reduction & recycling activist group that works throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Their focus is not just recycling, but the entire process of recycling; reducing, reusing, and rethinking garbage in New York City. Their goal is for there to be sustainable waste management and recycling in NYC.

Sustainable South Bronx
www.ssbx.org
Sustainable South Bronx(SSBx) is a nonprofit environmental justice organization founded and led by Majora Carter. The organization spearheaded the creation of Hunts Point Riverside Park, the first piece of the projected South Bronx Greenway. It is also involved in "green roof" projects, and has a program called the Bronx Environmental Stewardship Program (B.E.S.T.) a skills training program focused on "green-collar jobs. They are also proposing a Bronx Recycling Center as an alternative use for a piece of land where the city government currently wants to construct a prison, and are engaged in developing "a collection of businesses in which the waste and byproducts of one business are the raw materials for another one." They have in the past succeeded in bringing waterfront access to the South Bronx, created two parks, and spread the green roof initiative across the borough.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Resources for Teens
http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/teens/resources.htm
The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and the environment. Since 1970, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people. The links provided on this page are intended to increase YOUR environmental awareness and inspire YOUR participation in environmental activities. They will help you to THINK and ACT “environmentally” on your way to becoming an environmental steward.

World Environmental Organization
www.world.org/weo/recycle
The World Environmental Organization (World.Org) is devoted to the preservation of the natural diversity of plant and animal species, and their habitats, through the prevention of environmental degradation and destruction. World.Org develops and implements scientific strategies for decreasing fossil fuel use, preventing climate change, and preserving plant and animal species and their habitats.