



## Lesson Plan 120104

“Green Holiday Night” or “Green Family Night”  
(Target: Grades 3-6)

### Objectives:

1. Create awareness of alternatives to wasteful, non-environmental holiday season and general gift-giving practices.
2. Generate discussion about ideas for saving energy in holiday celebrations and day-to-day practices.
3. Develop list of activities for a “Green Holiday” Night (or a “Green Family” Night)

### Materials:

1. Dry-Erase Board and Wipe-Off Markers - OR -
2. Bulletin Board, 4 x 6” Note Cards, Pushpins and Broad-tip Markers
3. “Ask Rustle About Green Holidays” Page\*
4. One Copy of “Green Holiday” Activity Page\* for each student

(\*Included with this document)

### Methods:

1. **Read Aloud:** “Ask Rustle About Green Holidays”. (5 minutes)
2. **Group Participation:** After reading the Ask Rustle page, fill in the blanks of the review paragraph orally, in class. Ask the students to raise their hands and provide answers to the fill-in blanks. (5 minutes)
3. **Individual Work:** Once the review paragraph is completed by the class, ask the students to complete the crossword puzzle. (10 minutes)
4. (Option) **Individual Work, Color Classroom Comic:** Give students time to color Classroom Comic (15 minutes). Students can send finished comics to GO NATUR’L STUDIOS, LLC., 1106 Meridian Plaza, Suite 463, Anderson, IN 46016. Student submissions will be entered in a monthly drawing for a free Rustle the Leaf T-Shirt.
5. **Classroom Discussion:** A “Green Holiday (or Green Family) Night” (information follows). Ask students to give you their thoughts on ways that, for one night (could be associated with holiday or not), their family could have a “Green Night” on a weekend night. Challenge them to think about ways in which their ‘average’ evening requires the use of energy and other resources. Using the marker board or bulletin board, write down student suggestions and have the students create a list of ideas for having their own “Green Night” at home.

### Lesson Information:

1. **The Objective:** Get your students and their friends, families, etc. to have a ‘low-energy’ activity night (Green Family Night). The evening can be associated with a holiday occasion, or be planned just for the sake of learning to be more environmentally responsible.
2. **What is a “Green Holiday (or Green Family) Night?”** Imagine a night at home with your family, during which you try to use as little energy as possible, while still having fun and enjoying each other’s company. That’s a “Green Holiday (or Green Family) Night.”
3. **Reducing Energy:** What do we usually do on a weekend night at home?
  - Watch television or movies (in more than one room)
  - Listen to stereo/MP3 player, etc.
  - Play video games, GameBoy, etc.
  - Surf or IM friends on the computer
  - Leave lights on in several rooms

All of these activities or habits use up a lot of energy. Most of that energy--even electricity--is generated by burning fuel such as oil or coal. Burning fuel creates pollution, and causes a wide range of problems for all living things. For one night, the objective is to find ways to have a fun, entertaining evening while using as little energy as possible.

4. **Having Good “Old-Fashioned” Fun:** Once all the energy-gobbling devices have been turned off, it’s time to turn your attention to having some energy-free fun!
  - Board games (pick kid’s favorites)
  - Card games (UNO, ‘Go Fish’)
  - Craft Activity (for holiday, string popcorn or cranberry garland; for other days, build collages of family photos for framing)
  - Write a “Family Letter” to friends about the past year; write a letter to your elected officials, asking them what they have done to help reduce pollution.
  - At the end of the evening, write down some ideas for your next “Green Night”, and set a date for when you’ll get together and do it all again!



**Dear Rustle:**

**Our family gets so much stuff every year at the holidays. What can we do to be more friendly to the environment?**

**-- Jessica, Columbia, MO**

Dear Jessica:

Your question is a little tricky, because not everyone has a 'holiday tradition.' So it's important to start by reminding everyone that we should always respect the opinions and beliefs of others. Having made that point, let me answer your question about how to make holiday celebrations more Earth-friendly. According to a recent survey, over 85% of the people in North America participate in Christmas holiday celebrations. Another 4% participate in Hanukkah observances. Combined, that percentage represents over 240 million North Americans, and that doesn't include another 800 million or so people in other parts of the world who also identify themselves with those traditions. Because most of these holiday celebrations are focused on shopping, giving gifts and putting up decorations, a great deal of trash and waste is created. How much?

Every year, more than 5 million tons of extra trash is created JUST FROM THE HOLIDAY SEASON. Can you imagine? That's 10 billion pounds of gift wrap, cards, packing materials, boxes, plastic ribbons, product packaging, discarded decorations, cut trees and more. As shocking as that number is, it's even more shocking to think about all the energy and chemicals and toxins that are used in the manufacturing of all those items--and in their transportation from factories to stores to homes and finally to trash dumping sites. And every year, as the population grows, the amount of energy use, toxic waste and trash increases.

Do those facts curb your holiday cheer? I can understand why they might. But, with a little extra care and effort, your family's holiday celebration can be fun, meaningful and environmentally friendly. Here are a few suggestions:

- If your family usually buys a cut pine tree, ask your parents to consider buying two or three small live trees (3-foot tall) in pots

instead. Your family can arrange them like a small stand of trees by using milk crates or wooden boxes of varying heights, then covering their bases with tree blankets and decorating them as usual. After the holidays, you can plant the trees in the yard or donate them to a park when the weather permits. (IMPORTANT: IF YOU LIVE IN A COLD-WEATHER AREA, BE SURE YOUR PARENT OR ANOTHER GROWN-UP ASKS A TREE FARM EMPLOYEE ABOUT CARING FOR THE TREES UNTIL THE GROUND IS WARM ENOUGH TO DIG HOLES AND PLANT THEM.)

- Reduce the amount of paper you use in your holiday celebrations! Send ecards online instead of buying bleached, printed cards. (Check out our holiday cards at [www.rustletheleaf.com/ecards.html](http://www.rustletheleaf.com/ecards.html)). Reuse wrapping paper and ribbons. Use gift bags that can be folded, stored and reused year after year. Fabrics and cord ties make beautiful, reusable gift wrapping that can become a familiar part of your family tradition and can be handed down generation after generation. Does going to this much effort to save paper seem silly? Remember, it takes 20 large trees and up to 7,000 gallons of water to make one ton of paper.
- Use unbleached paper and recycled papers instead of the 'regular' stuff. Unbleached paper and some neat rubber stamps and colored ink pads are an environmentally responsible alternative to printed papers. Also, be sure to avoid ALL paper products that have a metallic finish. These papers are virtually impossible to recycle, and some very harsh, toxic chemicals were used to give them their metallic appearance.
- Ask your parents to go through all the holiday catalogs and other holiday mail from companies selling merchandise. Ask them to contact each company that they don't order from, and request that your family be taken off their mailing list. It may seem like a small thing, but millions and millions of pounds of paper are wasted on catalogs that often go right from the mailbox into the trash can.
- Choose gifts that do not have much paper or plastic packaging. Consider gift

certificates or gifts to events such as a sports events, movies, concerts or plays, for which no packaging is required. Hand-made gifts from local artists are often very special and seem more personal; best of all, they don't use much packaging.

- When your family or friends are going on shopping trips, try to carpool with other friends or neighbors. Less cars at the mall means less waiting in traffic jams and less fossil fuel wasted.

As you can see, Jessica, there are quite a few things you can do to reduce holiday trash and energy use. And these suggestions are just a start! While researching your question, I met several new friends who have web sites that provide a lot more great information about how to have an environment-friendly holiday. I've included links to their sites at the end of my letter.

Thanks, again, for your question, Jessica. And remember: whether you have a 'holiday tradition' or not, there are always ways to help reduce pollution and to be more considerate for our wonderful Earth. I hope you'll write and let me know if your family or friends tried some of these excellent, pollution-saving holiday ideas.

Your Friend,



Web Sites that provided information for the answer to your letter:

[www.eartheasy.com/gift\\_wrapping.htm](http://www.eartheasy.com/gift_wrapping.htm)

[www.conservatree.com](http://www.conservatree.com)

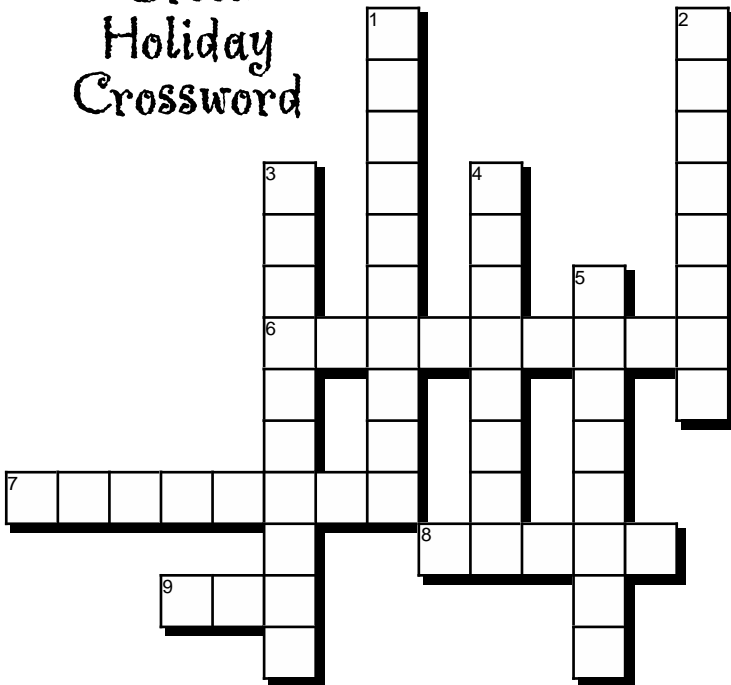
[www.bellaonline.com/articles/art25408.asp](http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art25408.asp)

[www.boonecountyky.org/BCSWM/TrimWasteLine.htm](http://www.boonecountyky.org/BCSWM/TrimWasteLine.htm)

Read the "Ask Rustle the Leaf About..." page and fill in the blanks below:

Every year, over \_\_\_\_\_ tons of extra holiday trash are created. Some of the trash includes (name 3 things) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. There are many ways that we can reduce the amount of holiday trash. If you are going to use wrapping paper, be sure it's \_\_\_\_\_, since making a ton of new paper uses as much as \_\_\_\_\_ gallons of water and up to \_\_\_\_\_ large trees. Also, when your friends or family are going shopping, try and \_\_\_\_\_, so fewer vehicles are burning fuel and traffic congestion is reduced. Finally, choose gifts that use very little \_\_\_\_\_, such as gift certificates or \_\_\_\_\_ to sporting events, movies or concerts.

## Green Holiday Crossword



### DOWN

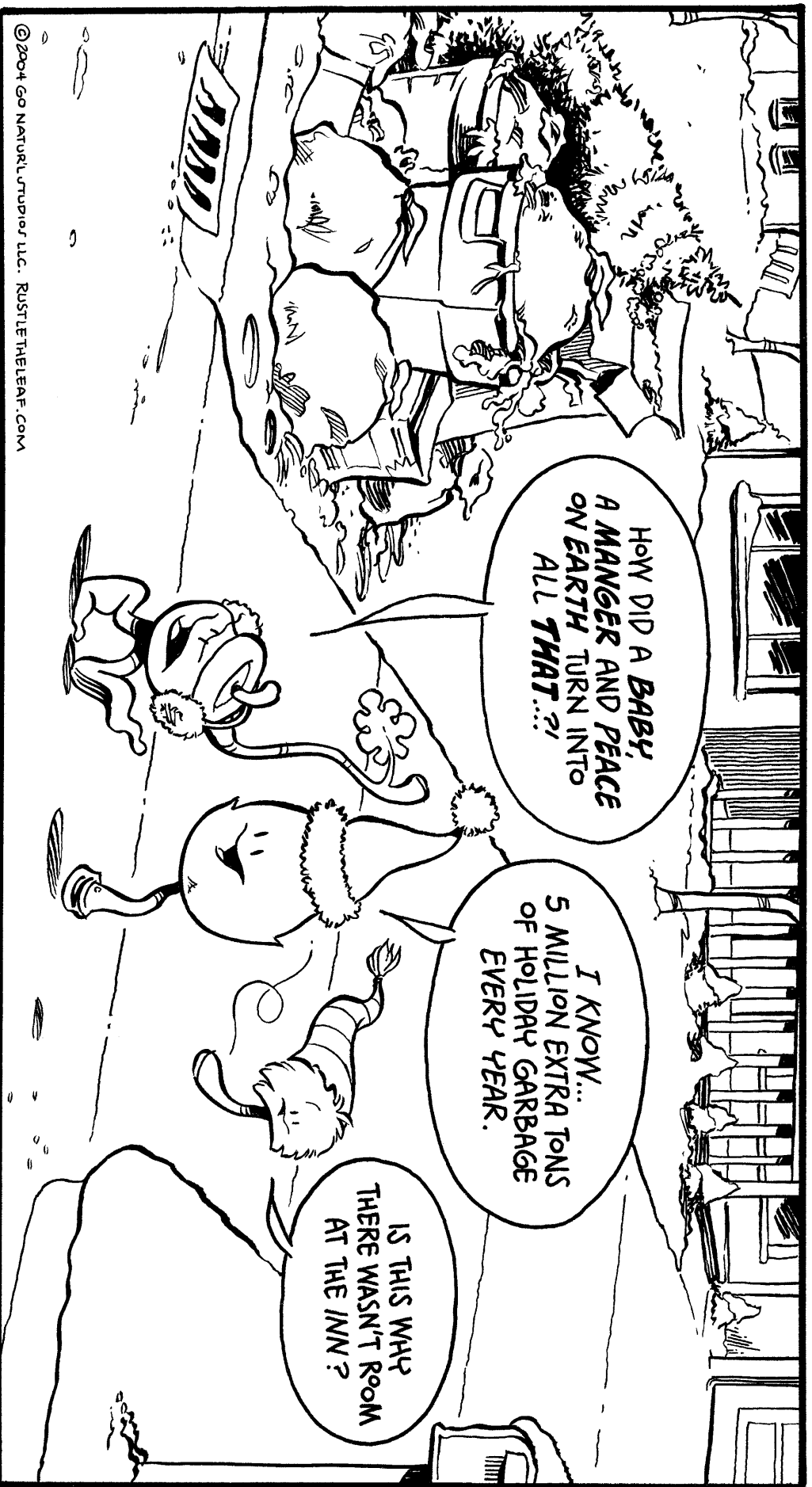
1. This paper is brown in color because it has not been turned white by chlorine and other toxic chemicals.
2. Millions of these are sent out for mail order shopping, but many are never used and to right into the trash.
3. Word that means taking several people to the same place in one vehicle, instead of everyone driving separately.
4. Avoid wrapping paper with this finish, because toxic chemicals are required to produce its shiny surface.
5. Alternative to a cut tree. Can be planted when the weather gets warmer in the Spring.

### ACROSS

6. Different combinations of cardboard, paper and plastic that are made into containers for retail products. Often very wasteful and unnecessary.
7. This kind of paper uses 60% less energy to produce, because some of the pulp has already been used before.
8. Sent through the internet, saving paper, postage and transportation cost of regular greeting cards.
9. Making this much new paper uses up to 7,000 gallons of water and 20 large trees.

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## CLASSROOM COMIC



According to 2001 estimates, the extra 'Holiday Trash' created from Thanksgiving Day through New Years' Day amounts to 5 million tons. There are many ways that we can all reduce the amount of trash we create as part of our holiday traditions. For ideas about what you can do, visit [http://eartheasy.com/gift\\_wrapping.htm](http://eartheasy.com/gift_wrapping.htm) AND <http://www.conservatree.com/paper/AddIPProducts.shtml>