

## **The Greenville Garbage Solution**

Rosy and Ronald Robinson lived in the quiet, little town of Greenville in a quaint, little green house with their father, Raymond. Their house was located right next to the town's landfill site where Raymond had worked for many years. The children lived contently in their little green house, playing in their large yard, happily watching their father at work, sorting and disposing of the town's trash.

Then, seemingly without warning, things started to change. Raymond was busier at work; he had to work longer hours and was very tired when he arrived home. The children noticed garbage piling up in the landfill. They could no longer watch their father work, their view obstructed by mounds of refuse. Never had this happened before.

One morning, Rosy and Ronald saw something quite peculiar from their bedroom window. The pile of garbage in the landfill seemed to have grown even larger overnight. In fact, it looked like the head of an enormous monster, watching them from its ghastly lair. All day long it glared at them with its scrap tire eyes, sniffed in its stench with a rusted-out trashcan for a nose, grimaced at them with a cracked and grimy bathtub for its mouth, and all the while a black cloud of thousands of filthy, feverish flies swarmed and buzzed above its ugly head.

Night after night, as the children tried to sleep, they heard the most frightful noises: the scraping and grinding of metal, the mashing and slopping of rotting vegetables, the crunching and popping of broken glass...and the sounds seemed to travel nearer and nearer as each night went on. Morning after morning, they awoke to find that the garbage monster had inched its way closer and closer to the fence that surrounded their little green house, clearly determined to slurp and slop over whatever lay in its path.

Before they had the chance to devise a clever plan of defense, that repulsive mound of rubbish had crept past the fence, up the pathway, and into their dooryard. Rosy and Ronald

could no longer go outside to play as their large yard was now the domain of the garbage monster, a kingdom filled with unsightly refuse: dented pop cans, dirty newspapers, decomposing potato peelings, dilapidated shopping carts, discarded shoes, dirty diapers...every disgusting thing that you could imagine. Rosy and Ronald knew that they had to do something, something big, in order to rid their yard of this appalling pile of pestilence. It was obvious to them that, if they chose to do nothing, their little green house would soon be overtaken by this most unwelcome guest.

When their father arrived home from work that evening, very tired and very dirty, the two brought their concerns to his attention. As he had been working such long, wearisome hours, leaving for work before the sun was up and coming home after it had set, he simply hadn't noticed the garbage piling up in his own yard. But, being a good father, Raymond listened to his children attentively and offered suggestions as to how the problem could be fixed.

*Tell everyone you know to start **recycling** without delay:*

*Paper, plastics, cans, and glass, every bottle and cardboard tray!*

*Tell your teachers, friends, and neighbours that this can no longer be overlooked.*

*If we don't take action now, we'll be up to our knees in garbage gook!*

So, the children got busy. They did exactly what their father had told them to do - they pleaded with the people of Greenville to start recycling. And, after a few weeks, the garbage monster had started to creep away from their dooryard and back down the path. But it stopped there, flies a-buzz above its head, watching them defiantly, unwilling to be moved any further.

A week passed, and their father arrived home from work again, tired and dirty, but not as tired and dirty as he had been. Rosy and Ronald wondered aloud as to what they could do next to get this garbage monster out of their yard and back to the landfill where it belonged. Their father, being a man of action and good ideas, offered this advice:

*Tell everyone you know to start **reusing** all they can:*

*Plastic bags, clothes, toys, jars, even old cast iron frying pans.*

*Tell your teachers, friends, and neighbours that this can no longer be overlooked.*

*If we don't take action now, we'll be up to our knees in garbage gook!*

So, the children got busy again. They did exactly what their father had told them to do and noticed that, after a few weeks, the garbage monster had crept further down the path and past the gate in the fence. But it stopped there, as smug as could be, knowing that all it had to do was wait - wait for the town's resolve to end and for the residents to go back to their old, indifferent, lazy ways. When that time arrived, the garbage monster would be quite pleased to reclaim his lost lands.

Nonetheless, as a consequence of all of their hard work in getting people to recycle and reuse, their father started arriving home earlier than he had in months. He was not so tired and not so dirty; in fact, he had time to play a game of croquet with them in the yard. While they were playing, the children mentioned that they were quite pleased that the garbage monster was headed in the right direction, back to his home in the landfill, but, being thorough children, they wanted him back in his hole completely, desperately wanting to rub the smug look off its face. To this, their father sighed, "Children, you have done a great deal in our community to raise awareness about recycling and reusing items that were once destined for the trashcan, and I am very proud of you for doing this. Recycling and reusing help to reduce the amount of garbage that ends up in our landfill. However, people need to understand that they must reduce what they buy, right from the start. When they do this, there will be much less garbage all together, and much less need to recycle and reuse. But this is a very difficult concept to get people to buy into, as many think that they need all that they have. Many believe that they need more."

That night around the dinner table, the three came up with a list of things that they could do to reduce the amount of waste that their household produced, and the list was long.

Nonetheless, they needed to start somewhere, so each chose one thing that they would do to start reducing. Raymond said that he would build a compost bin where all the food and yard waste could go to make fertilizer for his vegetable and flower gardens. Rosy offered to make “litter-free lunches” for the three of them to take to school and work: she would use cloth napkins instead of paper and reusable containers instead of plastic baggies to store their food. Ronald decided that he could live without the brand new super duper car jumping race track (if he *had* too) that he so desperately wanted to buy and planned on building his own with his father out of scraps that they had lying around the garage. But, in order for their new idea to catch on and to keep the garbage monster in his rightful place in the landfill, they again had to spread the word, so together they penned a letter to the editor of the newspaper.

*Good citizens of Greenville, we have one more challenge to face:*

*We must **reduce** what we buy and **reduce** what we use in order to **reduce** our waste.*

*This task is not impossible – it’s a storm that we can weather.*

*This is a choice that we can make, and we can make it together.*

*So let’s all recycle, reuse, and reduce.*

*Do these everyday – it’s a must!*

*Because when we stop taking care of our beautiful Earth,*

*She will stop taking care of us.*

And so the Robinsons got busy reducing, and their actions influenced others to follow suit. Soon the entire town of Greenville was busy recycling, reusing, and reducing. Because everyone pitched in to solve the garbage problem, the garbage monster begrudgingly slopped its way back to its hole in the landfill where it sits to this very day...right where it belongs.

Possible discussion questions for  
*The Greenville Garbage Solution*

1. Does your household recycle? Name five items that you recycle. Could you recycle more items?
2. Does your household reuse items? Name five items that you reuse. Could you reuse more items?
3. When we recycle and reuse items, we reduce the amount of waste that goes to our landfill sites. In addition to this, all of us need to start reducing what we buy and use right from the start. By doing this, we will reduce the amount of waste that we produce altogether. List three things that you currently use now that you could live without.
4. Have you ever considered that, when you buy something at a store, you are responsible for the entire purchase? That includes the packaging. Some items that we buy are heavily packaged and some of that packaging is not recyclable. What could you do to reduce the amount of garbage produced from packaging?
5. There is a fourth “R” and that stands for *refusing*. For example, there are many products for sale in my grocery store. I *refuse* to buy products that are not sold in recyclable containers, even if I like the product. What could you *refuse* to do/to buy to help our environment? Could you refuse a drive to school and walk or cycle instead? Name some other ideas.
6. Have you ever been to your community’s landfill site? In your opinion, does your community have a garbage problem? Waste management is everyone’s responsibility. What could you do to help your community solve its garbage problem?
7. Do you know what happens to recycled items once they leave your house? If you don’t, how could you find out?