

Name: _____

Lesson 32

Period: _____

The Dark Side of Curbside Recycling

Directions. Read the *Handy Dandy Guide* and the mystery. Read the clues. Be careful.

While all the clues are correct, only some are *useful* in solving the mystery. Decide which clues are most relevant to solving the mystery. Use the clues and one or more of the ideas from the *Handy Dandy Guide* to figure out a solution to the mystery. Write your solution.

Handy Dandy Guide

1. People *choose*.
2. People's choices involve *costs*.
3. People respond to *incentives* in predictable ways.
4. People create *economic systems* that influence individual choices and incentives.
5. People gain when they *trade* voluntarily.
6. People's choices have consequences that lie in the *future*.

The Mystery

Many Americans are taught at an early age about the importance of recycling. Most of us dutifully separate paper, plastic, glass, and cans and haul these things down to the curb on the assigned day of the week. We all feel better knowing we are helping our community and the environment.

Yet some critics have argued that curbside recycling may actually harm our community and the environment.

How could there be a downside to something as benign as recycling? How can recycling harm our environment?

The Clues

1. Recycling is not a new idea. Aluminum, glass, copper, and iron are among the materials people have recycled for many years. They have recycled these materials because they have market value; somebody is willing to buy them.
2. Much of the waste collected at the curb for recycling has no market value.
3. Community groups once used "paper sales" as a way to raise money. Sales projects of this sort have been made obsolete by curbside recycling programs.
4. Since it is common to have two haulers of curbside waste—one for the garbage and one for material to be recycled—the amount of energy used to collect waste, and the pollution emitted by trucks used in collections, is now twice the amount it would otherwise be.
5. Many cities have special programs to educate the public about the importance of recycling.
6. The vast majority of Americans cooperate with local government's recycling plans.
7. Landfill space is available in most cities. Some cities compete to get the garbage of others.
8. The per capita production of solid waste by American households has remained steady through 2000.

Record your solution and explain it briefly here:
