COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT

This unit addresses issues of shared responsibility for the community and the environment

Ryan's Treasures – a story for Key Stage 1 200

Wild Life – a story for Key Stage 2 207

Bossy about Badger – a story for Key Stage 2 215

Litter Bug – a board game introducing issues relating to re-cycling rubbish 225

It's Broken! – an exercise to encourage reflective thinking 229

Ryan's Treasures

Key ideas

- responsibility for the environment
- working together
- respect and concern for others

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Below are some of the issues you could explore arising from the story. Remember to ask the children if they would like to raise any issues of their own for discussion.

Moral reasoning

- Was Wayne right to poke fun at Ryan? Think of all the reasons you can for your answer.
- Should people use things again if they can, rather than throw them away? Why do you think this?
- Do you prefer it when your surroundings, such as the playground, are not untidy and littered? If you have answered "yes", do you yourself help to keep it tidy, or do you leave it to someone else?
- What kinds of litter do you see around you, eg on the street or in the park? Make a class list on the board. Where has it come from? Who has left it there? Are people deliberately untidy or just thoughtless, do you think? Who should clear it away?
- If you saw some friends of yours dropping litter in the playground or in the street, what could you say to them to persuade them to be tidier? Share your ideas about this.
- People sometimes drop things which can be dangerous for others. Think of some examples of dangerous things you might find lying around and who might be hurt by them.
- It is against the law to drop litter but this law is quite difficult to enforce. Is it a good law? Why do you think this?

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- People sometimes drop things which can be dangerous for others. Think of some examples of dangerous things you might find lying around and who might be hurt by them.
- It is against the law to drop litter but this law is quite difficult to enforce. Is it a good law? Why do you think this?

- Think of some rules which would help keep different places clean and tidy, eg at home, in the classroom, in the local shopping precinct or high street.
- Suppose you were trying really hard to be tidy because you knew untidiness distressed your teacher. Suppose, too, that no one else in your class was bothering so you began to wonder if it was worth the effort. Would you be right or wrong if you decided not to be tidy any more?

Thinking things through

- Some people say that many things in the shops are wrapped up in too much paper and plastic. Do you agree? What evidence is there for this? Why do you think this is done? Is there anything you can do about this?
- What do you think about the way Wayne treated Ryan? Why do people behave like that? Would they like it themselves if they were teased?
- Do you agree with Wayne that new toys are best? What is it that makes a really good toy?
- What kind of duty do we have to try to preserve the environment as much as we can, in your opinion?

Community building

- What should children be careful of in collecting rubbish as Ryan did? Draw up a list of rules or suggestions for other children about collecting rubbish.
- What places can you think of in your area where too much rubbish is left lying around? Why do you think these places are untidy? Is there anything that can be done about it?

Ryan's Treasures

Ryan was five and he lived in a block of flats with his Mum and big brother Wayne, who was nine. One of Ryan's favourite things was to find what he called his "secret treasures". Ryan's treasures were things like toilet roll tubes, wrapping paper and plastic trays from chocolate boxes. He found treasure in all kinds of places – in the park, in the school playground and even lying around at home. To Ryan, a treasure was something useful that other people had finished with.

One day Ryan found a treasure sticking out of the hedge in the park. It was a very good treasure to find, so Ryan looked all around to see if anyone was watching before he pulled it out and examined it. It was like a flat sheet of plastic with the round shape of half a ball sticking up in the middle. Ryan wondered where it might have come from. Perhaps it had been in a shop on one of those display stands that holds lots and lots of things on cards.

Ryan carefully put the treasure in his pocket, took it home, and the next time Wayne went out to play, he cleaned it up and put it in a big box under the bed with all his other treasures. He was already thinking of things he could make with it.

The next day was Saturday, so he took out the plastic shape and some other pieces of treasure and got Mum to help him spread out old newspapers on the kitchen table. Then he went for the glue, scissors and sticky tape.

Ryan began work and in no time at all, using part of a cornflakes packet, a few pieces of string, some silver foil and the plastic thing, he was soon on the way to making a splendid space ship. But just as he was about to start painting it, Wayne came home from playing with his friends.

Ryan knew what was going to happen because it always happened when Wayne caught him making things.

"What are you making?" Wayne asked, throwing off his outdoor shoes.

"Something," said Ryan, not giving anything away.

"But what?" asked Wayne again.

"It's a secret."

"It's rubbish, you mean," Wayne said, poking the model.

"Leave it alone!" said Ryan, trying to push Wayne away. "Mum!"

"I suppose it's a space ship," Wayne said, smirking, "a space ship for rubbish, a rubbish ship. All your models are rubbish."

"They are not!"

"Why don't you get a proper space ship like the one I had for Christmas. It's got lights that light up, and you can open the cockpit and take out the space people. You can't do that with your rubbish ship."

"Because I don't want to, now leave me alone!" Ryan shouted. But Wayne kept on. Next to playing football, his favourite thing was teasing Ryan until he cried.

"What this?" he said, pointing to the round plastic shape Ryan had found in the hedge. "It's no good for a space ship. It's no good for anything. If it was any good, people wouldn't have thrown it away in the first place."

Ryan tried to ignore his brother. Where was Mum? he thought.

"Your treasures are dirty," Wayne went on. "Rubbish should be thrown away, not used again for playing with. You'll catch something like Black Death. We did about that at school. Everyone died." And Wayne held up his hands in a spooky shape like a ghost.

"It's not dirty," Ryan shouted. "I washed it and washed my hands too. You're just trying to scare me."

Just then Mum came in and Wayne ran off to watch TV.

"Mum, Wayne says my space ship's rubbish," said Ryan. "He wouldn't leave me alone. Tell him, Mum."

"I keep telling him," Mum said, wearily. "I'm sick of telling him to stop teasing you. It wouldn't be so bad if he played with the space ship I bought him. After two days he was bored with it. Said he couldn't think of any more things to do with it."

"It's his space ship that's rubbish, not mine," said Ryan. "I can do anything I want with mine."

Ryan took his new model up to his bedroom and pulled out the box of treasures. He really liked talking to some of his creatures. Like the zigzag snake which he made from the long bit of paper which came out of the till at the supermarket. The snake had a

face drawn on it and a painted back. He could curl around the leg of Ryan's bed and listen to Ryan's ideas.

One day, Ryan told the zigzag snake that he was going to take him and one of the other treasures to school, to show them his classroom.

"You won't tell Wayne, will you?" Ryan said, and the zigzag snake shook his head.

"Who shall we take with us?" asked Ryan, showing the snake all the treasure models lined up in a row. The snake pointed to the matchbox spider.

"Hooray!" shouted Ryan. "That's who I would have chosen." And he carefully packed the spider and the snake into his school bag ready for the morning.

By the time Ryan arrived in school next day, it was time to take the register. This was what Ryan was looking forward to, because after the register, the children could show things from home. He slipped his zigzag snake and his matchbox spider out of his bag and carried them carefully to the carpet where they sat for registration. He sat down, crossing his legs and holding the treasures carefully in both hands. Lucy, one of the girls he played with sometimes, stroked his spider's back quietly. Another of his friends, Carlton, poked him in the arm and said: "Did you make that snake? S'good!" Ryan said nothing. He was trying to be very good so that Mrs Datchett would let him stand up to show the treasures. The register seemed to take for ever.

At last Mrs Datchett put ten fingers in the air which was her way of seeing who was listening, and when the class was quiet she said softly: "Who has brought something to show today?" Ryan sat up very straight and put up his hand. He looked around him to see if any other children had their hands up too. But today, he was the only person who had something to show. Ryan stood up and made his way to the front of the carpet to stand by Mrs Datchett. He could feel his face getting red.

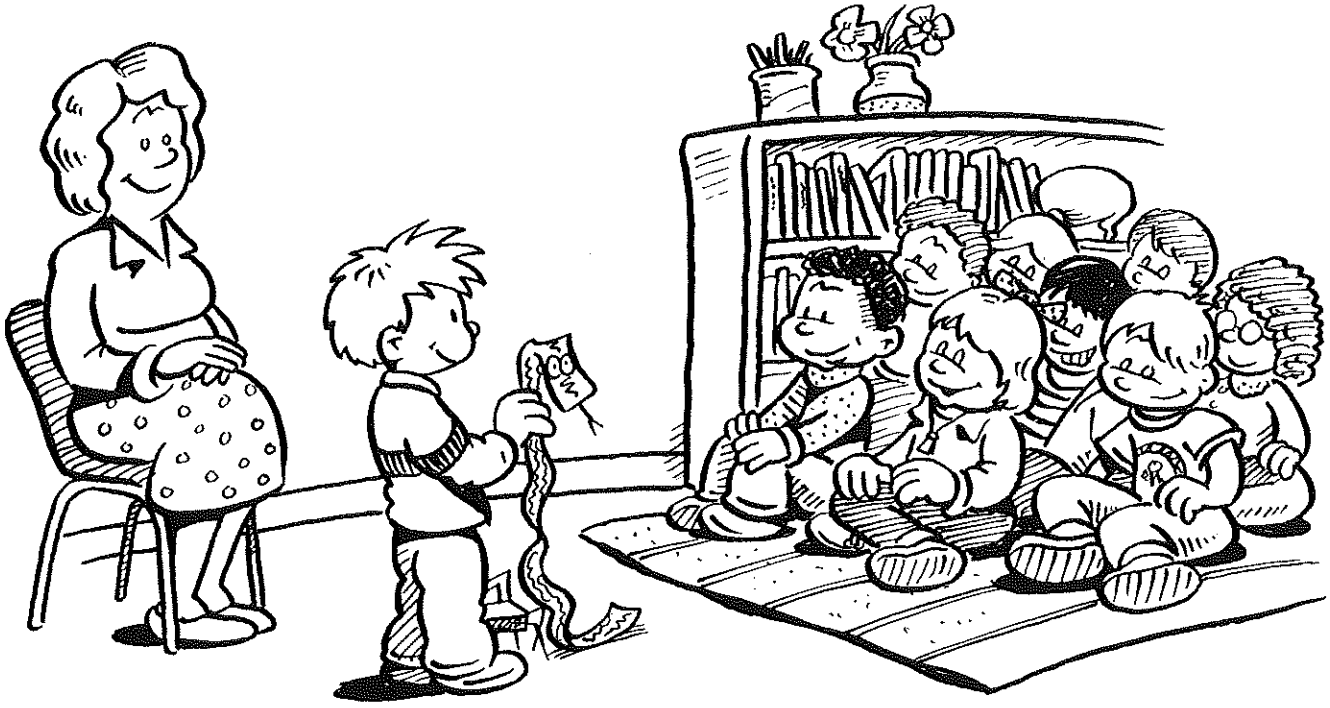
As he turned to face the class the sight of everyone staring at him made Ryan's heart beat very hard. Suddenly he found himself wondering whether everyone would think his treasures were rubbish, too, just like Wayne.

"Well, Ryan, what is it you're going to show us?" Mrs Datchett asked. "Don't keep us in suspense."

Slowly Ryan opened his hands to show her what was in them, and her face crinkled into a smile.

"Well, well, Ryan! What have we here?" she said, helping him to turn his hands so that the other children could see. Some of the children in the front knelt forward and tried to touch the zigzag snake and the matchbox spider.

"How did you do that?" said Linda, who had not been in the class very long.



Mrs Datchett asked Ryan to tell everyone about his models. Though he was still very nervous, Ryan told everyone how he collected old things and turned them into something new and better.

"My Mum won't let me keep rubbish, Miss!" Kevin shouted out. "It's dirty. She says you should throw it away." Then the other children started talking all at once – "Yes, it's just rubbish." "My Daddy says never ever pick anything up." Ryan felt all hot and cold and a bit sick.

"Now now, Class 1," called Mrs Datchett, raising her voice for the first time that day. "Everyone show me ten fingers." Gradually, the class went quiet as everyone waggled their fingers in the air.

Putting an arm around Ryan when it was all quiet again, Mrs Datchett said, with a twinkle in her eye: "Ryan's treasures have given me a very good idea." And she began to explain.

And that was the beginning of a big class project which they called THE ENVIRONMENT. Ryan and the other children learned about "dirty" rubbish which could not be made safe for playing with, and "clean" rubbish which could be cleaned up for playing with. They made a collection of treasures, first from their own classroom, then in the infant corridor, then in the infant playground. And they collected lots of treasures which they made into creatures and things with glue and paint, just like at home in Ryan's kitchen only even better because the school glue was stronger and you could make things with other people. And some of the children brought their own clean rubbish from home. Carlton and Ryan made some more spiders to keep the first spider company.

That was Ryan's favourite project ever.

One day, towards the end of term, Ryan was late out of class and Wayne came looking for him. Wayne was amazed to see the classroom full of

playworld characters and creations – and on the big wall was a huge display called *"Clean and Dirty Rubbish"*, which all the children had helped with.

Mrs Datchett came over to say hello.

"You should be very proud of Ryan, you know," she said. "All of this project came from Ryan's idea of re-using old things at home." Ryan looked up at his teacher. He felt very proud.

"It's all right, I suppose," said Wayne. "Come on, Ryan, Mum's waiting."

"Tell her to come in and see the display," said Mrs Datchett, "and see how clean and tidy the playground is now," she added.

Wayne said nothing, but led Ryan across to the gate where Mum was talking to Carlton's Mum.

"Well – what took you so long?" said Mum. Wayne said nothing.

"Wayne was looking at our exhibition, Mum. Mrs Datchett says you should come and see it, too."

"Okay, then, but not today. Is it good Wayne?"

"It's a load of rubbish," said Wayne.

But after that day, Wayne never again teased Ryan for making his treasure models. In fact, once he even gave something to Ryan for his collection. It was the broken cockpit of his toy space ship.

Wild Life

Key ideas

- the responsibility of individuals towards the environment and the shared property of the school community
- group responsibilities towards each other
- vandalism and its consequences
- the causes of anti-social behaviour

This story is about the anti-social actions of a boy who vandalises the school pond out of a sense of frustration and anger. It presents the very obvious wrongness of the act alongside an opportunity to understand what might lie behind it. Classes often have to cope with the behaviour of disruptive children and this can present problems for both teacher and class. Children may ask why the disruptive child should be treated differently or why the rest of the class should be sympathetic and tolerant. This story may provide a sympathetic starting point for considering such issues.

Below are some of the issues you could explore arising from this story. Remember to ask the children if they would like to raise any issues of their own for discussion.

Moral reasoning

- What aspects of Anthony's behaviour would you say are wrong? What would you say to Anthony to persuade him that his behaviour was wrong? What do you think Anthony might reply? (You could write this as a conversation or act it out.)
- Why is vandalism wrong? Think of all the reasons you can. Work in pairs at first, then share your ideas with the class.
- Anthony was not too keen to help with the work. Do you think it was fair that he had to help? Would it have been fairer to use only those children who wanted to help?
- Should children care about keeping their school neat and tidy? Why or why not?

- Think of as many reasons as you can why Anthony was wrong to pollute the pond. Think about this in relation to himself, others, the school and the environment. Share all your reasons in a class list. Take a class vote on the best reasons.
- Think carefully about what you know about Anthony and the way he behaves. Do you blame Anthony for being naughty? If yes, say why and if no, say who you would blame.
- What might be done to help Anthony behave better in future and whose responsibility is it?
- Put yourself in the position of the teacher, Miss Ladwa. How would you deal with Anthony? What would you take into consideration in dealing with him? What would be best for Anthony? What would be best for the class as a whole? Are the two things different?
- If Miss Ladwa felt sorry for Anthony, should she let him off? Why or why not?
- If you were Dipika, what would you say to Annie to persuade her to change her attitude towards Anthony?

Thinking things through

- What Anthony did was wrong but did he have any *excuse* for doing it?
- What is the difference between a reason and an excuse?
- Think about the different ways Anthony was treated by Annie and Dipika. Is it possible to say that one behaved better than the other or are they simply different? Give reasons for your answer.
- Why are people so different in their attitudes and the way they behave?
- For what different reasons are people punished? Try to think of as many as you can. Which are the best reasons, in your opinion?
- What is the value of beautiful surroundings?
- Would it be better if the school got rid of the pond? At least no one would be able to vandalise it?

Community building

- Do you think it is a good idea for all the classes in the school to take it in turns to look after the school pond? List all the advantages and the disadvantages you can think of. Are there areas in your own school which could be looked after in this way?
- Vandalism is a problem for most communities. Are there problems where you live? Why do you think it happens? Who causes the problems and can anything be done about it? Who suffers as a result of the vandalism?
- How would you assess the quality of your local environment? What things would you look for in pleasant surroundings?

Personal writing

- Write a short story showing the effects of some piece of vandalism on someone else. Try to show why it may be happening.
- Design a poster encouraging other pupils to look after the school better.

Wild Life

"Now class, come and sit on the carpet," called Miss Ladwa. "I've got some exciting news."

"Anthony!" she called to the last boy to make a move. "Hurry up or you'll miss it, won't you?" As slowly as he dared, Anthony crossed the classroom and sat himself on the very edge of the carpet, so that most of his bottom was still on the cold, hard floor. The hard edge of the carpet quickly began to hurt.

"Anthony, you're keeping everyone waiting and it's not fair on the others, is it? Now sit properly." Anthony wriggled onto the carpet as the whole class turned round to stare at him. Anthony could not really say why he behaved like this. In lots of ways he wanted to be just like everyone else in the class, but he wasn't. He didn't know why, but he found it so hard to remember things. Sometimes, when Miss Ladwa was able to sit down with him and explain things properly, he would find them easier but it never seemed to last. The next day, it was no better than before. No one else seemed to have this problem. It was all right for them.

"As you know," Miss Ladwa was saying, "now that Mr Newbold has retired, he is not going to look after the school pond any more and so we thought it would be a lovely idea if each class took it in turn." There was a buzz of excitement around the room. "Now, I've just been speaking to the head and she wants our class to go first."

The next day, after play in the afternoon, work on the pond began. Miss Ladwa decided that one group of children could go out each day. Anthony was put in the first group with Jacko and Sahel, two boys he often played football with, and the two girls who were the best in the class at almost everything, Annie and Dipika. Dipika was all right. Anthony quite liked her, but Annie was different altogether. She lived on a farm a few miles away and all she could talk about was *her* horses and *her* sheep. It got everyone down, even Dipika sometimes.

Miss Ladwa got the group together and gave them their instructions.

"Today the best thing would be to do a survey of the pond. Have a look at the state of the water and see if the pond itself needs cleaning." The group turned to go. "Oh, and why don't you also do a survey of the long grass between the pond and the road. See what signs of wild life you can find."

When they got to the pond, Annie and Dipika immediately started noting things down on their clipboards and Jacko and Sahel decided they would count the number of fish, even though the water was so murky it was difficult to see anything.

"What about you, Anthony," said Dipika. "What do you want to do?"

"Dunno," said Anthony, with the slightest flick of his head and shoulders. Miss Ladwa had learned to dread that gesture.

"You've got to do something," said Dipika cheerfully. "Miss said we had to work together and help each other. What about collecting all the litter?"

"What about it?" asked Anthony.

"Well, all right then, do a survey of the long grass and see what you can find."

Without a word, Anthony turned and walked away from the pond, his hands in his pockets, kicking the tufts of long grass as he went. What he was looking for, he had no idea.

Some way from the pond, Anthony's foot kicked against something. It was an empty oil can which someone had thoughtlessly thrown over the hedge from the nearby road. Anthony stooped down to pull up the can, and as he did so, two baby frogs started up in fright. Anthony stooped down

and picked up one of them before it could escape and, cupping it in two hands, he ran back to the others. Just at that moment, Miss Ladwa was walking over to see how they were getting on.

"Look what I've got, Miss" he called.

"What is it, Anthony?" she asked as everyone gathered around.

"Come on, Ant, what you got? Show us," urged Jacko.

Anthony slowly removed his top hand, trying not to frighten the little frog. The group was now so close, their heads were nearly touching. From the corner of his eye, he could see Annie watching closely but, unlike the others, she had a kind of sneer on her face, a look which told Anthony she would never admit that he could ever have anything good.

Suddenly, he jerked the hand with the frog right up into Annie's face. She screamed and swung her arm upwards, knocking Anthony's hand away. The little frog flew into the air, landing several feet away on the hard

footpath. Anthony dashed over to where the baby frog lay completely still on the tarmac. As the group followed to see what had happened, Anthony lashed out at Annie, hitting her hard on the shoulder. She turned away, crying.

"Anthony, go indoors at once," ordered Miss Ladwa, sternly. "You are not to hit people like that. Go and wait by my desk."

With tears in his eyes, Anthony turned to go in. For a second something had gone right for him. But it hadn't lasted. Annie had spoilt it for him and he hated her. As he entered the classroom, everyone seemed to stop and look at him. He didn't care how he was punished. Just at that minute he didn't care about anything.

When Miss Ladwa came back into the classroom, she asked everyone to pack up quickly because it was home time. When the classroom had emptied, Anthony was still standing by the desk but his teacher was clearly in a hurry.

"Anthony," she said, "how many times have I told you not to hit other people?" Anthony said nothing. Miss Ladwa looked at her watch. "Look," she said, "I can't stop now, I'll deal with this in the morning."

Anthony followed his teacher slowly out of the classroom. Already the school was quiet, except for the hum of a distant vacuum cleaner. His path took him past the pond and he stopped. Someone had piled all the leaves in a soggy heap near the water's edge next to a disgusting heap of decomposing litter – crisp packets and sweet wrappers of all kinds.

Suddenly, Anthony remembered his baby frog and he went to the spot where it had fallen but it was nowhere to be seen. He wondered whether someone might have thrown its little body on to the flower bed by the side of the path but it wasn't there either. His frog had gone.

At once, his anger returned. All his feelings of being different, of being looked down on by the others, of being no good, flooded back. He ran to the piles of rubbish and kicked them as hard as he could, scattering them back across the water. Then he raced over to the oil can, where he had first found his frog. Not caring whether he was seen or not, he threw the can into the pond as hard as he could. As it filled with water, the can began to sink, slowly at first, then

much quicker until it disappeared with a gurgle. Anthony stared at the water until it became still again and then, as the first rainbow traces of oil appeared on the surface, he turned to go.

Not feeling anything at all, he walked on. As he reached the school gate, Dipika was waiting for him.

"Anthony," she called, "I've got something for you." To his delight Anthony saw in her hands his baby frog.

"After you were sent in, it began to move," she said, "so I put it in some grass and wrapped it in my cardigan until home time." Then she added: "I knew you were upset."

Anthony did not know what to say. That someone had thought about him and his feelings made him feel, somehow, that he mattered. Then he remembered the pond and suddenly he realised what he had done. Grabbing the frog with a quick "Thanks", he raced back into school.

By now the oil was spreading, unstoppably, across the water. The leaves and litter lay still on the surface but there, in the middle of the pond, just as Anthony had feared, floated the upturned bodies of two dead fish.

Bossy about Badger

Key ideas

- responsibility for animals
- rights
- shared responsibilities

This story raises issues commonly encountered in primary classrooms relating to our responsibilities for the things we share in school and the extent to which animals, including class pets, may be said to have rights. As a topic which interests many children, it is a useful one with which to stimulate discussion of rights and responsibilities, both for individuals and for the class as a community.

Below are some of the issues you could explore arising from this story. Remember to ask the children if they would like to raise any issues of their own for discussion.

Chapter 1

Moral reasoning

- What do you think of Sean's point about the size of Badger's hutch? What do you think of as cruelty to animals? Where would you draw the line between the reasonable and unreasonable treatment of animals? Write down some examples in pairs or small groups and then share your ideas to see if other people agree with you.
- Why does Mrs Harvey say that no one will be blamed without evidence, when Adrian suggests the culprits might be from another class? What things would you want to be sure of before accusing someone of doing something wrong?
- Do you think Melanie was rude to her father? Was it excusable, in your opinion? How do you think Melanie's parents should deal with this behaviour?
- Why did Melanie regret speaking to her father rudely? Can you think of any better reasons why she might have felt sorry?

Thinking things through

- Is sharing things in school a problem? Why is this? What sort of duty or obligation is there to respect school property? Would it make a difference if children came to school voluntarily?
- Why are some people cruel to animals?
- Do you think animals have rights? If so, what rights would you say they have?

  In small groups, make a list of rights:

  – for a class pet;

  – for a farm animal;

  – for a wild animal; and

  – for a wild animal in captivity.

  You could share out these tasks around the class with two or three groups per topic. Then each of the groups could share their ideas with each other and with the whole class.
- Some people don't eat meat because they say killing farm animals for food is wrong. What do you think of vegetarianism? What are your feelings about using animals in scientific research? Is it justified (reasonable) or not?
- Melanie has demanded a pet. Does she have any kind of right to have a pet?
- What kinds of rights do you think parents have?
- Why do parents and children sometimes find it hard to understand each other or get along without rowing? What can be done about this?

Community building

- Can you think of any examples of how individual behaviour can spoil things for the whole class or school? Do you think people realise the effect their behaviour has?
- Is it a good idea to have something shared like a class pet? Why do you think this? What things would you have to consider before getting a pet for the class?

Chapter 2

Moral reasoning

- Talk about the way Shirley behaved. Which of the following phrases would you use to describe it?

  – very wrong;

  – wrong;

  – wrong but understandable;

  – wrong but excusable; or

  – not wrong.

  Listen to what different children say about which they have chosen. What would be the majority choice?

- Should Shirley be punished for what she did? Why or why not?
- Shirley blamed Melanie for the way she behaved. Was that fair? Why or why not?
- What do you think of Melanie's parents' decision to buy a pet for her class?
- Melanie's parents were generous. Why do people usually say generosity is a good thing? Think of as many reasons as you can.
- In your opinion was Mrs Harvey wrong to let Melanie do so much for Badger in the first place? Could she have done something different?

Thinking things through

- Melanie found sharing Badger hard at first, but later found she enjoyed sharing Brandy. What are the good and the bad points about sharing things with others? In pairs, make a list on either side and then share your ideas.

Community building

- How do you feel when someone spoils things for you unfairly?

Bossy about Badger

Chapter 1

Class 6H bundled back into the classroom after morning play just as they did every day. But today something was different. For a start, Mrs Harvey was not sitting on her desk. She was standing in the middle of the room and her face was as dark as thunder. She wasn't often like this, even on a Monday.

The children knew the signs. Without having to be told, everyone went to their place and sat as still as they could. Something was seriously wrong. Mrs Harvey was clearly holding back her anger when she eventually spoke.

"It's happened again," she said, "and this time it's much worse."

Thirty pairs of eyes darted around the room for clues, but not a single child dared move its head from the direction of Mrs Harvey. She didn't often lose her temper to be fair, and most of the time she was funny and friendly and easily the most interesting teacher. But her temper ... that was something to see!

"Someone," she began slowly, "someone, this play, has come into the classroom and deliberately tried to cause harm or injury to the guinea pig." There was an intake of breath you could hear and the eyes shot towards the painting area, a small annexe off the classroom where, next to the sink, stood Badger the guinea pig's hutch. And the door was open.

"First it was some sharp wire poked into the hutch, now this," she said. "Badger's cage has been opened, allowing him to escape and his food and water have been scattered everywhere. This was deliberate – it couldn't have been an accident – and I want to know who was responsible for this appalling act. Badger has got out. I only hope he's still somewhere in the classroom. If he has escaped completely, then I'm afraid he's not likely to last long. There are far too many cats round here."

Melanie was shocked. As she sat there listening to Mrs Harvey, her mind was racing. How could somebody do such a cruel thing? She could not believe it. Badger had been Class 6H's pet since the beginning of September and she, probably more than anyone in the class, loved that animal. Almost every day she would bring it an apple from home (to her Mum's surprise because she had never asked for apples before in her lunch box). She was always volunteering to clean out the hutch even if it meant staying after school. It was even her idea to call him Badger because of the black and white stripes over the top of his head. Everyone thought it was brilliant to call a guinea pig "Badger".

Now Badger was missing and someone was trying to harm him. But who? Almost without realising she had done it, Melanie made up her mind to find out who it was. She would become a detective, she'd look for clues, she would hunt the criminal down. Because it *was* a crime – vandalism and cruelty to animals.

The next few minutes were devoted to searching every nook and cranny in the room in search of Badger. Eventually he was found hiding under the sink cupboard. Melanie was allowed to be the one to coax him out with some of his favourite oats and a juicy slice of her apple. Within about ten minutes she was placing Badger back in his hutch and topping up his food and water.

But Mrs Harvey was not going to let the matter rest there. Calling the class together she began.

"Right, the time has come to have a little chat about the things we share. There seems to be someone in the class, I don't know who it is – yet – who doesn't seem to like the fact that we have a guinea pig. Now why could this be? You tell me, because I don't know."

There was a strained silence. Was this a genuine question, or were they expected to say what Mrs Harvey wanted to hear? It was hard to tell.

Sean O'Donnell put his hand up. He always had something to say.

"Miss, perhaps someone wasn't being cruel. Perhaps they were trying to set Badger free. You know, because it's cruel to keep him in a cage all the time."

"Do *you* think it's cruel, Sean?" said Mrs Harvey, fixing him with a stare.

"Well, yes, Miss, it is a bit. I mean we could let it out sometimes to have a run. It can't really have a proper run in that hutch, can it? But I didn't let it out, Miss, honest," he added hastily.

"I believe you," said Mrs Harvey. "Who else thinks it's cruel to keep a guinea pig in class?"

Melanie wanted to say something, anything. She thought of Badger as at least partly hers because she did so much for him. But what could she say? Sean was right really, it can't be pleasant to be cooped up in a hutch all the time. She wondered how she would like it if she had to stay indoors the whole time, never going out into the fresh air or being able to see the countryside. But if she said it was cruel, Mrs Harvey might give him away. And she couldn't bear that.

"Put up your hand if you think it's cruel to keep Badger in a hutch the whole time," said Mrs Harvey calmly. Melanie looked round. Three hands were up, including Sean's. Mrs Harvey paused and the longer she waited the more hands went up. Melanie closed her eyes.

"Thank you, put your hands down," said Mrs Harvey. "Now who thinks it is even more cruel to scatter Badger's food, empty his water bottle and deliberately let him escape?"

Every hand went up. Melanie searched the faces of her classmates. Someone here was lying, surely. Unless ...

"Miss, perhaps it was someone from Mr Hooper's class," suggested Shirley Dunster, voicing the thought that was beginning to form in Melanie's mind. There was a lot of nodding.

"Yeah, Miss," nodded Adrian Henley, "perhaps they're jealous that we've got something they haven't got." Mr Hooper was well known as a bit unadventurous. His class never got to do drama in the hall or things like that. If you couldn't tick it in a book, Mr Hooper didn't do it.

"I don't think we'll start blaming other people, yet, not without evidence," said Mrs Harvey. "I have just one final thing to say for now. This cannot go on. Either it stops, or we will not have a guinea pig, or any other pet, in the classroom. You have one last chance. I hope it's not true that someone here is prepared to spoil things for everyone else. Right, let's get back to work ... you have been warned."

On the way home from school that night, Melanie was trying to figure out who could possibly be trying to harm Badger. And why? How could anyone do that to a poor little defenceless creature? School just wouldn't be the same without him. Suddenly she made up her mind about what to do with her Christmas money. She would buy a guinea pig of her own.

Mum was quite good about it, when Melanie told her what she wanted to do.

"Well, if that's what you want, love, I suppose it'll be OK. Though you know your Dad doesn't like things like that."

"I'll keep him in my bedroom, Mum, and Dad needn't see him at all."

"Well, maybe, but you'll have to look after it, you know."

"I will, Mum, honest, I do it all the time at school for Badger. Mrs Harvey says I've got a way with animals."

But Dad, when he came in, was not keen, not keen at all. Try as she might, Melanie could not persuade him to say yes. He just sat in his chair, with the television on, only half listening to Melanie begging and pleading to have a guinea pig of her own.

"Who's paying for it?" Dad said. "I can't afford to."

"I can buy it with the money Gran gave me for Christmas. And a hutch as well," said Melanie.

"But you'll soon get bored with it, children always do, and then your mother and me will be lumbered with it. Besides, those things always make me chesty. Ever since I was a kid, they

made me wheezy whenever I went near them. There's no way I'm having one in the house and that's an end of it."

"You're horrible," shouted Melanie. "You never think about me. This is all I want in the world! You've never let me have a pet of my own."

"That's enough, Mel," said Mum sternly. "You won't get anywhere by rudeness to your father." But Melanie wasn't listening.

"I hate you," she shouted at Dad, "you're a pig!"

Dad stopped watching the television.

"Now just you come here," he said with an iron tone in his voice.

"No, I'm going to my bedroom," shouted Melanie and stamped out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

As she lay on her bed, sobbing, she knew she had just said goodbye to any chance of persuading Dad. If she'd only kept quiet, he might have come round in the end, but not now. And what if Mrs Harvey gets rid of Badger, she thought. That would be unbearable. It made her all the more determined to find out who had it in for the class guinea pig. She turned her soggy pillow over and began to think up a plan to catch the culprit.

Chapter 2

For two days nothing out of the ordinary happened at school. Badger seemed to get a lot of attention from almost everyone in the class. And they had worked out a rota for people to stay in each play to look after Badger and this seemed to be working well. But on the third day, two of the boys who were supposed to be on duty forgot all about it and went out to play football.

At lunchtimes, it was more difficult. No one was allowed into the block when it was fine and there were times when everyone who stayed to dinner had to be in the dining hall, which was in the main building. Mrs Harvey asked the lunchtime supervisors to keep their eyes peeled.

Part of Melanie's plan was always to be the last person out of the class. She would pretend to take a long time to pack up so that she could check to see if anyone was lingering suspiciously. But no one ever was. And then on the Friday after the attack, it happened.

Melanie was in the dining hall on a table with a number of girls from her class when Shirley Dunster came in and spoke to her.

"Mrs Harvey wants to see you," she said.

"What? Now?" said Melanie.

"Suppose so," said Shirley, shrugging her shoulders and walking off.

Melanie excused herself and went to the staff room. She knocked on the door and when it was opened by the Head, she asked for Mrs Harvey. Mr Hooper's voice came booming out over the noise of the photocopier.

"She's out of school, young lady. It'll have to wait."

Melanie walked away puzzled. What was Mrs Harvey thinking of, asking to see her then going out of school? Shirley must have got the message wrong. Melanie decided not to go back to the dining hall but to return to the classroom block where she now spent every lunchtime on the look out for Badger's attacker. But just as she was approaching the block, she saw Shirley coming out of the main door.

Then it clicked. Could Shirley possibly be Badger's enemy? Was that why she had given Melanie a false message – to get her out of the way? Melanie ran towards Shirley but as soon as Shirley saw her, she called out: "Melanie, it's happened again, it's Badger. His cage door's open and I think I saw one of the boys run off."

Fearing the worst, Melanie burst past Shirley and ran into the classroom, ignoring the shouts of Mrs Lemon the lunchtime supervisor. When they got to the hutch, Badger's door was wide open and his water bottle was on the floor. Melanie noticed that his food bowl was upturned but Badger himself was still nervously hiding at the back of his cage. It could only just have happened.

"It's a good thing we were in time," said Shirley.

"Who did you see running off?" asked Melanie suspiciously, not wishing to accuse Shirley directly. She didn't know her very well. They never played together and Shirley was probably the quietest girl in the class – a bit of a loner, really. Before Shirley could answer, Mrs Harvey came into the classroom.

"Ah, Melanie, there you are. Did Shirley give you my message?" Melanie felt awful. So there had been a message and Melanie had got it all wrong about Shirley.

"Yes, Miss, you said you wanted to see me. I went to the staff room but you weren't there. And Miss, someone's been after Badger again." Mrs Harvey took in what had happened in a second. Then she said: "But I distinctly told Shirley to ask you to come to the *classroom* after your lunch." She turned to look at Shirley. "Did you give Melanie the wrong message, Shirley?"

"No, Miss." But Mrs Harvey wasn't satisfied.

"Shirley, did you tell Melanie to meet me in the classroom?"

Shirley paused. "No Miss, I must have forgotten that bit."

"Shirley, did you give Melanie half a message knowing that she would go to the staff room looking for me and that the coast would be clear for just long enough to get back to the classroom and open Badger's door?"

Melanie could not believe anyone could be so devious. But Shirley was saying nothing. She was looking at the floor.

"Look at her hands," suggested Melanie. "I covered the bottom of the food bowl with red chalk. That was part of my plan to catch the culprit. I read about that sort of thing in a story." Shirley held out her hands. There was not a trace of red dust on them. Melanie felt confused and guilty for a second time.

"Come on, Shirley, out with it. I know it's you who's been doing these things to Badger. It is, isn't it?"

"Yes, Miss." Shirley's voice could hardly be heard.

"Why, Shirley? Why did you do it? Did you want Badger to be killed?"

"No, Miss."

"Well?"

"I was jealous, Miss, of how everyone made such a fuss of him and no one ever asked me to help with the cleaning out."

"But you never asked," said Melanie.

"You were always getting to look after him," said Shirley to Melanie, accusingly. "As if Badger was yours. Well, he's not yours. He's everybody's."

"And you would rather we didn't have one, would you?" shouted Melanie. "That's horrible, Shirley. No wonder no one asks you to help! And Miss said if the vandalism happened again, Badger would have to go! You've ruined everything!"

"That's enough, Melanie," said Mrs Harvey. "Now calm down, I think we can settle this. It so happens that one of the parents has offered to give the class another guinea pig. That's where I've been just now. To the pet shop. And what's more we've got a lovely big pen so that they can both have lots of room to run around in during the day. And in the summer, they'll be able to go outside and eat the grass. They really like that."

Melanie could hardly believe her ears.

"But you said –" she began.

"I know I said we'd not be able to keep a guinea pig unless the attacks stopped. Well, I wanted to show how seriously I was taking it. I hoped I wouldn't have to carry out the threat. Then when one of the mums offered another guinea pig, that was an offer I couldn't refuse. In any case, I don't think we'll have any more trouble now, shall we?" She looked at Shirley, who shook her head.

There was great excitement that afternoon, which was given over almost completely to installing the run for Badger and his new mate, who was female and a light brown colour. Of course, they had to write about keeping guinea pigs in their English books, as if they were explaining it all to a Martian on its first visit to Earth, but nobody seemed to mind that.

At the end of the afternoon, Mrs Harvey said: "Now there is one thing we've forgotten. Our new guinea pig hasn't got a name. What shall we call her?"

There were all sorts of suggestions on the slips of paper Mrs Harvey had given them. Lots of people tried to think of another animal name to go with Badger, but somehow "Cow" and "Rat" didn't seem too polite.

"Ah, here's one," said Mrs Harvey. "How about 'Brandy'?" There was a cheer. "Good, that's perfect. Well chosen, Shirley." Shirley sat there beaming to herself. "And now we've got two animals to look after, there'll be plenty of jobs for everyone, won't there?" Mrs Harvey looked straight at Melanie as she spoke.

When she got home that evening, Melanie said nothing about the new arrival.

"Had a nice day at school, love?" said Mum.

"Not bad," said Melanie. "What's for tea?"

"Anything unusual happen today?" Mum asked.

"Not much," replied Melanie. "Why?"

"Just wondered," said Mum.

Dad seemed to be equally curious about Melanie's day when he got in, which was unusual for him. That clinched it for Melanie.

"It was you, wasn't it?" she said suddenly at tea.

"What do you mean?" Dad asked.

"Bought the new guinea pig for the class. You did it, didn't you?"

"Now what would we go and do a thing like that for?" said Dad, with a twinkle in his eye. "Can't stand the things, myself."

"Your Dad'll have an excuse not to go to Parents' Evenings, now," Mum joked.

After that, Brandy was Melanie's special favourite. In a way she felt Brandy really did belong to her and that made up for not having one at home. But then again, she found that she really enjoyed sharing the new pet with the rest of the class and that made it even nicer, somehow – especially with Shirley, who seemed equally devoted to Brandy.

And maybe, Melanie admitted to herself later, she had been a bit too bossy about Badger.

Litter Bug

This is a game for up to four players.

The task is to collect litter from the squares marked **L** on the board and take it to the most appropriate 'dump' for that particular piece of litter or rubbish. There is a choice of 'dumps' and, while playing the game, there ought to be discussion among the players about the most appropriate place to which each piece should be taken. Once they have decided where it should go, the player who "found" it must take it there and then collect a litter bug. If the group cannot decide where the litter should be taken, the player must proceed to **Help**, where the litter is left. The player does not collect a litter bug but sets off, at the next throw, to find another piece of litter. At the end of the game the pieces which are in **Help** are discussed with the teacher or other children.

Equipment required per game:

- the board – the page provided (preferably enlarged to A3);
- one dice (or, more correctly, die);
- four coloured counters (one for each player);
- the litter cards – cut out and mounted on card; and
- a quantity of litter bugs (with the present set of cards you need 24).

Note: a possible litter bug is shown on the card but the children could design their own bugs and these could be reproduced for use during the game.

How to play

1 Each player places a counter on one of the spaces marked 1-4.

2 Place the litter cards in a pile *face down*.

3 To decide who is to start play, each player throws the dice. The player with the highest score begins.

4 The beginner throws the dice and moves in any direction according to the number of squares shown on the dice. It is not possible to change direction in mid move. The object is to land on an **L** square as quickly as possible.

5 If a player lands on a square marked **L**, the player takes the top card from the litter card pile.

6 The player shows it to the others and suggests where it should be taken. When everyone has agreed, the player waits until the next turn before moving off towards the chosen dump. Players on their way to dumps move by throwing the dice as normal. It is not necessary to throw the exact number of moves to land on a dump.

7 Players on their way to a dump cannot pick up more than one piece of litter at a time, so they ignore any **L** squares on which they land.

8 Once at the dump a player collects a *litter bug*, leaves the litter card and sets off from there on the next turn in search of another piece of litter.

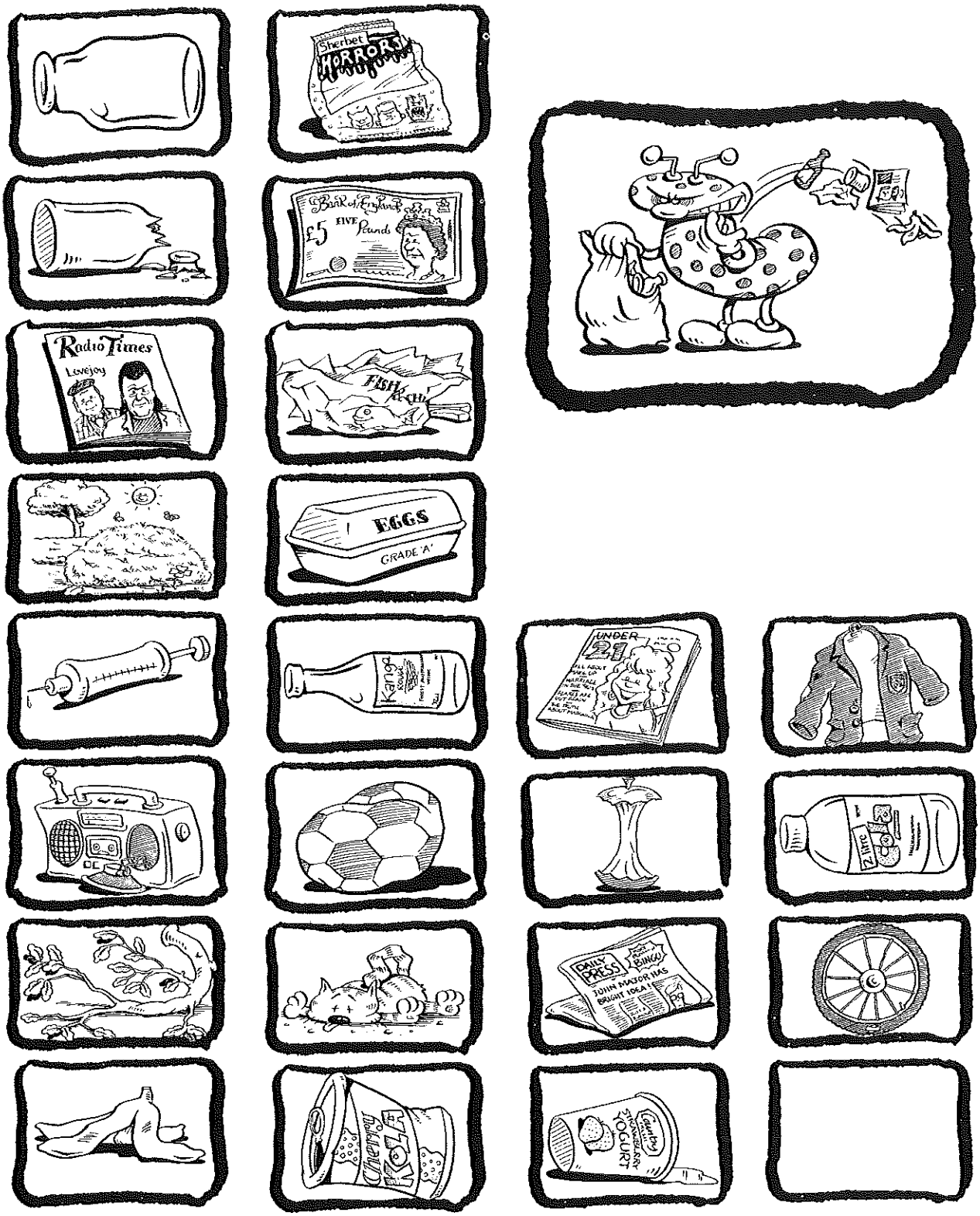
9 If a player cannot decide where to take the litter, she or he must go to **Help** and leave the litter there. Ask your teacher to help you after the game.

10 The game ends when all the litter has been collected and taken to a dump. The winner is the player with the largest number of litter bugs to his or her credit.

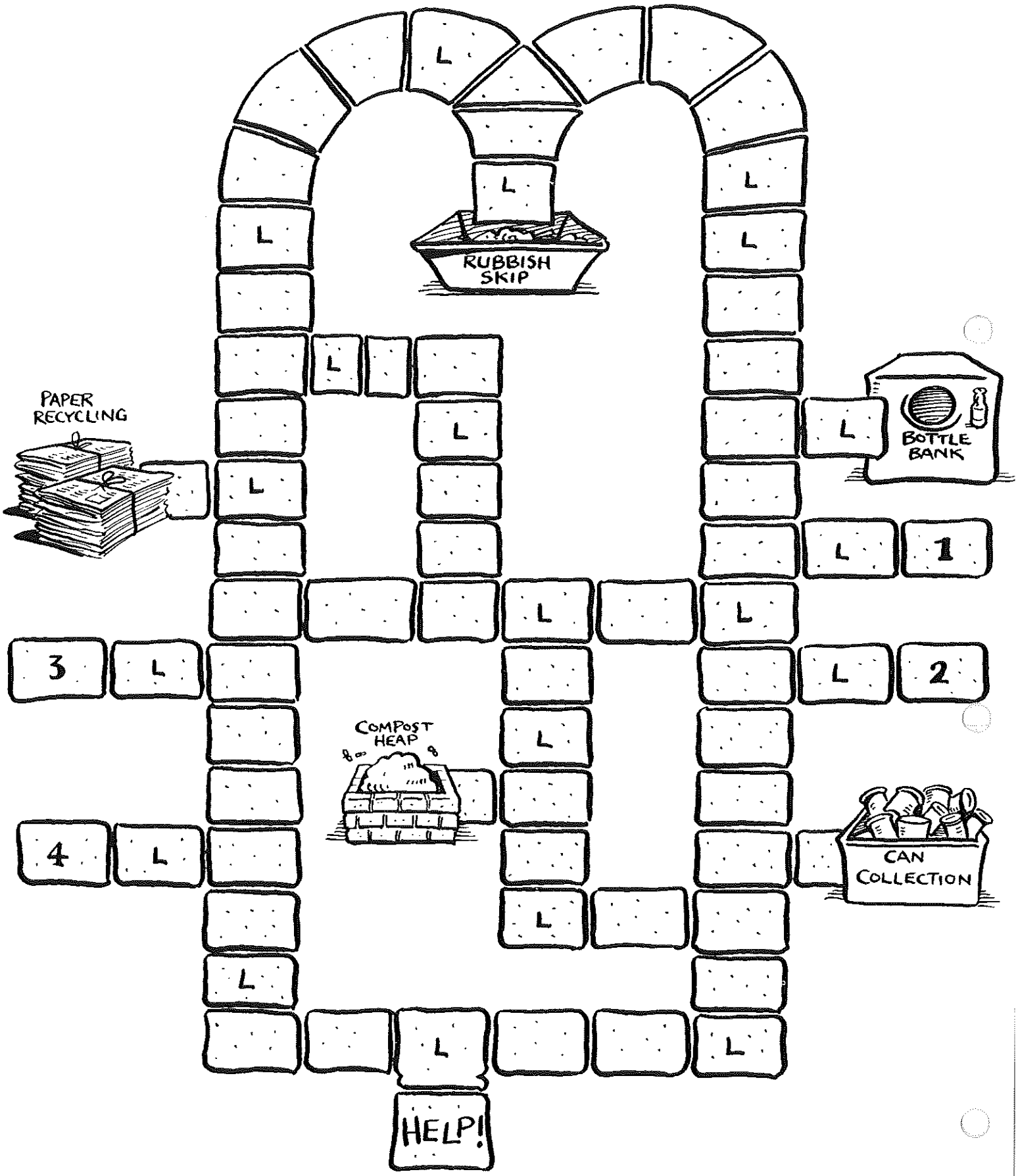
11 At the end of the game take the items out of the **Rubbish Skip** and discuss whether they have any further use. Could they be re-cycled or used in any other way?

Can you think of other items of rubbish and make additional cards which others in your class can use when they play?

Litter Bug game cards



Litter Bug


RUBBISH SKIP
PAPER RECYCLING
BOTTLE BANK
COMPOST HEAP
CAN COLLECTION
HELP!
1
2
3
4

It's Broken!

This activity focuses on aspects of our responsibility to our neighbourhood or community. It asks the children to consider how various broken items might be a hazard to others and who should be responsible for tackling the problem. Sometimes an individual might take responsibility but on other occasions this is not possible and some other body in the community must take action. The exercise can encourage the children to consider the nature of their obligations to others and the community with respect to the local environment. This activity could be used as a writing, discussing, drawing, painting or acting task.

The purpose is to consider each of the broken items listed below and consider:

a) Why was it useful in the first place?

b) Who might be affected by its being broken?

c) What should happen next?

d) Who might have the responsibility to do something about it?

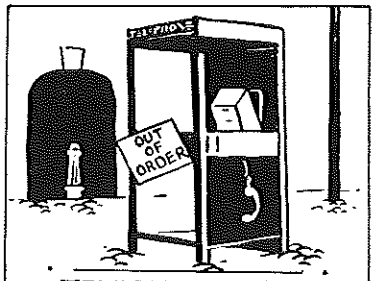
You may also find it helpful to consider how some of the items might have come to be broken, which could encourage some discussion of vandalism. However, this needs to be carefully controlled to avoid the children wasting a great deal of time inventing fanciful scenarios.

A whole range of possibilities may be offered in response to the final question. It is important to elicit as much discussion as possible and to consider what are practical possibilities. Encourage the children to consider what they think **should** be done **and by whom**. In how many cases could they themselves take some action if they discovered the breakage?

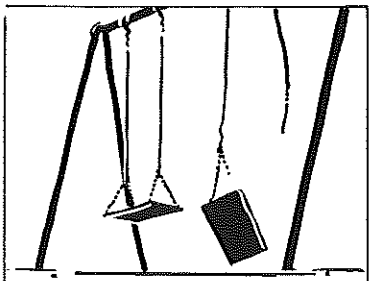
Clearly these questions might be asked of any range of broken items, eg those associated with safety around the home. Here is a selection (you or the children could add others):

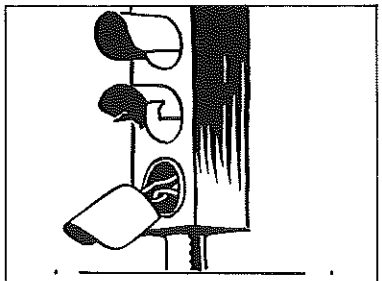
- a telephone box
- swings in a play area
- traffic lights
- a loose pavement slab
- a school gate
- an abandoned car
- a broken field gate
- a park bench
- a fence alongside the railway
- a deep pothole in the road
- a burst water pipe
- a broken window in a derelict shop
- an abandoned supermarket trolley with one wheel off
- a bicycle with punctured tyres

It's Broken



TELEPHONE BOX


SWINGS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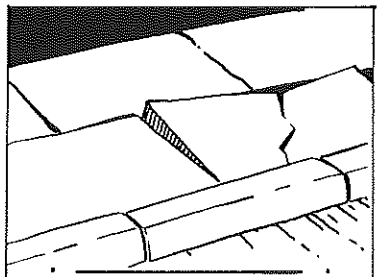
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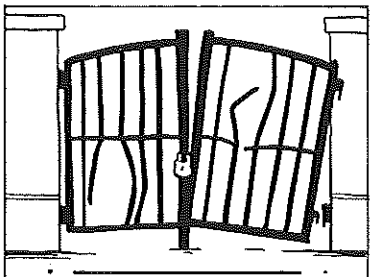
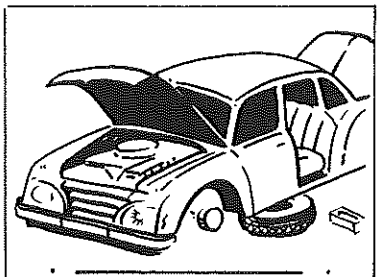
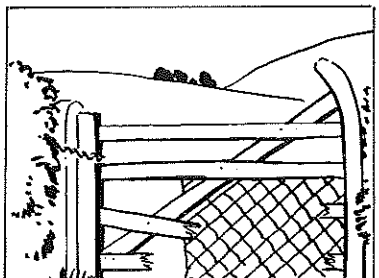
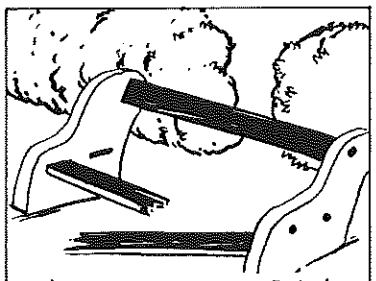

SCHOOL GATE


CAR


FIELD GATE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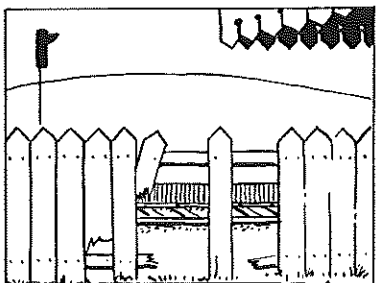
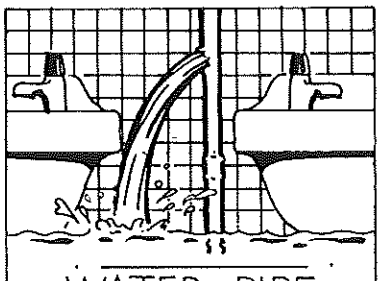
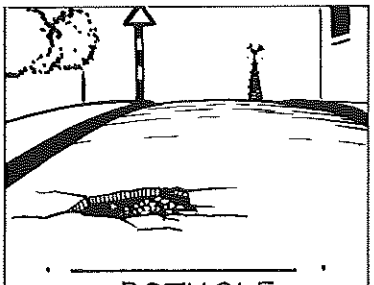
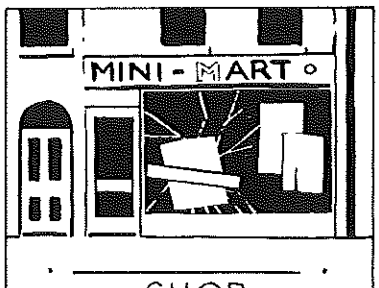
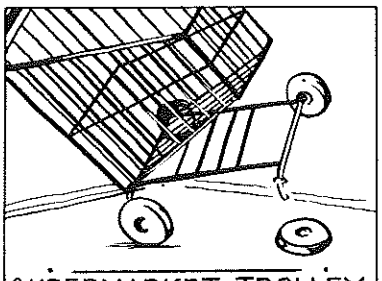

RAILWAY FENCE

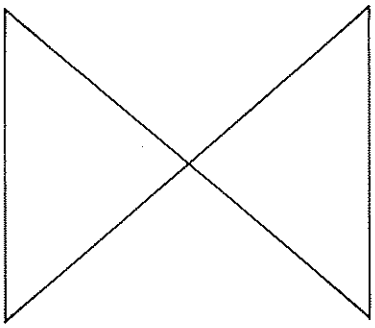

WATER PIPE

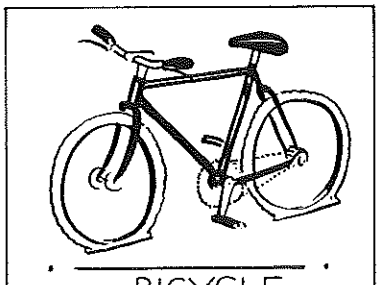

POTHOLE



SHOP


SUPERMARKET-TROLLEY

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