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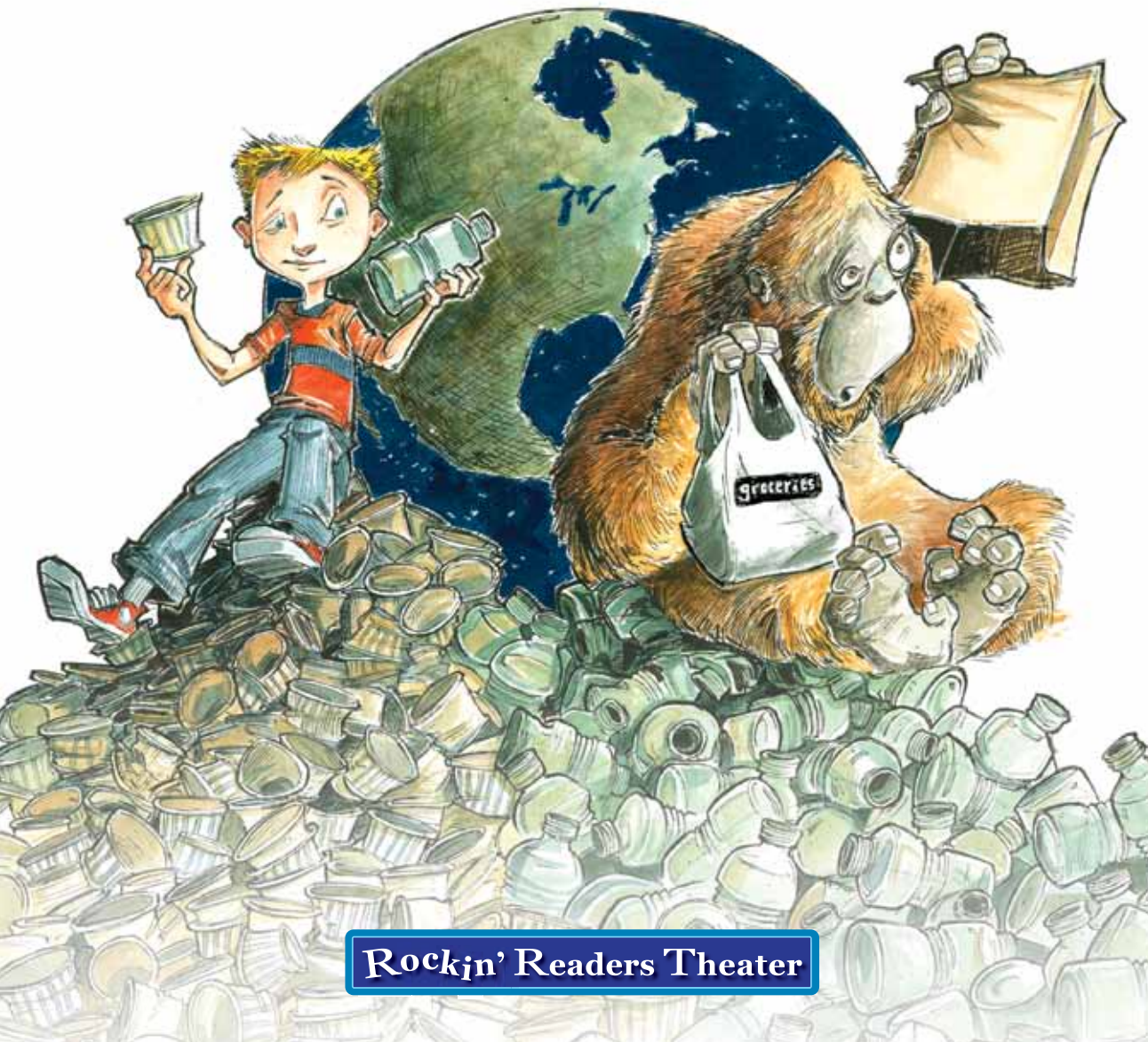
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SCRIPT

Paper or Plastic?

A Musical Play
About Protecting Our Environment

By Sindy McKay



Rockin' Readers Theater

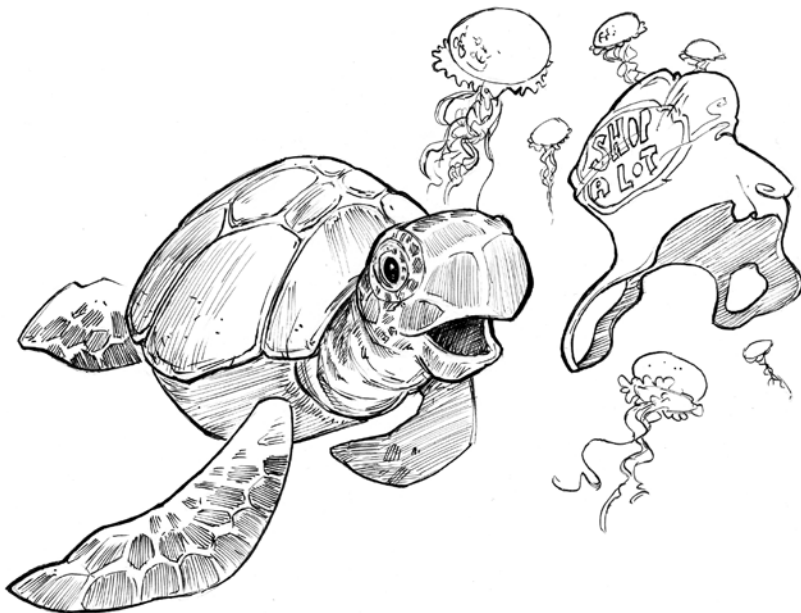
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By Sindy McKay

With illustrations by Jeffrey Ebbeler



Rockin' Readers Theater

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A Musical Play About Protecting Our Environment

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PAPER OR PLASTIC?

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PAPER OR PLASTIC?



SCENE ONE—OPENING

Lights dim on an empty stage. Garbage Can enters and takes a position downstage.

LIGHT CUE: The lights quickly come up full.

MUSIC CUE: Instrumental version of KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY

The full cast bursts onto the stage and creates a “kids on the playground” atmosphere—playing games, talking, laughing, etc.

CAST MINUS GARBAGE CAN: *<ad-libbing playground shouts, laughs, etc.>*

Jesse and Pat come downstage to stand on either side of Garbage Can. Jesse is stage right (the “Paper” side of the stage), and Pat is stage left (the “Plastic” side). Jesse has a PAPER CUP like those from a fast-food restaurant. Pat has a PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE.

PROP NOTE: paper cup, plastic water bottle

Jesse and Pat are totally unaware of each other as they take one last swig from their containers.

JESSE/PAT: *(satisfied sigh) Aaaaaaah!*

Still unaware of each other, they toss the empty cup and bottle over their shoulders and onto the ground behind—NOT in—Garbage Can. Cup and bottle hit the floor and . . .

MUSIC CUE: The music stops abruptly. (Sound note: Recue the music for KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY, but do not start it yet.)

The Cast turns to look at Jesse and Pat. They freeze, staring back at the Cast.

Pat and Jesse realize that all eyes are on them. Busted! Uncomfortable for a moment, they look around, not sure what to do. Then, as nonchalantly as possible, they pick up their litter.

As they go to drop it into Garbage Can, they see each other for the first time. They stop, still holding their cup and bottle.

PAT: *(points to Jesse’s cup)* Really? You’re using a paper cup?

JESSE: Yeah. So?

PAT: So??? Don’t you know using paper cups is bad for the environment?

The Plastic Kids (half the cast) move up behind Pat to show support.

VARIOUS PLASTIC KIDS: (*quick, talking over each other*) Yeah!/Bad!/ Really bad!/The worst!

Dramatic Plastic Kid marches up to Jesse.

DRAMATIC PLASTIC KID: (*humorously overdramatic*) Paper is killing the planet!

Dramatic Plastic Kid turns and marches back to the Plastic Kids.

JESSE: (*points to Pat's bottle*) Well, you're using a plastic bottle! Those are REALLY bad for the environment!

The Paper Kids (other half of cast) move up behind Jesse to support him.

VARIOUS PAPER KIDS: (*quick, talking over each other*) Yeah!/Really bad!/Really, REALLY bad!/The VERY worst!

Dramatic Paper Kid marches right up to Pat.

DRAMATIC PAPER KID: (*humorously, intensely crying*) Plastic makes Mother Nature cry.

She turns and marches back to the Paper Kids. Jesse and Pat start to argue.

PAT: Paper cups are worse than plastic bottles!

JESSE: No, plastic bottles are worse than paper cups!

PAT: You're wrong!

JESSE: YOU'RE wrong!

PAT: I'm right!

JESSE: I'M right!



Paper Kids and Plastic Kids join in, all talking at once, supporting their person. The sound grows.

JESSE/PAT/PAPER KIDS/PLASTIC KIDS: <ad-libbing the idea that our side is right; your side is wrong>

The argument grows louder and louder until Garbage Can jumps up and blows a WHISTLE.

PROP NOTE: *whistle*

Everyone on stage freezes.

GARBAGE CAN: You all are making a lot of noise. But you're not saying much.

JESSE/PAT: *(in unison)* Yes I am!

Jesse and Pat look at each other and scowl.

GARBAGE CAN: No. You're not.

Now Pat and Jesse scowl at Garbage Can.

GARBAGE CAN: *(with a shrug)* Hey, don't get mad at me. I'm just telling it like it is.

JESSE: What do you mean?

GARBAGE CAN: If you're going to say something is true, you better have some information to back it up.

PAT: Information?

GARBAGE CAN: That's the key!

SCENE TWO—KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY SONG

MUSIC CUE: KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY

Garbage Can sings lead. Plastic Kids and Paper Kids join in, singing and dancing on the second verse. Jesse and Pat move off to either side of the stage to watch.

NOTE: See Teacher's Handbook for choreography ideas. Solo lines may be sung by soloists, pairs, trios, or the whole ensemble.

GARBAGE CAN:

You think you know
The answers to the questions.
You think you know
How to make them listen.

But you need to go,
Yeah, you need to go,
Go and get some education
'cause you need to know,
Yeah, you need to know
To pass on information.

Keep on learning.
The truth is in the facts.
Their trust you're earning.
And you know . . .

GARBAGE CAN & PLASTIC KIDS & PAPER KIDS:

You want the world to see
The way the world can be,
To show them what you believe.
You want the world to see,
But first you need
The knowledge—

'cause that is—
the key.

DRAMATIC PLASTIC KID (or ALL PLASTIC KIDS): (*singing to Pat*)

You have a good point.
Now learn the facts around it.

DRAMATIC PAPER KID (or ALL PAPER KIDS): (*singing to Jesse*)

Explore, get proof.
Then tell us where you found it.

PLASTIC KIDS & PAPER KIDS:

Now you need to go,
Yeah, you need to go,
Go and get some education
'cause you need to know,
Yeah, you need to know
To pass on information.

GARBAGE CAN & PLASTIC KIDS & PAPER KIDS:

Keep on learning.
The truth is in the facts.
Their trust you're earning.
And you know . . .

You want the world to see
The way the world can be,
To show them what you believe.
You want the world to see,
But first you need
The knowledge—
'cause that is—
the key.

(INSTRUMENTAL BREAK)

You want the world to see
The way the world can be,
To show them what you believe.
You want the world to see,
But first you need
The knowledge—
'cause that is—
the key.

END SONG

SCENE THREE—MAKING AN INFORMATION STATION

Jesse and Pat come to center stage. Plastic Kids congregate behind Pat; Paper Kids congregate behind Jesse. Garbage Can moves to stage left to watch.

JESSE: I feel kinda weird saying this, but . . . the Garbage Can is right.

PAT: I agree. You have to know what you're talking about.

JESSE: Right. So you must know why paper cups are bad for the environment.

PAT: (*smugly*) Of course. It's because they're made of paper.

JESSE: Why is that bad?

PAT: (*hesitates a bit*) Because . . . paper is made from trees.

JESSE: Why is that bad?

PAT: (*losing confidence*) Because . . . you have to cut down the trees to make the paper.

JESSE: Why is that bad?

PAT: Because . . .

Pat looks at Plastic Kids behind him, hoping for an answer. They all just shrug.

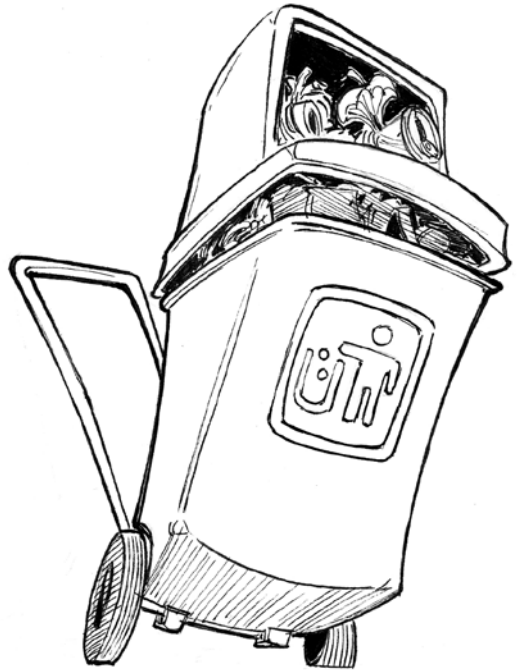
PAT: (*frustrated*) . . . it just IS!

JESSE: You don't know, do you?

From his position stage left, Garbage Can hisses for Pat's attention.

GARBAGE CAN: Pssst . . .

Pat looks at Garbage Can questioningly. Garbage Can gestures for Pat to come over. Pat crosses, and Garbage Can speaks confidentially, like a spy passing secret documents.



GARBAGE CAN: *(secretive)* Listen, I can get you some really good information on this.

PAT: *(dubious)* Uh . . . you're a garbage can.

GARBAGE CAN: You'd be surprised what people throw away.

Garbage Can steps back, blows his WHISTLE and shouts . . .

GARBAGE CAN: Information Station, ACTIVATE!

Paper Kids and Jesse go far stage right and sit to watch as Plastic Kids "morph" into a computer/machine.

NOTE: See *Teacher's Handbook*, pages 8 and 9, for tips on how actors can use movement to create a "machine."

PLASTIC KIDS: *<making humorous electronic noises while forming a machine>*

GARBAGE CAN: This Information Station is filled with facts. Just tell it what you want to know.

Pat steps up to the machine, a little unsure.

PAT: Well, er . . . I want to know why cutting down trees is a terrible thing to do.

PLASTIC KIDS: <making more electronic noises>

Note that Plastic Kids One, Two, Three, and Four are still part of the machine as they say the following lines.

Plastic Kid One stops the noise by holding up his or her finger.

PLASTIC KID ONE: (like "ta da!") PING! Here are the facts.

PLASTIC KID TWO: Cutting down trees is not always a terrible thing to do.

Jesse jumps up from amid the Paper Kids and waves a triumphant fist in the air.

JESSE: I knew it! Cutting down trees to make paper is NOT bad!

PLASTIC KID THREE: There are ways to harvest trees that carefully consider the environmental impact.



JESSE: In your face, Mr. Plastic Lover! Woo-hoo!

PLASTIC KID FOUR: (*very loudly*) BUT!

Jesse stops to listen.

PLASTIC KID FOUR: Most trees are NOT harvested in an environmentally friendly way.

JESSE: Oh . . .

Jesse sinks back down to the floor.

SCENE FOUR—THE LOWLANDS OF BORNEO

Pat and Garbage Can move to stage left to watch as Plastic Kid One steps out of the machine to narrate.

PLASTIC KID ONE: Take the lowland rainforest of Borneo . . .

The Information Station reshapes itself into a rainforest, the Plastic Kids packing in like a thick grove of trees with hands over their heads like tree branches.

PLASTIC KID ONE: Here is a perfect ecosystem with well over 10,000 different kinds of trees, plants, vines . . .



Plastic Kid One joins the forest, kneeling in front of the other Plastic Kids and putting open hands to face like a blooming flower. (This should be played for humor.)

PLASTIC KID ONE: . . . and bea-u-tiful flowers.

From inside the “forest,” Plastic Kid Two speaks.

PLASTIC KID TWO: Thousands of animals feed on these plants, like monkeys . . .

Plastic Kid Two moves toward the “flower” (Plastic Kid One).

PLASTIC KID TWO: <making monkey sounds>

PLASTIC KID THREE: . . . and parrots . . .

Plastic Kid Three becomes a parrot and also moves toward the “flower.”

PLASTIC KID THREE: <making parrot sounds>

PLASTIC KID FOUR: . . . and snakes . . .

Plastic Kid Four becomes a snake and also moves toward the “flower.” The flower is getting a little worried as he’s being surrounded.

PLASTIC KID FOUR: <making hissing sounds like a snake>

PLASTIC KID FIVE: . . . and a whole bunch more mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and insects!

All the Plastic Kids now descend on the poor “flower” and completely cover him.

PLASTIC KIDS: <making all kinds of animal noises>

PLASTIC KID FIVE: Not to mention the PREDATORS . . .

All the Plastic Kids jump back away from the “flower” and cower in fear at the mention of “predators.”

PLASTIC KIDS: (*jump back in fear*) Aaaah!!!

PLASTIC KID FIVE: . . . that feed on the plant-eating animals.

Plastic Kid One (the flower) now stands and takes over the narration again as the others form back into the trees of the forest.

PLASTIC KID ONE: This rainforest is a perfect system. Until loggers . . .

Plastic Kid Two hands Plastic Kid One a big cardboard chain saw prop.

PROP NOTE: cardboard chain saw

PLASTIC KID ONE: . . . come in and clear cut the trees . . .

Plastic Kid One swipes the chain saw across in front of the “trees.”



PLASTIC KID ONE: TIMBERRRRRR!!!!

All the “trees” fall to the ground. Plastic Kid One gives the chain saw back to Plastic Kid Two.

PLASTIC KID ONE: Then burn all the brush and scrub left on the forest floor.

Plastic Kid One mimes lighting a match, making a big show of striking the pretend match across the seat of his pants before tossing it into the group of fallen trees.

The “forest” Plastic Kids jump up and react as if the ground is burning.

PLASTIC KIDS: <ad-libbing “Ouch!” “That’s hot!” “Oooh!” “Ow!” “Eee!”>

Plastic Kid One gives them a cutoff sign with his hand, and they are instantly quiet.

PLASTIC KID ONE: No more trees and plants. No more food and shelter.

About half of the Plastic Kids (representing trees and plants) move to stage left.

TREE ONE: *(while walking away)* We’ll be missed.

TREE TWO: *(while walking away)* They’ll never find a better home than we were.

TREE THREE: *(while walking away)* And we were so tasty too!

PLASTIC KID ONE: No more food. No more animals.

Most of the rest of the Plastic Kids (representing animals) move to stage left. Two Plastic Kids are left. These will become Orangutan One and Orangutan Two.

ANIMAL ONE: *(while walking away)* Where will we go?

ANIMAL TWO: *(while walking away)* How will we live?

ANIMAL THREE: *(while walking away)* Why didn't I buy insurance?

PLASTIC KID ONE: No more animals. No more rainforest.

Moving like apes, Orangutan One and Orangutan Two go right up to the face of Plastic Kid One, scratching their heads and looking puzzled. These characters should go for humor, making ape faces, scratching armpits, squealing like apes, etc.

PLASTIC KID ONE: *(to the Orangutans)* Sorry, guys. We need your trees to make paper and other wood-based products.

Orangutan One and Orangutan Two stick out their tongues and blow a raspberry at Plastic Kid One.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO: *(blowing a raspberry)* Pttttt!!

PLASTIC KID ONE: Once the rainforests are all gone, well, that'll pretty much be the end of the line for all kinds of rare animals. Like pygmy elephants.

ORANGUTAN ONE: That's terrible.

PLASTIC KID ONE: And Sumatran rhinoceroses.

ORANGUTAN TWO: That's awful.

PLASTIC KID ONE: And Bornean orangutans.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO: *(shocked to realize)*
Wait! That's US!!!!

SCENE FIVE—WE ARE ALL CONNECTED SONG

MUSIC CUE: WE ARE ALL CONNECTED SONG

All Plastic Kids move into position for the number.

NOTE: See Teacher's Handbook for choreography ideas. Note that Orangutans sing with the Chorus in this song.

Instrumental introduction

ORANGUTAN ONE: *(spoken during music introduction)* We can't become extinct!

ORANGUTAN TWO: *(spoken during music introduction)* No way!

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO: *(spoken during music introduction)* We're adorable!



ORANGUTAN ONE: (*singing*)

We live with our friends in the forest.
We are loved here and most adore us.

ORANGUTAN TWO:

Sharing plant food and shelter and sunshine.
All together we always have a good time!

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

You know, when they chop a tree low,
They TAKE away the home where we go.
When they raze and destroy every plant here,
You know we're going to ALL disappear.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

And we need to be protected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

Don't let us be neglected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

And we need to be protected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

Don't let us be neglected.

CHORUS:

Help to keep us all protected now.

ORANGUTAN ONE:

It starts with the rain and the sunshine.

Plants grow! We eat!

And it's all mine!

ORANGUTAN TWO:

Carnivorous animals eat us.

Without a lot of bother and fuss!

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

They call it an ecosystem,

Nature's way—got to trust her wisdom.

Though it seems like a struggle and a big strife.

You know it's just the circle of life!

CHORUS

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

And we need to be protected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

Don't let us be neglected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

And we need to be protected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

Don't let us be neglected.

CHORUS:

Help to keep us all protected now.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

When the last tree falls and the rainforest is gone,
Go and try to find—orangutans . . .
. . . you won't find one!

(INSTRUMENTAL BREAK)

CHORUS:

Come on, come on.
Come on, come on, we are all connected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

Don't let us be neglected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

And we need to be protected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

Don't let us be neglected.

CHORUS:

Come on, come on, we are all connected.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO:

And we need to be protected.

CHORUS:

Help to keep us all protected now.

END SONG

Plastic Kids and Orangutans move to sit stage left. Pat and Jesse meet center stage and Garbage Can moves upstage between them.

SCENE SIX—MAKING A SECOND INFORMATION STATION

PAT: See? I told you paper cups are bad for the environment. All those trees are being cut down, just so you can have a drink!

Dramatic Plastic Kid again marches up to Jesse.

DRAMATIC PLASTIC KID: (*humorously dramatic*) Paper is killing our rainforests!

Dramatic Plastic Kid marches back to the Plastic Kids. Then Jesse turns to Pat.

JESSE: (*grudgingly admits*) Okay. So paper cups are bad for the rainforests.

The Orangutans stand and shake their fists angrily, pointing to themselves.

ORANGUTAN ONE & ORANGUTAN TWO: *<squealing to indicate “What about us?”>*

JESSE: (*quickly adds*) And for orangutans.

The Orangutans nod; they’ve made their point. They sit.

JESSE: But plastic bottles are worse!

As Pat and Jesse argue back and forth, Garbage Can turns his head back and forth from one to the other like a spectator at a tennis match.

PAT: Oh yeah?

JESSE: Yeah!

PAT: Oh yeah?

JESSE: Yeah!

PAT: WHY are plastic bottles are worse?

JESSE: Because!

PAT: Because WHY!!

Garbage Can's head turns to Jesse, but Jesse is stumped.

JESSE: (*leaning in to Garbage Can*) A little help here, Garbage Can?

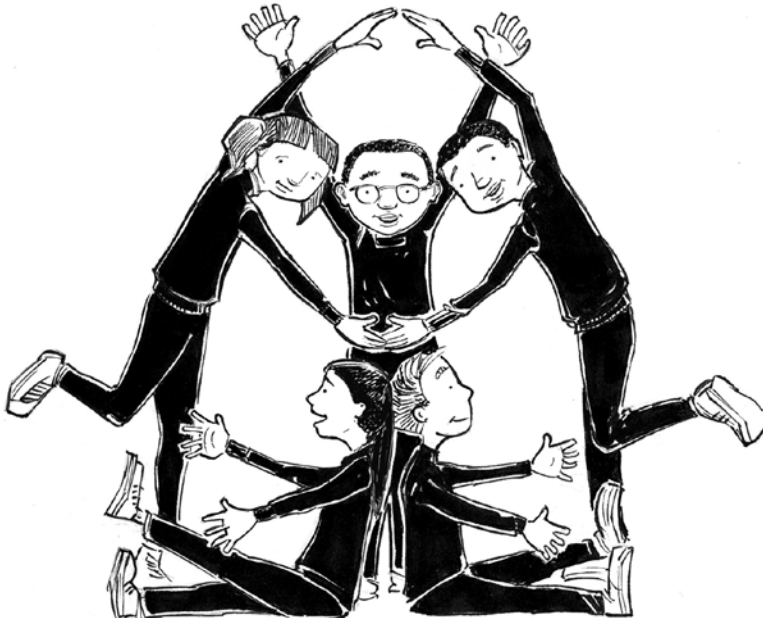
Garbage Can, mesmerized by the back-and-forth argument, is snapped back to reality by the plea for help.

GARBAGE CAN: Huh? Oh! Yeah, of course. Help.

Garbage Can steps back, blows his WHISTLE, and shouts.

GARBAGE CAN: Information Station, ACTIVATE!

Paper Kids run to center stage to morph into another Information Station.



PAPER KIDS: <making humorous electronic noises as they form a machine>

Jesse steps up to the machine, feeling confident.

JESSE: Okay, Information Station, tell Pat why using plastic bottles is even worse than using paper cups.

PAPER KIDS: <making more electronic noises>

PAPER KID ONE: (like “ta da!”) DING! Here are the facts.

Various kids within the Information Station speak.

PAPER KID TWO: Plastic is not made from trees.

PAT: Did you hear that? Trees aren’t used to make plastic.

PAPER KID THREE: So rainforest trees are not cut down to make plastic.

The Orangutans jump up again to dance around wildly. Pat runs over to join them. All three dance around in a silly, fun way.

PAT, ORANGUTAN ONE, & ORANGUTAN TWO: (squealing happily!)
Woohoo! Plastic ROCKS!

PAPER KID FOUR: (loudly) BUT!

Pat and the Orangutans stop dancing.

PAPER KID FOUR: Plastic IS made from oil.

PAT, ORANGUTAN ONE, & ORANGUTAN TWO: OIL?!?!?

PAPER KID FOUR: That’s what I said.

The Orangutans slink back down to a sitting position.