

TAKE
A SIDE

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Write an opinion essay.



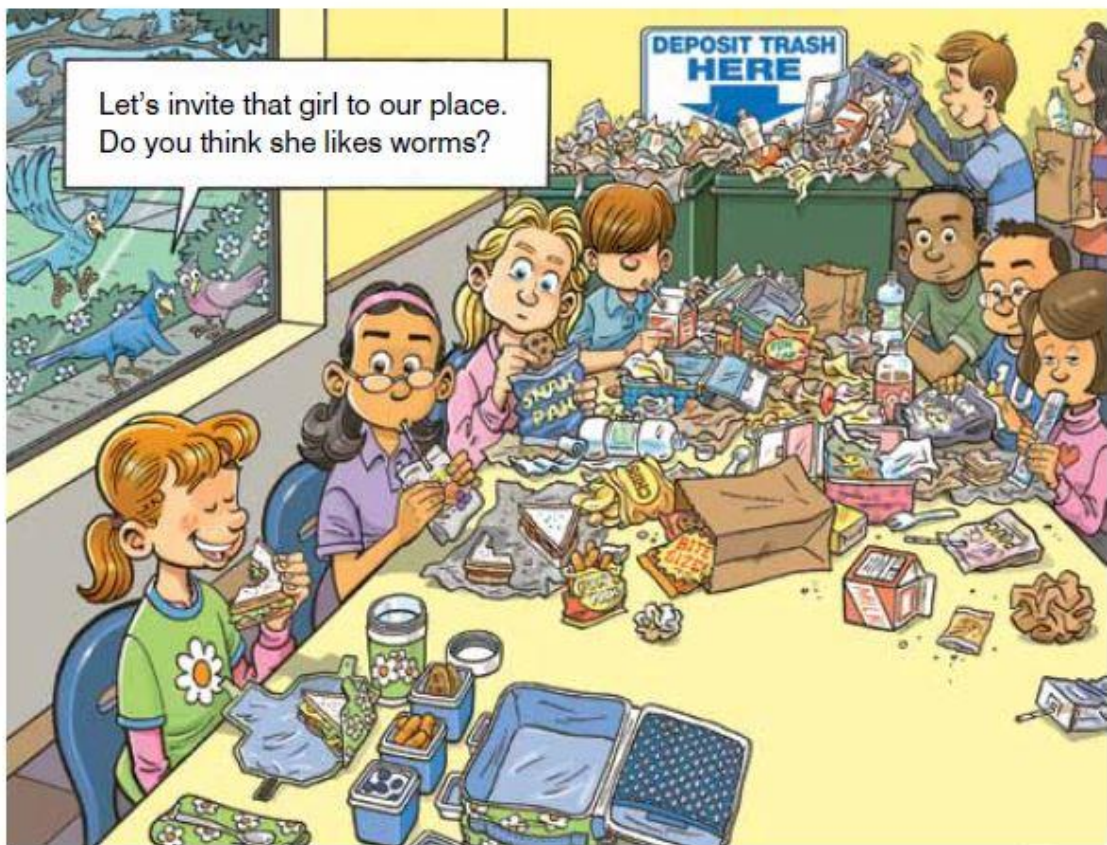
Can Your Lunch Help Save the Planet?

More kids are packing trash-free lunches. Are you ready to make the switch? **BY LAUREN TARSHIS**

Charlotte D. is 12. She lives in Cary, North Carolina. Each day, she packs a healthy lunch for school. There's a sandwich on whole wheat bread, carrot sticks in a Ziploc bag, a bottle of water, and a cup of yogurt.

These lunches are good for Charlotte. But scientists say that they're *not* good for the Earth. That's because a pile of trash is left when Charlotte finishes. There are empty plastic bottles, crumpled bags and wrappers, and sticky yogurt containers.

Plastic containers and wrappers create about 14 million tons of trash each year. Not much of this waste is recycled. Most winds up in landfills. It will sit there for centuries before it breaks down.



Problem Solved

Lunch-time trash is a big problem for the Earth. But this problem can be fixed. Suppose every elementary school kid in the U.S. were to pack a trash-free lunch. Each year, 1.2 billion fewer pounds of waste would end up in landfills.

To go trash-free, you can pack food



and drinks in containers that can be reused. Don't pack foods that you buy in serving-size portions, like juice boxes and mini bags of chips. Your lunch will be cheaper this way too. Those serving-size packages might save time, but they cost more. Instead, pack snacks in containers that you can reuse. You could save your family about \$250 per year that way.

Hectic Mornings

But not all families are eager to make the switch. One reason is time. Ethan L. is 10. He lives in Montclair, New Jersey. He says his mom wants to pack a trash-free lunch. "But it takes so much longer to make a lunch with

all of those containers," he says. "She has to go to work. And the mornings are really rushed at my house." It's quicker to make a lunch when most of the food is already packaged.

The price of gear can be a problem too. Reusable bottles and containers can cost a lot. And in a rushed school lunch period, lids and spoons can get thrown out by accident.

And then there are germs. They can grow and spread in food containers that aren't washed thoroughly after each use.

Charlotte agrees that going trash-free could be tough. But she thinks it's worth it.

"I just won't enjoy my lunch knowing that it's bad for the Earth," she says. ■

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should kids be required to pack trash-free lunches?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

YES It will help save the Earth!

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

NO It's a pain in the neck!

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. State your opinion in one sentence below. It can become the thesis statement for an opinion essay on this topic.

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