

STUDENT'S
HANDOUT



THE PARK IS OUR COMMONS

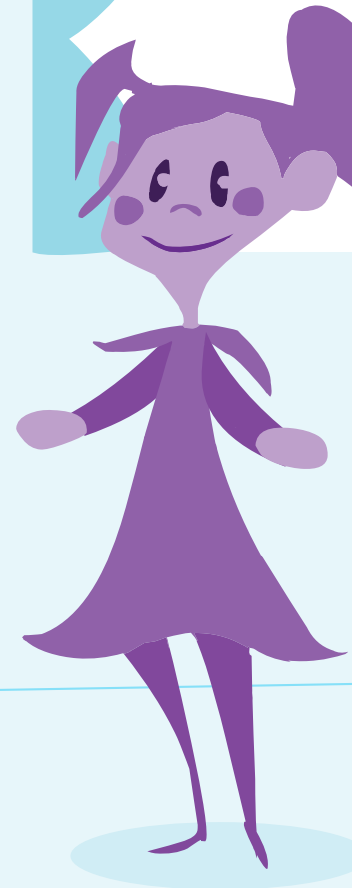
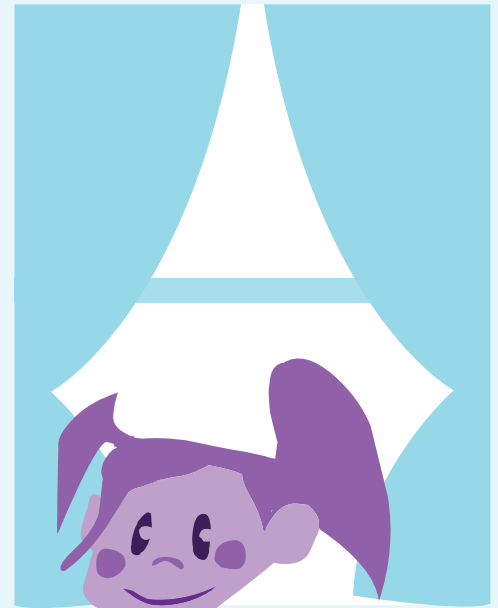


The Healthy Commons Lesson Set was co-created by
TerraCycle, The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education, and Learner-Centered Initiatives.



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It had been a long day, and Maria couldn't wait to go to the park near her home. Maria loved the park. It had a big playground where all of her friends played. Grandmother had promised to take her there that afternoon.

On their way to the park, Maria noticed that her grandmother was carrying a big, empty cloth bag.

“Why do you have that big empty bag?” Maria asked.

“I thought that I would bring it to the park in case we find anything interesting,” replied Grandmother.



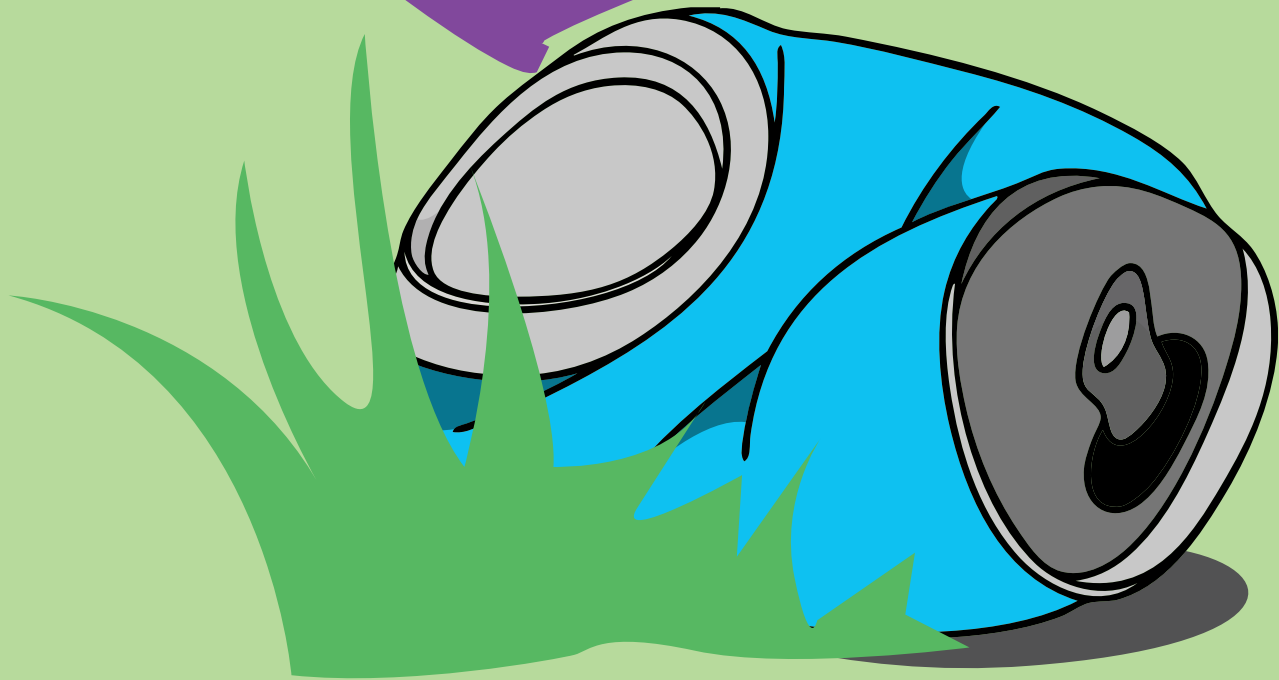


Just then, Maria saw her best friend, Ellie, waving to her from the swings.

Maria ran toward her friend, with Grandmother calling to her,

“Don't run, Maria - watch where you are going - be careful!”

But Maria was so excited to see her friend that she didn't hear Grandmother's warnings.



Sure enough, halfway to the swings, her foot landed on something round and shiny, and she almost fell.

“What was that?” asked Maria, more surprised than hurt.

She turned around and noticed a crushed soda can lying on the ground, near where she had tripped.



“Are you OK?” shouted Ellie as she jumped off the swings and came over to where Maria was standing.

“That shouldn't be left on the ground! I almost got hurt!” cried Maria. “Why would someone just leave a can on the ground like that?”

She picked up the can just as her grandmother caught up with her.

“Are you alright, Maria?” Grandmother asked, out of breath from hurrying to reach her. “You could have really hurt yourself!”

“I'm OK, Maria answered, but I don't understand why the soda can was just left on the ground like that.”

“Who did they think was going to clean up after them, the trees?” Ellie added.

Maria agreed. “Don't they know that nature only takes care of the things that nature makes? People make soda cans, so people should take care of them.”



Grandma handed Maria the empty canvas bag she had brought to the park. "Put the can in here. We'll take care of it."

"But we didn't leave it here! Why should we clean up someone else's mess?" Maria complained. "No one cleans my room up for me!"



“Who uses your bedroom, Maria?”
Grandmother asked gently.

“I do,” Maria replied.
“It's my bedroom.”

So, if you are the person who
uses your bedroom, Grandmother
continued, “who should be
responsible for keeping it
neat and clean?”

“Ummm.....me?”

“That's right. You use your room,
so you are responsible for it,”
agreed Grandmother. “Now, who
uses the park?”

Maria thought about this for a
moment. “I do...” She thought
again and corrected herself.
“I mean, we do.”

“Only you?...Only us?...”
asked Grandmother.
“Look around.”

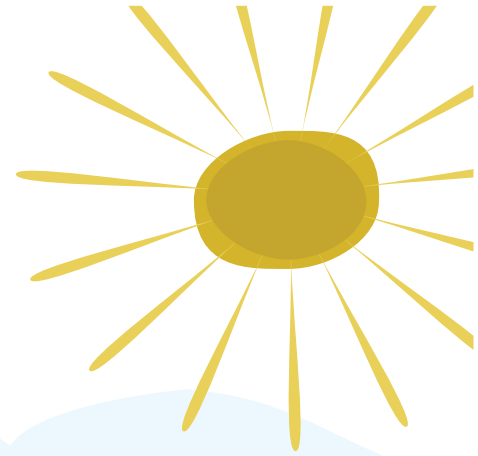


Ellie chimed in, “Lots of people use the park!”

“Right, Ellie, and when lots of people share the use of something, it's called a “Commons.”

“So, the park is our Commons?” Maria asked.

“Yes, Maria,” replied Grandmother.





“Then we're all responsible for our Commons, because they are the places and things that we all use,” Maria stated.

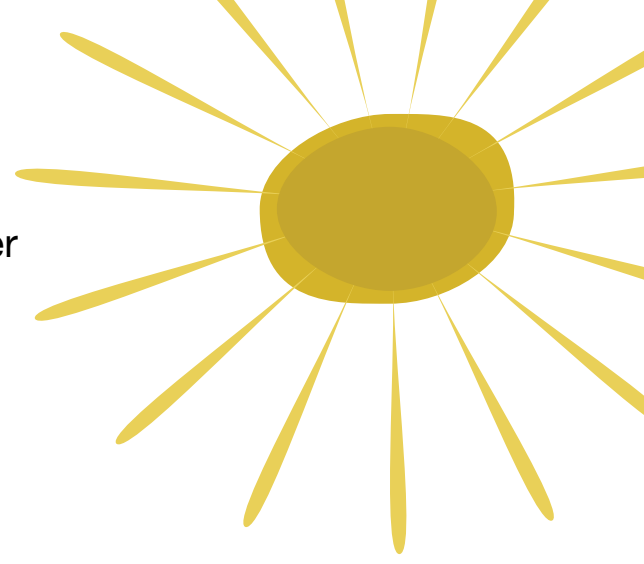
“Exactly!” said Grandmother. “Now you understand.”

“OK, so, since we're enjoying the park, we should help to keep it clean.” Maria dropped the can into the bag, turned to Ellie and said, “Let's swing!” and off they ran to the swings.

Maria and Ellie swung higher and higher. They pretended to be birds flying high over the park. Something shiny caught Maria's eye from way over on the other side of the park.

"Look!" said Maria, "I think there's a whole bunch of soda cans in a pile over there by the basketball court!"

Ellie squinted her eyes and pointed in another direction, "And I see some kind of wrappers and plastic bags over there, by the water fountain. Maria, let's get your grandmother's bag. We can pick up all that stuff and help keep our park Commons clean."





Maria jumped off the swing and skipped over to Grandmother to ask her for the bag.


“We're going to clean up all of the cans and plastic wrappers and other things that people made and left here, so the park is clean and beautiful.”

Grandmother smiled as she handed over the bag.

“Go ahead, girls. But be sure to wash your hands when you're done.”

Maria and Ellie skipped off to clean up the park.





Half an hour later, Maria and Ellie returned. They were exhausted!

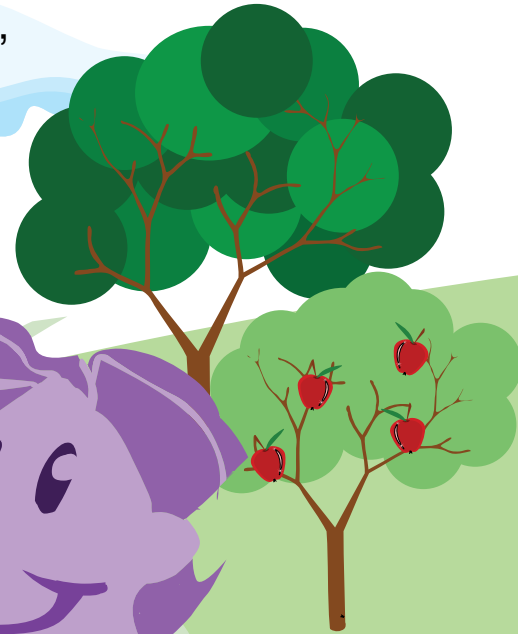
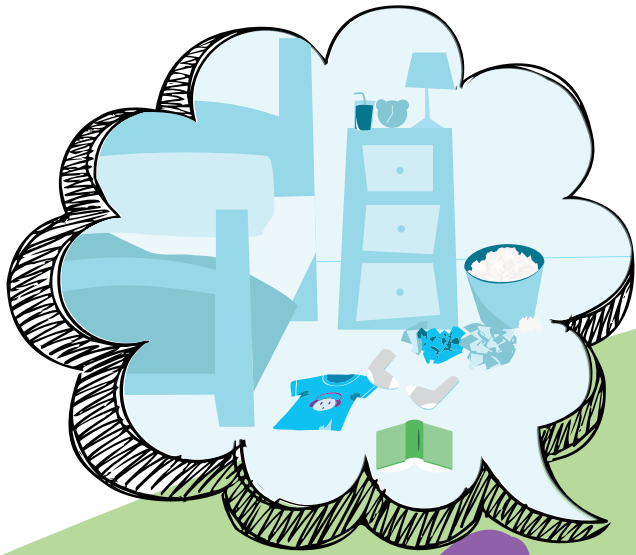
“What a mess! If we're the only ones picking up all of the stuff that people leave here, we're never going to be done! Since the park is our Commons, everyone who uses it needs to help keep it clean and healthy.”

Grandma looked up at Maria. “Do you always remember to clean your room?”

Maria shook her head. “No. Sometimes I forget or I am too busy or I want to play, and I need to be reminded.”

Ellie added, “My mom always reminds me to clean up after myself.”

“Maybe people need to be reminded to take care of their commons, just like we need reminders about our rooms,” exclaimed Maria excitedly.





Grandma chuckled and gave Maria a big hug. “You are so smart, Maria! You are only two people out of many many people who use our park Commons. What can we do to help remind everyone that we all have to help to keep our park Commons clean and healthy?”

“Well, in my house, first we set our goals. Then we each learn how to do our part, and we make plans and rules we all agree to so that we know who is in charge of what. Then we get stuff done,” said Ellie.



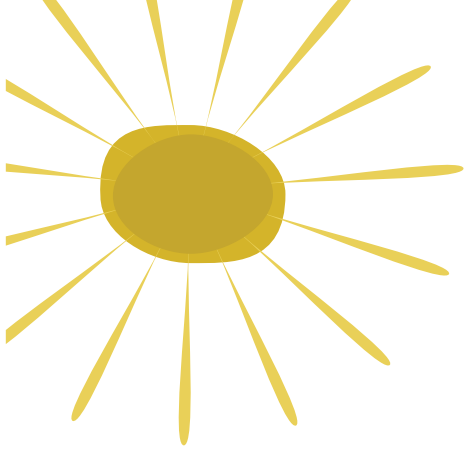
Grandma opened her purse and took out a notebook and a pencil and wrote:

Goals and Rules for Our Park Commons

Maria, Ellie and Grandma spent the rest of the afternoon at the park. They talked to people about the park and about the Commons and they asked everyone what they loved about the park and what they wanted it to be like, forever. Then they asked each person if they would be willing to share the responsibility for cleaning up the park, and what they thought would help everyone keep the park clean and safe.

Most people were happy to do their share and thought it might be good if a sign could list the things they could do. If the sign were posted at the park entrance, it would remind everyone about their responsibilities when they came in and when they left.





Maria, Ellie and Grandmother decided that the next day, they would make a big sign and post it at the entrance of the park. They would leave some space in case there were new goals and rules that anyone wanted to add.



“Hurray!!!” cheered Maria and Ellie.
“Now let's go home. We are hungry!”

“I'll make your favorite supper to celebrate!”
added Grandma.

“It was a good day for our Commons.”

Here is the sign that Maria, Ellie and Grandmother posted at the entrance to the park. Can you think of any to add?

GOALS AND RULES FOR OUR PARK COMMONS

GOALS

- 1 OUR PARK WILL BE CLEAN AND SAFE FOR ALL THE CHILDREN AND GROWN UPS
- 2 OUR PARK WILL BE CLEAN AND SAFE FOR ALL THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS
- 3 OUR PARK WILL GET BETTER AND BETTER EACH YEAR FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO ENJOY

RULES

- 1 PACK IT IN PACK IT OUT! (IF YOU BRING SOMETHING INTO THE PARK, TAKE IT OUT WITH YOU)
- 2 WE ARE COUNTING ON EACH OTHER! WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE OUR PARK COMMONS EVEN BETTER? (EVERYONE WHO ENJOYS THE PARK CONTRIBUTES TO IT IN SOME WAY)
- 3 IF YOU SEE SOMETHING DO SOMETHING! (EVERYONE TAKES RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING THE PARK COMMONS HEALTHY AND CLEAN)