THEME:	**Water Stewardship & Community Connections**
SCOPE & SEQUENCE UNIT:	**Popular Writing**
OBJECTIVE:	**Telling our Story with Popular Writing**
ACTIVITY:	**Writing a newspaper article**

Notes:	in class
Teacher Prep.:	Consider inviting a local journalist into the class to talk about how to write an article for newspaper. Request the local newspaper for space for a student article.
Time:	several 45 minute sessions

Skills:

- Reading
- Writing and Oral Language
- Media literacy, communication & information management
- Ecological literacy
- Critical & creative thinking
- Life and career planning

Objectives:

- To experience popular writing and how it differs from creative writing in class
- To organize around a theme and express it in writing
- To discover the interconnections in life through garbage research

Background Information:

The analysis of the garbage collected during the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup™ is an opportune time to take advantage of the hands-on work and back it up with some research into where the garbage comes from. This kind of research is open ended in that it can send the investigation off into many directions. Decide to write an article about the garbage. As a class, decide what is news, what is relevant to the community, and what is interesting. Brainstorm points of interest and facts. With the aid of a journalist, distill the brainstorm list into keepers or main points; and develop a sequencing of the information. Consider what makes a good headline. Then brainstorm titles.

Work together as a class in developing the article, tackling it in bits. Later, the benefits of doing it as a class can be transferred to individuals or groups who want to take on an article on behalf of other class studies.

Exemplar:

NEWSBEAT

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Too much garbage in the ocean

SSE class joins Shoreline Clean-Up and learns about a massive litter problem

BY STUDENTS OF STELLA WEINERT AND MARIE MULLEN
SPECIAL TO THE DRIFTWOOD

Our Grade 4-5 class at Salt Spring Elementary participated in the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up in late September. This is an international day when volunteers pick up garbage on beaches around the world.

But we did more than pick up garbage. We learned how big a problem ocean garbage really is.

For our clean-up we walked down to the Ganges Creek estuary to pick up garbage. We chose this spot because our class has adopted the creek as a class project this year. It's important to us because our school releases salmon every year into this creek.

While we were there we picked up 328 pieces of styrofoam, lots of plastic, metal, cardboard, lumber and other stuff.

"What I saw was lots and lots (505) of cigarette butts. It was very unsettling that everyone smokes so much and that the cigarette butts were dumped on the beach," said student Max Temmel.

Altogether we picked up 1,580 pieces of garbage!

All of us were surprised and sad about how much there was.

Grade 5 student Julianne Robertson wrote afterwards, "I saw a lot of garbage and it made me feel bad because we are polluting our earth."

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Salt Spring Elementary School children with their clipboards and garbage bags at a Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up outing in September.

Where does it come from?

We tried to figure out where all the garbage was from. As one student, Jaspar Irwin, commented, "If we can figure out what there's most of, maybe we can stop it or lessen it."

We thought the garbage came from tourists and local people using the beach, from being washed up from other beaches and from boats. The styrofoam probably came from docks. Then we learned of a bigger problem.

Floating garbage patches

We learned that the world's largest "landfills" are actually in the Pacific Ocean. They are massive garbage patches made when the world's garbage is sucked into gyres, which are spiralling currents. One patch is between Hawaii and Japan, the other is between California and Hawaii. These patches are as big as Texas and go 80 feet deep below the ocean's surface. The bad thing is most of this garbage is plastic. In fact, 90 per cent of the ocean's garbage is plastic. Plastic does not biodegrade. This means no natural process can break it down. It photodegrades, which means it only breaks down into smaller pieces. We think this is terrible. You'll see why.

Tiny, deadly pieces

Plastic that floats in the sea for a long time slowly breaks down into very small pieces of plastic that looks like plankton. These are called nurdles or mermaid's tears. They soak up toxic chemicals and poisons. Animals eat them, thinking they are food and can be injured or die.

"On our clean-up I saw hundreds of little bits of plastic," said Madeline Woodley, "I didn't feel good because then they break up into millions of pieces. They are mistaken by birds for zooplankton and then get stuck in the birds' systems, hurting them."

In some places in the ocean, nurdles outweigh plankton by a ratio of six to one.

This puts sea creatures in incredible danger! This could destroy the entire food chain! And some of this garbage might come from Salt Spring.

How we can help

Our class came up with ideas to lessen the amount of garbage. We thought we could make signs to remind people, put garbage cans on beaches a lot of people go to, talk to people, including people at our school, and write about it in the newspaper so more people will know about the problem. That's why we wrote this article.

Remember — don't litter or leave garbage on your beach, especially plastic. We all need to work together to stop this garbage problem. Having garbage here is bad enough — we don't want our garbage floating out and hurting animals out in the ocean.

Here on Salt Spring, we picked up 1,580 pieces. Can you or your group pick up more?

Stella Weinert's and Marie Mullen's Grade 4-5 class at SSE has embarked on a year-long study of water, focusing on Ganges Creek, supported by environmental educator Cate McEwen. They hope this is the first in a series of articles about our local environment.