Name : _____ Group : _____

The following activity is part of "Gère tes matières", a collaboration between the Monique-Fitz-Back Foundation and Québec'ERE. Its goal is to make you, your staff and your school's administration aware of the important role that the school environment can play in the sound management of residual materials (RMM) in Quebec. Visit the "Gère tes matières" website for more information.

S.O.S EARTH!

READING COMPREHENSION

Yesterday, all the students at my elementary school were invited to visit a large exhibition on waste management. My brother Jean-Simon, who is in fifth grade, was one of the organizers. In fact, all the students in his class were manning booths.

There were 14 in all. Each stand was unique and offered solutions to reduce the amount of waste we throw away.

For the occasion, the school gymnasium was transformed into a giant exhibition hall. All the booths were placed in a circle in the hall. Every hour the organizers received three new groups of visitors. We were divided into small groups of eight or nine students and had to move from booth to booth together. Each presentation took about six minutes.

The booths were beautiful! Many of my friends really enjoyed the presentation by Louis Poliquin and Marie-Claude Létourneau, who ran the raw materials booth. On the table was a video game controller, a model of a bridge and an exact replica of a log-hauling truck. The animations and texts were provided by specialists in environmental education.

Did you know that the plastic used to make containers, toys, phones, TV screens and many other products is made from petroleum, just like gasoline? Oil, an essential part of our daily lives, is a non-renewable resource. This means that when humans have used up all the oil available on our planet, there will be none left for future generations!

Other natural resources are also non-renewable, such as iron ore, which is found mainly in northern Quebec. Iron is extracted from rocks and formed into billets or ingots.

Billets are used as a raw material in the manufacture of a variety of products, such as tin cans, shopping baskets, and structures for bridges and buildings. They are also used to make small pins for your stapler, nails and bolts. All of these products can be recycled hundreds of times at the end of their useful life, saving large amounts of iron ore.

One of Quebec's most important natural resources is its forests. Every year, millions of trees are cut down to produce construction materials and pulp. Although the forest is a renewable resource, it must be used wisely.

My uncle, a biologist, told me that if you cut down an entire forest to make new products, you'd have to wait over 65 years for the trees to grow back and be cut down again. Of course, trees are only cut down when they are very large. For some species we have to wait over 100 years!

Forestry companies cut trees in the forest and truck the logs to sawmills. These tree parts are then cut into boards of all kinds. In the past, sawmill residues such as shavings and sawdust were simply thrown away. Nowadays, these residues are no longer waste, as they are sent to paper mills where they are turned into the pulp needed to make paper and cardboard. As for the bark, it is burned to produce energy.

Well, thanks to the "S.O.S. Earth!" stand, I've learned a lot about waste and natural resources. From now on, I'll use the recycling bin more, both at home and at school, so that as many products and packaging as possible can be transformed into new products. As a result, I'll save a lot of natural resources that are so precious to all living things.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXT

1. The plastic used to make containers, toys and many other products come from what raw material?

2. Is iron ore a renewable or non-renewable resource?

3. What is the most important natural resource found in Quebec?

4. How many years must we wait before cutting down the trees in a forest again?

5. Which sawmill residues used to be thrown away?

EXERCISE

Identify the raw material used to make each item in the attached list and whether the resource is renewable or non-renewable, by simply marking with an "X" the appropriate box.

Product	Iron ore	Wood	Oil	Renewable resource	Non-renewable resource
Tin can					
Looseleaf paper					
Yogurt container					
Maple flooring					
Book					
Lego blocks					
Automotive body					
Pine picnic table					
Soda bottle					
Newspaper					

Product	Iron ore	Wood	Oil	Renewable resource	Non-renewable resource
Recycling bin					
Bicycle					
Cereal box					
Cherry wood furniture					
Grocery basket					

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