

KAP Club for Schools

Theme: Litter Dating



Big question (Inspired by World Clean Up Day and Jason Alexander)

What can litter tell us about how it ended up there, and what could we do to stop it happening?

Session length: Around 45 minutes

Prep: Low

Aim: Help pupils look at litter differently, use observation and imagination to explore its possible story, investigate litter around their own school and choose one realistic action.

Before the session

Have these ready:

- Amy's KAP Club Connection video
- the PowerPoint Guess the Litter Age - KAP Activity
- four areas or corners of the room labelled A, B, C and D
- gloves, litter pickers and a bag or container if pupils will collect litter outside
- paper or mini whiteboards if useful for recording ideas

The litter featured in the PowerPoint was collected by Jason Alexander, founder of Rubbish Walks and the Vintage Litter Museum.

If pupils are collecting litter, follow your school's usual safety procedures. Pupils should not touch sharp, hazardous, dirty or unknown items. Use litter pickers or gloves where appropriate.

1. KAP Club Connection

Start with the short video from Amy.

Amy introduces the idea that litter is a problem every day, not just on World Clean Up Day, and that looking closely at the litter around us can help us understand why it is there and what might need to change.

Then move straight into the Guess the Litter Age activity.

2. Guess the Litter Age: Run Around!

Open the Guess the Litter Age - KAP Activity PowerPoint.

Each round shows a real piece of litter collected by Jason and four possible dates, labelled A, B, C and D.

The challenge is to guess the date shown on the litter, such as its sell-by or use-by date.

Give pupils around 15 seconds to decide.

Each corner of the classroom represents one answer.

When everyone is ready, say: "Run around... NOW!"

Pupils move to the corner representing the answer they think is correct.

Then give them one last chance to reconsider:

"You've got 10 seconds to change your mind if you want to..."

Then:

"Run around... NOW!"

After the 10 seconds, everyone must freeze in their chosen corner.

Reveal the correct answer on the PowerPoint.

The aim is not simply to get the answer right. Encourage pupils to notice just how long some everyday rubbish can remain in the environment.

If running is not appropriate for your space or pupils, they can point, hold up A/B/C/D cards or move to four marked areas in another suitable way.

3. What's the litter's story?

After revealing the answer, bring everyone back around the screen.

Now ask pupils to imagine how that piece of litter ended up where Jason found it.

Start with questions such as:

Who might have had it?
Where might they have been?
Did they deliberately drop it?
Could it have fallen out of a pocket or bag?
Could the wind have carried it somewhere?
What might have happened to it since?

Then make it creative.

For each round, give pupils a different story challenge, for example:

- "What is the most unbelievable story you can invent for this piece of litter?"
- "Can you tell a story about this litter involving an alien?"
- "How could this piece of litter have travelled hundreds of miles?"
- "Can you invent a story where nobody actually meant to drop it?"

At the end of the PowerPoint

Introduce the Vintage Litter Museum that Jason created from some of the unusual old litter he has found.

Finish with the slide showing Jason's litter dragon, made from rubbish collected during his litter-picking work.

The aim is to leave pupils thinking differently about the things we normally walk past and ignore.

4. Take the Litter Dating Challenge into school

Now it is the pupils' turn.

Go into an agreed area of the school grounds and look for litter.

They do not need to collect lots. The aim is to find a few interesting examples.

Back in the classroom, ask pupils to choose one or two pieces to show the rest of the club.

They can then run their own mini Litter Dating Challenge.

Ask the group:

How old do you think this is?

Look for clues such as:

dates printed on packaging
fading
dirt or weathering
old branding or designs
damage
where it was found

If there is a date on the litter, see how close everyone was.

Then invent a backstory for it just as you did with Jason's examples.

5. Turn it into action

Now shift the conversation from the individual pieces of rubbish to the school itself.

Ask:

“What is the litter we found telling us?”

Then:

“What could we do to stop some of this litter ending up in our school grounds in the first place?”

Encourage pupils to think beyond simply doing another litter pick.

For example, they might notice:

- the same wrappers appearing repeatedly
- lots of litter around one particular location
- packaging from something sold or given out in school
- bins that are difficult to reach
- rubbish blowing into the grounds
- particular times or activities when litter seems to appear

Ask the group to choose one realistic next step.

That might be:

- finding out where a particular type of litter is coming from
- asking why it is being used
- speaking to someone responsible for a particular area
- checking whether bins are in the right places
- monitoring the same spot again next week
- suggesting a change that could prevent the litter being created in the first place

The aim is not to solve the whole problem in one session.

A good outcome is:

“We spotted something worth investigating and we know what we’re going to do next.”

6. Send something back to KAP

We’d love to hear what your KAP Club discovered.

Send KAP:

- one interesting piece of litter you found
- your best guess at how old it was
- your favourite invented backstory
- something your group noticed about litter around school
- the one next step you have decided to take

You can also send a photo of an interesting litter find or your group’s activity where your school has the appropriate permissions.