



does  
the

Rubbish

**MONSTER**  
live in your house?

KEYSTAGE 2

## Does the Rubbish Monster Live in your House?

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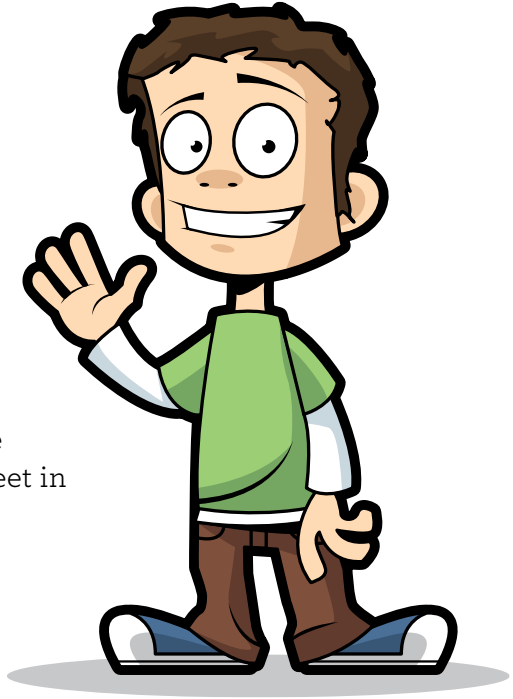
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**An Eco-Schools Book**  
.....





Tom lived in an average house in an average street in an average town.

He was average height for his age, had averagely brown hair and was average at football, even though he thought he was well above average.

Tom shared his average house with his little sister, Lucy, and his Mum and Dad.

Although virtually everything in Tom's life was average, there was one aspect of it that was very un-average indeed.

A **monster** lived in Tom's house!

Now, when I say **'monster'** it wasn't the scary sort, so there's no need to read the rest of this book hiding behind the sofa or in the paper cupboard at school.

Tom's monster wasn't the kind that jumps out when you least expect it and shouts **'BOO!'**

Or the kind that lurks around in the dark like a big, smelly, furry lurking thing.

Or even the sort that screams as loudly as a cat with its tail stuck in a mangle whenever there is a full moon.

No, the monster that lived in Tom's house wasn't scary at all. In fact it was a rubbish monster. Rubbish at being scary; rubbish at lurking and really, really rubbish at screaming like a mangled cat.

Tom knew all this because every single day, for as long as he could remember, his Dad always complained that the Rubbish Monster had been in the house.



“Looks like the Rubbish Monster’s been in the kitchen again,” Tom would hear him say. Or, “I see The Rubbish Monster’s been hanging out in Tom’s room.”

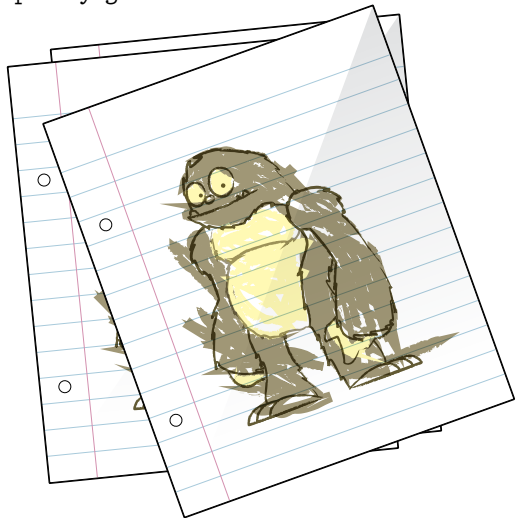
Now, this last complaint puzzled Tom a lot because he had never actually seen the Rubbish Monster, heard the Rubbish Monster or smelled him. (Tom figured that all monsters ponged a bit and was perplexed that he hadn’t caught the faintest whiff of his household’s monster-in-residence.)

And due to Tom’s lack of confirmed Rubbish Monster sightings or smellings, it further reinforced his opinion that the Rubbish Monster was indeed very rubbish at being a monster.

When Tom would hear his Dad’s Rubbish Monster rantings he’d think to himself, “Yes Dad, you’re not wrong there mate. That monster really is rubbish. I mean, what’s the point of being a monster if you never make an appearance? Surely that’s a monster’s main job?”

But even though Tom had never seen the mythical Rubbish Monster he had a pretty good idea what it must look like. This is his first drawing of it. Pretty good, huh?

One bright Tuesday morning during the school holidays (ah, the holidays! Don’t worry, yours will soon be here) Tom decided to hunt down the Rubbish Monster once and for all.



He gathered together all the essential gear he needed to track the mystery monster: a large fishing net on a pole that he normally used to catch crabs and small creatures in rock pools. Not today though. Today it was a **Rubbish Monster Trap™**.

He also grabbed a torch, because as any experienced monster hunter knows, you'll usually find them in the darkest, remotest and gloomiest places on Earth. Like the hot press upstairs in Tom's house.

Then Tom sat down and drew a map of rooms in his house and marked on it all the places he'd heard his Dad complaining about the Rubbish Monster. He figured that if the Rubbish Monster had been there at some point he might well return, like a criminal returning to the scene of the crime.

He drew big red crosses on the map in the kitchen beside the bin; in the utility room beside the fridge; in his bedroom, under the bed and finally outside on the pavement at the front of his house.

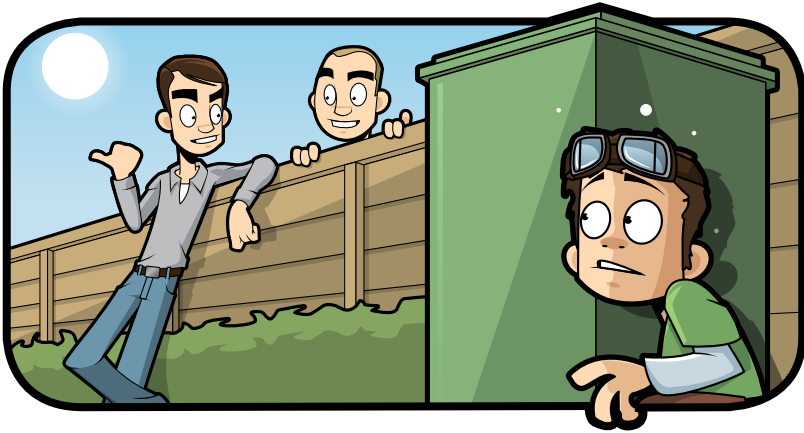
This last location was a bit of an unusual one because not only had he heard his Dad mention the Rubbish Monster to





their cheery neighbour, Mr Pattison, he'd actually heard his dad say "Looks like my Rubbish Monster has been out here."

"MY Rubbish Monster." That meant that the Rubbish Monster belonged to Tom's Dad. Tom almost fell off his bike when he heard his Dad saying this, but it got even weirder when Mr Pattison replied, "Well you never know, it could very well have been one of my Rubbish Monsters."



Holy smoke! thought Tom, not only does Mr Pattison have a Rubbish Monster as well, he has more than one! Maybe he's got three or four in his house. Maybe he has even more; enough maybe to make up his own Rubbish Monster football team. What a cool match that would be at school, thought Tom. Our team against Mr Pattison's Rubbish Monster XI.

So that's why Tom headed out to this location first. If Mr Pattison had a heap of Rubbish Monsters ('heap', by the way is the collective noun for Rubbish Monsters) then by the laws of probability that's where Tom was most likely to find one.

Cautiously, Tom edged his way out of the front door and down the garden path to the front gate. The sun was glinting in his

eyes and it took him a moment to adjust to the brightness. In that split second he heard a shuffling, snorting noise behind him. Tom quickly wheeled round, holding out his Rubbish Monster Trap™ and raised the heavy torch above his head.

“Hello young Tom,” said a voice. Tom’s eyes were closed because of the bright sunlight and he thought that not only was he about to come face to face with a Rubbish Monster,



but that the aforementioned creature was being quite familiar and pleasant. Not monster behaviour at all, he thought. How typical of a creature so utterly rubbish at his job.

But as Tom slowly opened his eyes he saw that he wasn’t standing face to face with a Rubbish Monster. Leaning over the fence, staring down at him was Mr Pattison. The snuffling, snorting noise had been him eating a

choc-ice that he quickly polished off, licking his fingers with delight.

“What you up to Tom? Off fishing?” he asked.

“Erm, no, not really.” Replied Tom. “I’m actually hunting for Rubbish Monsters.”

“Ah, well there’s plenty of those around here,” chuckled Mr Pattison as he pointed towards the gate of Tom’s house.

“Looks like you’ve just missed one.”

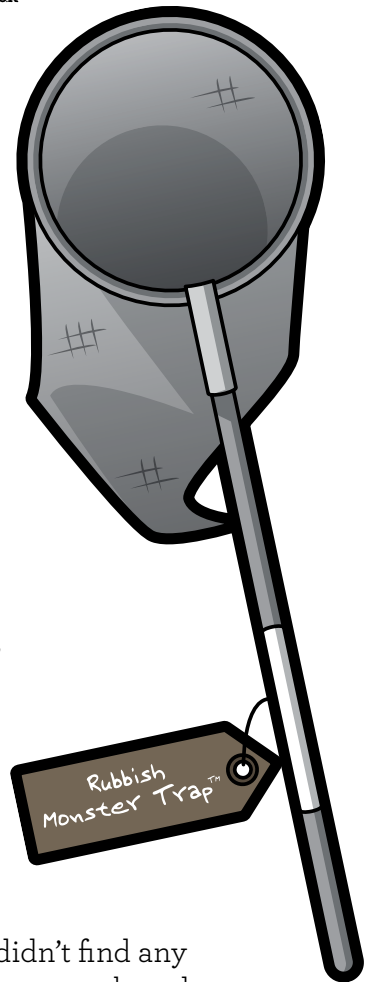
Tom followed the direction of Mr Pattison’s outstretched finger and rushed over to the gate, but when he got there he didn’t find any monster footprints in the flower bed or monster fur trapped in the wire of the gate. He didn’t find any monster claw scratches on the concrete path and he definitely couldn’t detect any monster smells.

The only thing that Tom saw was an empty crisp packet stuck under the bottom rung of the gate.

Tom turned to ask Mr Pattison what he meant, but the ice-cream loving gent was nowhere to be seen. So instead he got out the map he had drawn and in bright red pen he wrote:

**EVIDENCE – Crisp Packet by the gate.**

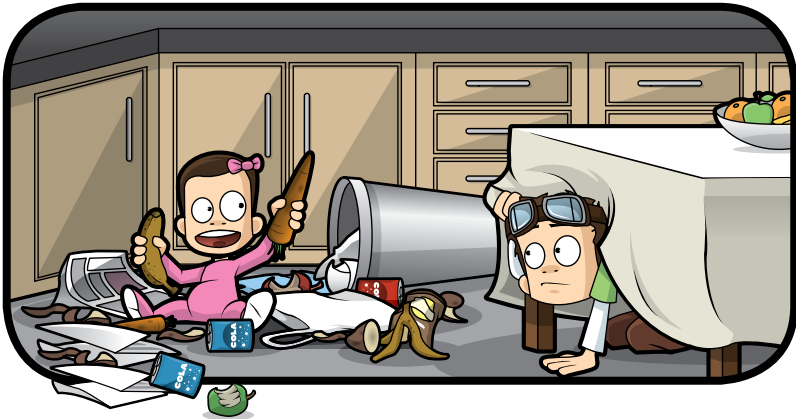
Tom stayed outside for a while, hiding



behind the wheelie bin and peeking round every so often to try to catch a glimpse of his elusive monster. But the Rubbish Monster didn't appear.

Tom's next stakeout was by the bin in the kitchen. He hid under the table, gripping his Rubbish Monster Trap™ firmly with both hands and waited. And waited. And waited. In fact Tom waited so long under the table that he started to feel a bit drowsy and eventually he nodded off.

But only for a few minutes as he was startled by an almighty **CRASH!**



Tom peeked out from under the table half expecting to see the Rubbish Monster wreaking havoc but instead saw his little sister sitting in the middle of the floor with the kitchen bin on its side and all manner of stuff scattered all around her. There were potato peelings, old plastic bags and a couple of browned off looking bananas among the debris. Lucy was quite happily playing in the middle of it all when Tom's Dad came running into the room.

“Oh Lucy,” he said, “Have you tipped the bin over again?” and he lifted her off the floor and popped her into a high

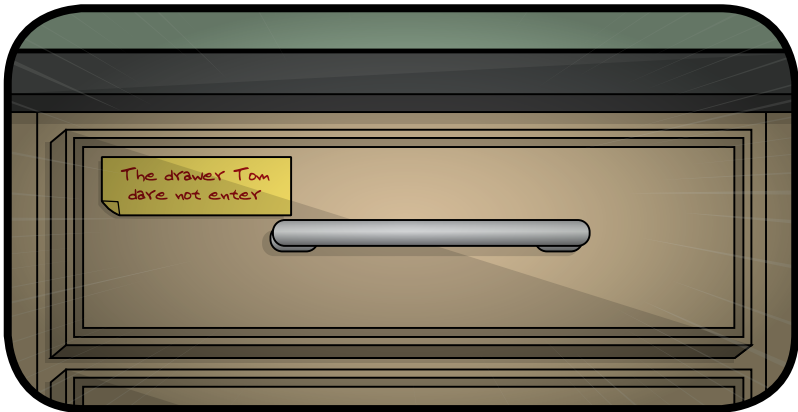
chair for safe keeping. Then he turned and surveyed the mess on the floor.

“Well well, well’, “ he said to Lucy, it looks like the Rubbish Monster’s been in here.”

Tom’s heart missed a beat. Oh no, he thought, I must have missed the Rubbish Monster when I fell asleep. I can’t believe that I just missed it **AGAIN!** Meanwhile Dad scooped the potato peelings and the old bananas up and disappeared out the back door of the house.

That’s odd, thought Tom. Where’s Dad taking those old bananas? The Wheelie Bin is round the front of the house.

And when Dad returned a moment later he was empty handed. Now Tom had another puzzle to solve: ‘The Mystery of the Missing Bananas’. I’ll leave that for another day, he thought. After all, he did have quite a full schedule at the moment what with all this monster tracking and what not.



Dad finished tidying up the kitchen. He put the plastic carrier bag into **‘the drawer Tom dare not enter’**. This was a special drawer in the kitchen that Tom had been

expressly warned to keep his sticky fingers out of. It fascinated him. I mean, what could be so special about something kept in a drawer in the kitchen? And given that his Dad had just stuffed an old plastic shopping bag into the self same drawer, clearly nothing much. This however was not a new mystery. The exploration of **‘the drawer Tom dare not enter’** was one of Tom’s long-term projects and he had allocated several days the following week to the completion of that task.

With the kitchen now ship-shape again, Dad told Lucy that he’d make her some lunch and he walked over to the fridge. The same fridge that Tom had marked on his map with a big red ‘X’; the very fridge that was known to be a frequent haunt of the Rubbish Monster. And true to form, as Dad peered into its illuminated interior he let out a groan.

“Unbelievable. The Rubbish Monster.” he sighed. He pulled out Lucy’s baby food, but at the same time, lifted a couple of ready meals and a packet of mince.

Dad’s a bit hungry today, Tom thought.

But Dad didn’t make himself anything to eat. Instead, he took the extra food and put it into the bin.

“It’s all past its ‘use-by date’ Lucy,” he said as he started to make her lunch.

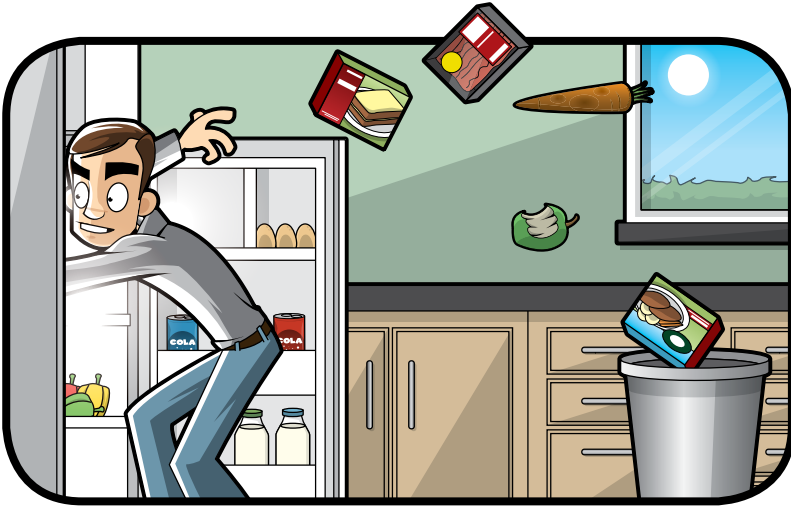
“Stranger and stranger,” thought Tom as he reviewed his map. He took his red pen out and wrote beside the kitchen **‘EVIDENCE: two old bananas and some potato peelings’** and by the fridge on the map he scribbled



**‘EVIDENCE: out-of-date food.’**

While dad fed Lucy her lunch, Tom shimmied out from under the table.

“Oh, hello big man,” said Dad, “What you up to?”



“Oh nothing really, just, you know... hanging out,” said Tom as innocently as he could and started whistling as he walked nonchalantly out of the kitchen. When he reached the bottom of the stairs he ran as fast as he could up to his room. This was his final chance to catch the slippery Rubbish Monster red-handed. Holding his **Rubbish Monster Trap™** in one hand and the map and torch in the other he burst into his room, figuring that the element of surprise might be a better tactic than his earlier attempts at covert surveillance.

“**Gotcha!**” he screamed as he entered the room. But his excitement was short-lived as the only thing he’d managed to take unawares was his favourite teddy bear, Max who sat faithfully at the top of his bed.

Tom was dejected. He sat down with a resigned ‘flump’ onto the floor of his bedroom. Well, I say the floor of his bedroom, but you couldn’t actually see the carpet as it was covered in pieces of paper with half-completed sketches of the Rubbish Monster, maps and doodles. As he sat, head bowed in the middle of his room he heard his Dad and Lucy coming up the stairs. Dad was burbling and talking nonsense to her as always, but then something made Tom’s heart start to beat really fast. He heard his Dad say to Lucy “Look Lucy-loo, it’s the Rubbish Monster.”

WHERE? Thought Tom anxiously as he slipped and struggled to get up from the paper-strewn floor. But when he finally got to his feet he was quite surprised to see his dad standing in the middle of the room, looking down at him.

“Where’s the Rubbish Monster Dad?” he asked excitedly looking behind himself and then under the bed. “Where, where, where?”

Tom’s dad smiled and said, “Come over here and I’ll show you.” And he took Tom by the hand and led him over to the corner of the room where Tom’s wardrobe stood.

This is it. I’m finally going to see the Rubbish Monster.



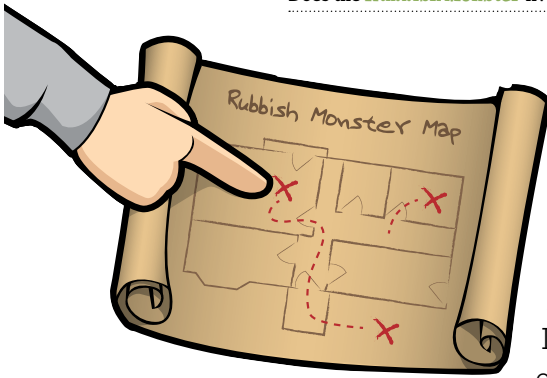


It must be hiding in my wardrobe, Tom thought. He held the **Rubbish Monster Trap™** in a shaking right hand as his dad slowly opened the big double doors. As they swung open Tom got ready to pounce but when he peered inside there was no monster to be seen, just Tom's clothes, a half-inflated space-hopper and a pair of his old football boots.

“Where's the monster Dad?” Tom asked.

“Look, here it is,” said Dad as he positioned the long mirror on the inside of the right-hand door so that it was facing them.





“What?” asked Tom with a very puzzled expression on his face.

“We are the Rubbish Monsters mate” said Dad. “You, me, Mum and even sometimes, Lucy.”

“But, but, but,” stammered Tom. “But Mr Pattison, next door, has Rubbish Monsters too and we don’t live there.”

“Yes Tom, Mr Pattison next door has Rubbish Monsters, old Mrs Clarke across the road has a Rubbish Monster and even your teacher Mr Fisher probably has one too. Everyone does,” said Dad.

“But I’ve been hunting high and low for our monster today,” said Tom holding out his map to show Dad. “These are the places I thought I’d spot it because that’s where I’ve heard you mentioning its name.”

Tom’s Dad looked at the map and gave a little smile.

“Okay big man. I’ll show you what I mean,” said Dad. “Let’s start in here. You see all this paper lying around on the floor?”

Tom nodded.

“You know where paper comes from, don’t you Tom?”

Tom paused, because this sounded suspiciously like one of Dad’s infamous trick questions. “The paper shop in the High Street?” he eventually answered.

“Well, yes,” said Dad, “but before it gets to the paper shop, it starts out life as trees.”

Tom waited for the punch line to Dad's joke, but it never came.

"We cut down trees, pulp them in big factories and turn them into paper," Dad continued. "So if we don't recycle the paper that we've used it means more trees have to get cut down to make more paper for us. It looks like there's a small forest's worth in here alone! So if we simply stuff this lot in the wheelie bin for it to be taken away to the tip we are guilty of being, what me and Mr Pattison call, 'Rubbish Monsters'."



Tom's head was spinning. Trees. Paper. Monsters. It was all a bit much to take in.

"Let's go downstairs to the kitchen and I'll show you some more monstrous shenanigans," said Dad.

So the three of them went downstairs and stopped by the bin.

Tom thought this was the perfect opportunity to kill two birds with one stone and solve, at a single stroke, both the Rubbish Monster and Missing Bananas Mystery.

"Dad, where did you take those two old bananas earlier," enquired Tom.

"Good question," replied his father, "I took them out to the compost heap."

"That 'what' heap?" asked Tom.



“Come outside and I’ll show you,” replied Dad.

So the three of them went outside and down to the bottom of the back garden to the place that Tom called ‘Warm Mountain’.

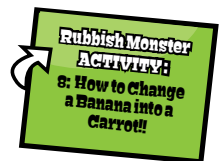
“Oh, you mean Warm Mountain,” he said to Dad.



“Er, yes, Warm Mountain is actually the compost heap Tom,” said Dad. “It’s where we’re supposed to put our vegetable rubbish like potato peelings and fruit peelings, along with grass clippings and leaves. If we put it here for a few months, it decomposes and creates really good stuff for putting back into the flower beds to help the roses grow. But sometimes we forget and the potato peelings and old bananas get put into the wheelie bin by mistake. That’s another way we turn into Rubbish Monsters.”

“But Warm Mouna....sorry, the compost heap gives off heat, even on a cold day,” said Tom, “why’s that?”

“That’s the energy being given off by the composting



process,” said Dad. And if we turn the compost over now and again it means the process happens faster as well as deterring rats and mice.

All sorts of thoughts were running through Tom’s mind now and he was starting to realise that this Rubbish Monster business was actually quite straightforward.

“Mr Pattison said that a Rubbish Monster had been at our front gate this morning,” Tom said to his dad.

“Well let’s go see,” Rubbish Monster Senior replied.

When they got there, the crisp packet had been joined by a half eaten apple and a piece of glass from a broken bottle.

“Dear oh dear,” said Tom’s Dad, “the Rubbish Monsters have been out in force today. You see litter like this Tom? It causes so many problems that people, or should I say, Rubbish Monsters, don’t even think about when they toss stuff onto the pavement, into the road or in the park. This piece of glass, for example. Imagine if Lucy here found that and put it near her face or in her mouth. Or if you fell on it while playing football? Pretty horrible, eh?”

Tom winced at the thought.

“And look at this half eaten apple,” Tom’s Dad continued. “Discarded food attracts mice and rats and they in turn spread nasty diseases. And this innocent looking crisp packet doesn’t look very nice stuck under our gate, does it? So let’s tidy up the mess left behind by these Rubbish Monsters. Run inside and get me a pair of rubber gloves, there’s a good lad”

So Tom went back into the kitchen, grabbed a pair of rubber gloves and came back out outside. His Dad set Lucy down

on the lawn and after putting on the gloves, carefully picked up the litter. He put the crisp packet in the wheelie bin and put the apple alongside the two old bananas on the compost heap. Then he took the piece of glass and after carefully wrapping it in some thick paper, placed it in a box in the garage along with various glass jars, bottles and old chipped beakers.

“All of this glass can be recycled,” Tom’s Dad explained. “We’ll take it to the local recycling centre this afternoon where it will get melted down and turned into brand new glass instead of clogging up the local land-fill site. You’ll love it down there as you can smash the glass into big metal containers. It makes a great noise!”

Wicked! thought Tom. He liked the idea of smashing stuff up and actually being allowed to do it. In fact, being encouraged doing it!



Back in the kitchen, Dad moved over to **the drawer that Tom dare not enter** and pulled it open.

Tom held his breath. This was a momentous occasion as, ever since he was tall enough to reach it, he’d been warned not to open the drawer. Peering down inside though, was deeply disappointing.

The drawer didn’t contain a laser gun.

The drawer wasn’t a portal to another dimension.

The drawer didn’t hold tickets to this year’s FA Cup Final.

What it did contain was about 50 plastic carrier bags.

“These bags,” dad said, “take 500 years to decompose. That’s 1000 times longer than the bananas and the apple on

our compost heap, so the last thing we should ever do with them is put them in the wheelie bin. That's one of the worst things a Rubbish Monster can do."



"But why am I not allowed in that drawer?" asked Tom.

"Well because plastic bags are quite dangerous Tom, that's why. If you or Lucy got one of these stuck over your head it could suffocate you. And because it's also where I keep my laser gun," said Dad with a wink.

Tom said nothing, half-hoping that his dad wasn't joking.

"Now then," said dad looking at the map with the red Xs on it. "I'm afraid I have a terrible Rubbish Monster confession to make." "Those ready meals and the mince I threw out meant that I was the biggest Rubbish Monster of all today. Your Mum and I should have planned our weekly menu a bit better and then I wouldn't have had to throw that uneaten food out."

Then something a bit odd happened. It was as if Tom's Dad

had seen something quite shocking. His eyebrows raised and he clicked his fingers.

“Hang on a minute!” he exclaimed. “Here’s an idea.”

And with that he started rummaging around in the bin and pulled out the two ready-meal packets and the plastic tray that contained the out-of-date mince. Tom thought he’d finally lost his marbles.

“We might not be able to completely avoid being Rubbish Monsters today Tom, but we can salvage the situation a little bit. Nothing we can do about this uneaten food,” he said, opening the packets and scraping the food into the bin, “but we can reuse these containers.”

And so began Tom’s **‘Growing an Apple Tree Project’**.

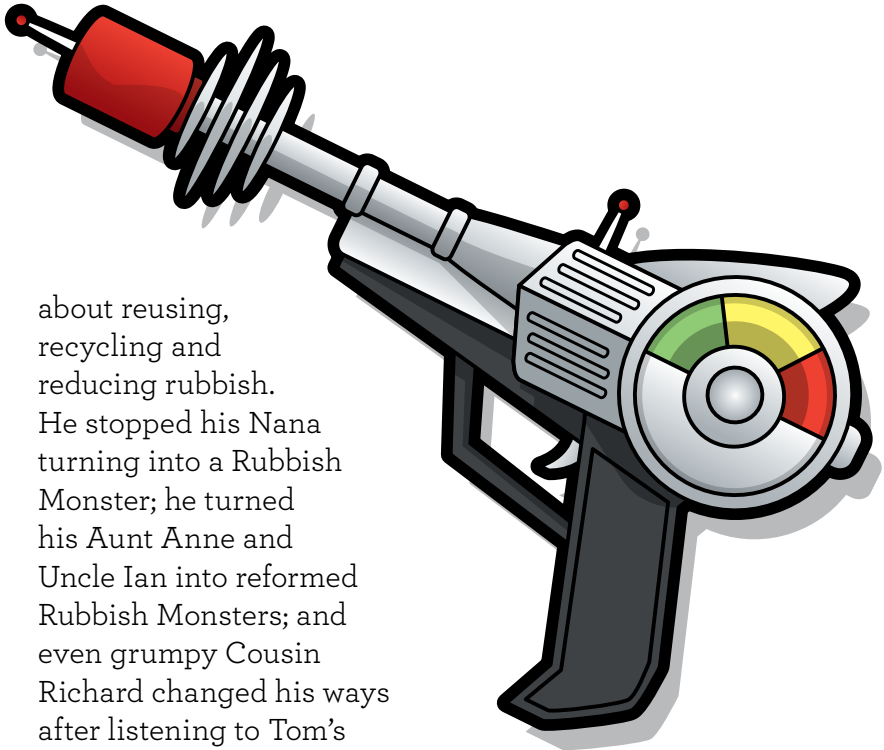
Dad washed out the empty food trays, dried them and then he and Tom headed back out into the garden and down to Warm Mountain, leaving Lucy with Tom’s Mum who had just returned from the supermarket.

Tom and his Dad carefully filled each of the trays with some soil from the garden and some compost from the heap. Then they carefully dug the apple pips out of the half eaten fruit they’d found earlier. They placed a couple of the pips in each of the trays, watered them lightly and then set them on the windowsill of the utility room. But not before Tom put a label in each tray. He wrote **‘Monster 1’**, **‘Monster 2’** and **‘Monster 3’** on each of the labels.



Tom’s Rubbish Monster hunting day was quite a few months ago and during the time that passed over the summer holidays he not only made a big effort not to be a Rubbish Monster, he told everyone who would listen





about reusing,  
recycling and  
reducing rubbish.  
He stopped his Nana  
turning into a Rubbish  
Monster; he turned  
his Aunt Anne and  
Uncle Ian into reformed  
Rubbish Monsters; and  
even grumpy Cousin  
Richard changed his ways  
after listening to Tom's  
stories.

And each day of those holidays he measured the seedlings that began to grow in the tray, writing down their progress in a chart he had drawn on a big piece of paper and seeing which of his **'Monsters'** grew to be the biggest. It turned out to be far from an average summer.

**(But he never did find his Dad's laser gun.)**



## What is Eco-Schools?

Eco-Schools is a way of making your school more environmentally friendly while having fun along the way. Work on a few fun projects that will make your school a better place and also help the world around us.

- Are all the lights turned off when you aren't in the classroom?
- Do you use both sides of pages?

Just a few little changes make a huge difference!



Biodiversity



Climate Change



Energy



Global Perspective



Healthy Living



Litter



School Grounds



Transport



Waste



Water

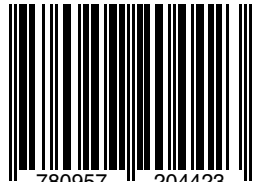
Speak to your teacher about getting started and setting up your Eco-Club. There are loads of ideas on the Eco-Schools website to get your school started. [www.eco-schoolsni.org](http://www.eco-schoolsni.org)



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