

Name: _____

Class: _____

The Troll Maker

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People often discard, or throw away, things that are no longer useful to them. In this text, an artist has an unusual idea to address the world's trash problem. As you read, take notes on Thomas Dambo's solution to the trash problem.

- [1] People often discard, or throw away, things that are no longer useful to them. In this text, an artist has an unusual idea to address the world's trash problem.¹ artist in Denmark, thinks big. In 2010, he started his first large-scale project: building birdhouses. He and his crew ended up creating 4,000 of them. Now he makes giant trolls. So far, 59 trolls can be found at locations all around the world.

His creations are made entirely from items people have thrown away, such as discarded wooden pallets, old fencing, and broken sheds. It's important to him that he doesn't add to the growing landfills on our planet. He thinks of discarded items as art supplies and a source of inspiration.²



"Overflowing Garbage Can" by the blowup is licensed under CC0.

Thomas recently took some time to talk about how his childhood set him on a path toward the work he does now.

Treasure Hunting

As a kid, I wanted to build all sorts of things, from a skateboard ramp to a castle or tree house in my backyard. I had lots of energy³ and creativity.⁴ The problem was that a kid doesn't have

1. having to do with the natural world
2. something that gives someone an idea
3. **Energy (noun)** a feeling of power
4. the skill to make or do something new or with imagination

the money to purchase supplies. I started to bike around the neighborhood looking for discarded wood, rope, and other items that I could use to create things.

- [5] In 7th grade, a girl in my class gave me a good piece of advice. She told me I should take a different route each day to experience something new. I took her idea and learned all about my city of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Today, I still use this idea of taking different routes as I search for trash left out on curbs. Items such as wire, ropes, wooden pallets, metal, old chair rollers, and plastic containers are just waiting for me to think of a way to use them. If the items are small, I use “Tingfinder,” my bicycle with a cart attached, to take home my “treasures.” I use a truck for the larger items.

Endless Possibilities⁵

When I was in school, we had a milk break. The containers had a plastic top. I realized that, every single week, 500 kids used 2,500 plastic tops! I started asking if I could have the plastic tops. What could I do with them? Make a big mosaic? A plastic snake? A large necklace? The possibilities were endless.

Look at something and think not what it is but what it could become. You can build all sorts of things from stuff that would be discarded. Be part of the solution by playing with things that don’t create more trash.

A Dream Life

Trolls play an important role in Danish folklore. I used to listen to a lot of audiobooks set in the Scandinavian fairy-tale universe. I like fairy tales because you can dream yourself into a world where anything can happen.

- [10] I’ve always liked magic, trolls, nature, and travel. I’ve always liked to build big things with recycled objects. All of these interests have combined into the perfect job for me.

My advice is to think about what you really love to do and let that guide you. Keep moving in the direction you’d like to go.

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5. something that may happen

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which alternate title best expresses the main idea of the article?
 - A. Milk Top Mosaics
 - B. Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers
 - C. Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them
 - D. One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure

2. How does the author organize the information in the text?
 - A. by sharing details about the different troll sculptures Thomas Dambo has made
 - B. by explaining how Thomas Dambo's early life made him who he is today
 - C. by showing why trash is such a large problem in our world today
 - D. by helping the reader picture what the troll art looks like

3. Which detail from the article helps the reader understand that Thomas Dambo thinks differently than most other people?
 - A. "As a kid, I wanted to build all sorts of things, from a skateboard ramp to a castle or tree house in my backyard." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "I took her idea and learned all about my city of Copenhagen, Denmark." (Paragraph 5)
 - C. "I realized that, every single week, 500 kids used 2,500 plastic tops! I started asking if I could have the plastic tops." (Paragraph 7)
 - D. "I like fairy tales because you can dream yourself into a world where anything can happen." (Paragraph 9)

4. Which of the following best describes how Thomas Dambo sees trash differently from most others?
 - A. While others see trash as a problem to fix, Thomas Dambo sees it as a good thing.
 - B. While others are throwing trash away, Thomas Dambo tries not to make any trash.
 - C. When others think something is trash, Thomas Dambo thinks that it could still be useful.
 - D. When others care about the things they throw away, Thomas Dambo sees trash as a problem.

5. How does Thomas Dambo's work show that he is "part of the solution" to the trash problem (Paragraph 8)?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Thomas Dambo tells us to "look at something and think not what it is but what it could become." Look around your school or classroom and find something that might be considered "trash." Then, use your imagination to think about all of the things that this piece of trash could become. As a creative extension, make a piece of art out of the "trash" that you find. Afterwards, reflect on how making something out of trash pushed you to think creatively.
2. The author shares that "it's important to him that he doesn't add to the growing landfills on our planet." Besides creating art from trash, what are some other things that we can do to make sure that we are not adding more and more trash to our landfills? How can actions like Dambo's help the environment? In your opinion are actions like this enough, or should more be done to protect the environment? Why?
3. Thomas Dambo shares that "my advice is to think about what you really love to do and let that guide you." What is something that you love to do? How could you use what you really love to help you find a job that is perfect for you, as Dambo says?