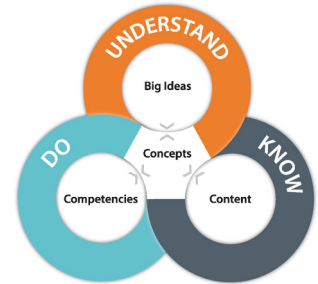


## Choice and Responsibility

This lesson introduces students to the concepts of choice and responsibility using Shel Silverstein’s poem, “Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out.” In exploring the poem, students get a chance to identify and think about how the scenario relates to their daily lives at home, school, and in their community. This lesson also provides students with an opportunity to compare their responsibilities to the responsibilities of others in their lives, and to think about why they differ.



### Instructional strategies

**Optional introduction activity:** Before reading the poem, you may want to introduce the concepts of choice and responsibility by asking students what they know about the words. You might ask the whole class to help you create definitions and write them on the board, with examples. You could even ask, “How do you know when you are being responsible or making a responsible choice?” or “What does it feel like when you’re being responsible?”

1. Read aloud Shel Silverstein’s poem “Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out” to the class (see [handout](#) at the end of this document).
2. If desired, you might ask students to draw pictures of the poem that capture their imagination. Afterward, you could read the poem aloud a second time and get students to act it out using their pictures as props.
3. Have a class discussion based on the following quotes and questions:
  - a. In the poem, Sarah has to “scour the pots and scrape the pans, candy the yams and spice the hams” and take out the garbage.
  - b. Part way through the poem it reads: “The garbage rolled on down the hall. It raised the roof, it broke the wall.” What would happen (physically, emotionally, or other) if you did not do the things you are responsible for at home or in the classroom?
  - c. Sarah did not take out the garbage even after her dad asked her to, and even after it began piling up very high. Why do you think she refused?



- d. Discuss the different roles of adults and children. Do adults and children have the same responsibilities at home? At school? In the community? If not, how are they different?
- e. Draw attention to the passage below and ask students to identify what they notice about why Sarah finally decided to take out the garbage. Then ask students to give other examples of how our actions can affect not only ourselves but other people and the environment.

*At last the garbage reached so high  
That it finally touched the sky.  
And all the neighbors moved away,  
And none of her friends would come to play.  
And finally Sarah Cynthia Stout said,  
"OK, I'll take the garbage out!"  
But then, of course, it was too late. . .  
The garbage reached across the state,  
From New York to the Golden Gate.*

## Gambling literacy

### Big ideas

- ✓ As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage gambling in our midst
- ✓ We can learn how to control gambling by examining the different ways people have thought about it, engaging in critical self-reflection and listening to each other

### Competencies

- ✓ Develop personal and social skills to reflect on and manage personal behaviour and choices related to gambling
- ✓ Explore and appreciate the diverse cognitive, social, emotional and physical factors that impact gambling behaviour

For a complete look at the gambling literacy competencies, as defined by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, see: <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/iminds/hs-gambling-curriculum.pdf>

## Links to curriculum

### First Peoples' principles of learning

- ✓ Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- ✓ Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions
- ✓ Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story



## Social Studies 1/2

### Big ideas

- ✓ Our rights, roles, and responsibilities are important for building strong communities
- ✓ Individuals have rights and responsibilities as global citizens

### Competencies

- ✓ Explain the significance of personal or local events, objects, people, or places
- ✓ Use social studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- ✓ Explain why people's beliefs, values, worldviews, experiences, and roles give them different perspectives on people, places, issues, or events
- ✓ Make value judgments about events, decisions, or actions, and suggest lessons that can be learned

## English Language Arts 1/2

### Big ideas

- ✓ Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves and our families
- ✓ Through listening and speaking, we connect with others and share our world
- ✓ Stories and other texts connect us to ourselves, our families, and our communities

### Competencies

- ✓ Use sources of information and prior knowledge to make meaning
- ✓ Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to stories and other texts to make meaning
- ✓ Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding

This resource was developed by the **Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research** with funding provided by the **BC Responsible & Problem Gambling Program**. Any views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the BC Responsible & Problem Gambling Program or the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research.



## Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage out

Shel Silverstein, 1974

Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout  
Would not take the garbage out!  
She'd scour the pots and scrape the pans,  
Candy the yams and spice the hams,  
And though her daddy would scream and shout,  
She simply would not take the garbage out.  
And so it piled up to the ceilings:  
Coffee grounds, potato peelings,  
Brown bananas, rotten peas,  
Chunks of sour cottage cheese.  
It filled the can, it covered the floor,  
It cracked the window and blocked the door  
With bacon rinds and chicken bones,  
Drippy ends of ice cream cones,  
Prune pits, peach pits, orange peel,  
Gloppy glumps of cold oatmeal,  
Pizza crusts and withered greens,  
Soggy beans and tangerines,  
Crusts of black burned buttered toast,  
Gristly bits of beefy roasts. . .  
The garbage rolled on down the hall,  
It raised the roof, it broke the wall. . .  
Greasy napkins, cookie crumbs,  
Globs of goeey bubble gum,

Cellophane from green baloney,  
Rubbery blubbery macaroni,  
Peanut butter, caked and dry,  
Curdled milk and crusts of pie,  
Moldy melons, dried-up mustard,  
Eggshells mixed with lemon custard,  
Cold french fries and rancid meat,  
Yellow lumps of Cream of Wheat.  
At last the garbage reached so high  
That it finally touched the sky.  
And all the neighbors moved away,  
And none of her friends would come to play.  
And finally Sarah Cynthia Stout said,  
"OK, I'll take the garbage out!"  
But then, of course, it was too late. . .  
The garbage reached across the state,  
From New York to the Golden Gate.  
And there, in the garbage she did hate,  
Poor Sarah met an awful fate,  
That I cannot now relate  
Because the hour is much too late.  
But children, remember Sarah Stout  
And always take the garbage out!