

# COTTON SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

## Collect Denim for America Recycles Day (Grades 5-8)



BLUE JEANS  
GO GREEN  
DENIM RECYCLING

### Dear Educator,

It's been said that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. But you can give your old denim new life! Authentic denim is 100% cotton in a twill weave, which makes it sturdy but soft. These properties make it desirable as clothing, but because it is so durable, denim can live on even after your favorite jeans are too worn to wear.

This year, you and your students can celebrate America Recycles Day (Nov. 15) by learning how old jeans and other denim clothing can be recycled into natural cotton fiber insulation. Not only does this keep denim out of landfills, but much of the insulation goes toward helping communities. It's easy, it's free, and it's all for a good cause. Plus, thanks to Cotton Incorporated's collaboration with Zappos's Zappos for Good efforts, teachers can log into their Zappos account, or create one, to print prepaid mailing labels for students to send in their jeans for recycling.

Use this activity as a stand-alone recycling lesson or as a supplement to the **Cotton Science and Sustainability** program, available at [ymiclassroom.com/cotton](http://ymiclassroom.com/cotton), made possible by Cotton Incorporated, the not-for-profit cotton research and promotions company. In addition, be sure to check out the interactive whiteboard game at the same link for a fun and educational activity you can do with your whole class or in small groups with laptops or tablets. Use it as a preview, a review activity, or even as an informal assessment.

Please feel free to share these materials with other teachers in your school. The materials are copyrighted, but you may make as many copies as necessary to meet your students' needs. Then, please comment online at [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-cotton](http://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-cotton) to let us know your thoughts on this program. We depend on your feedback to continue providing free educational programs that make a real difference in students' lives.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Dominic Kinsley  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by e-mail at [feedback@ymiclassroom.com](mailto:feedback@ymiclassroom.com).

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### Target Audience

Students in grades 5 to 8 and their families

### Program Objectives

- Explore how cotton, the fiber source of denim, helps support recycling efforts
- Raise awareness of cotton's role in benefiting the community as a source of insulation for homes

### Program Components

- This one-page teacher's guide
- One reproducible activity sheet

### More Cotton Science and Sustainability Materials Online

Visit [ymiclassroom.com/cotton](http://ymiclassroom.com/cotton) for:

- Additional activities: *The Fiber Factor*, *Break It Down!*, *Cotton and the Planet*, and *Growing Cotton*
- A classroom poster with fun, interesting cotton facts
- *Cotton: From Farm to Fashion to Food*, an interactive whiteboard activity
- An online feedback form at [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-cotton](http://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-cotton)
- Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards alignment chart

### How to Use This Program

Make copies of the activity sheet for your students, and explore the additional resources online.

### Activity

## Collect Denim for America Recycles Day!

Tell students that America Recycles Day is celebrated each year on November 15, and that recycling is one of the ways we can help take care of the Earth. Ask students if they recycle at home or at school. What kinds of things do they recycle? Give them some time to consider and share their answers.

What about clothing? Take jeans, for instance. Jeans that are too worn out to be given away may end up in landfills. Tell students that there's a way to give new life to old jeans — by recycling them into natural cotton insulation for building efforts, like new homes.

Pass out the activity sheet. Tell students that in Part 1 they are going to learn about a boy named EreK Hansen, who was inspired by Cotton's Blue Jeans Go

Green™ denim recycling program to lead a grassroots effort in his community to gather and recycle denim jeans. (See video at [youtu.be/EXN2euJ4iyk](http://youtu.be/EXN2euJ4iyk). Run time: 1:15)

After students answer the questions about the Blue Jeans Go Green™ program and EreK's initiative, brainstorm as a class how your school might participate in the denim recycling initiative either by hosting a school-wide event or by letting people know how they can contribute their denim to the program, such as by mailing it in. Have students go to [bluejeansgogreen.org/recycle-denim](http://bluejeansgogreen.org/recycle-denim) to find out how denim can be given to the program. Then have students work in small groups to complete Part 2 of the activity and create posters about the denim recycling program. The posters should include why recycling denim can help the community, as well as when, where, and how the clothing will be collected (if hosting a drive) or can be mailed (if raising awareness about the program). The posters should also include catchy slogans and supportive graphics.

Visit the website above for more details if you're interested in starting a school denim drive. Speak with your administration about any guidelines you may need to follow if setting up a denim recycling program at your school.

**Answers:** 1. Answers will vary. 2. 2,608 houses. 3. Possible answers include: it keeps denim clothing out of landfills, it helps provide insulation for programs that help people in need, and it encourages people to recycle. 4. Answers will vary.

**Extension:** Challenge students to put their creativity to the test. Using what they know about cotton and insulation made from recycled denim, have them brainstorm other ways cotton clothing can be recycled into new products.

### Resources

- Go Green Ohio: [gogreenohio.org/index.html](http://gogreenohio.org/index.html)
- Eco-EreK Collects Denim for the Blue Jeans Go Green™ Denim Recycling Program: [youtube.com/watch?v=EXN2euJ4iyk](http://youtube.com/watch?v=EXN2euJ4iyk)
- Blue Jeans Go Green™ Recycling Program: [bluejeansgogreen.org/recycle-denim](http://bluejeansgogreen.org/recycle-denim)
- Zappos for Good (to print labels; requires a Zappos account): [zappos.com/about/zappos-for-good/recycle](http://zappos.com/about/zappos-for-good/recycle)

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## ACTIVITY

# Collect Denim for America Recycles Day



**BLUE JEANS  
GO GREEN™**  
DENIM RECYCLING

REPRODUCIBLE MASTER G5-8

**Recycling is an important part of caring for the environment,** but did you know that recycling denim jeans can also help people stay warm in the winter?

**Part 1:** Read the passage below and answer the questions.

In 2006, Cotton Incorporated began an innovative program that would go on to help people in communities all over the country. The program, called Blue Jeans Go Green™, gives people the opportunity to recycle unwanted denim made of cotton rather than throw it into landfills. The denim is broken down and made into natural cotton fiber insulation, which is given to building organizations that help communities, such as Habitat for Humanity affiliates. Insulation helps keep homes cool in the hot weather, and warm in the cold weather, thus saving energy year-round.

In 2009, a 9-year-old student named Erek Hansen read about the program. He became passionate about recycling denim, organizing denim drives, and encouraging his friends, family, neighbors, and school to become involved. As of January 2019, over 33,000 items of denim clothing have been recycled into insulation through Erek's efforts.

It takes between 500 to 1,000 pairs of jeans to create enough cotton fiber insulation to insulate one average-sized home. The more denim recycled, the more insulation created for building efforts that will help keep cotton out of landfills.

1. Why do you think the Blue Jeans Go Green™ program was started? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. According to Blue Jeans Go Green™, about 6,000,000 square feet of insulation has been produced from recycled jeans. If the average house in the United States is about 2,300 square feet, how many houses could that much insulation provide for?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe two benefits of the Blue Jeans Go Green™ program.

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4. Erek was only 9 when he became involved with the program. Anyone can make a difference! On this America Recycles Day, what is something you could do to make a difference in your community or to help the environment?

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**Part 2:** Imagine your school has joined the Blue Jeans Go Green™ program. With your group members, create a poster to let people know how their unwanted denim clothing can be recycled into insulation. The poster should include how recycling denim can help the community, as well as when, where, and how the clothing will be collected or can be mailed in. Add a creative flair by including a catchy slogan and graphics. Plan your poster on a separate sheet of paper.



Learn how your family can recycle denim by visiting [bluejeansgogreen.org/recycle-denim!](http://bluejeansgogreen.org/recycle-denim!)