

LEVELED BOOK • Q

The Three-R Plan



Written by Penny Atcheson
Illustrated by Hugh Armstrong

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“Save the Kingdom”

The king looked out and sighed, “Our kingdom, once so beautiful, grows barren and dies more and more each day.”

The queen joined the king at the window. “The hills were once filled with trees, wildlife was plentiful, and the air was clean and fresh. Now, even our babbling creek is murky and polluted. Our citizens work hard, and yet they seem too tired to enjoy the rewards of their labor. Is this what our children have to anticipate in life?”

It was true—the land was abused and overused, and the people were unhappy and too busy.

The king looked at his own beloved wife. “Surely we have intelligent people living among us. Someone must know the solution to save our dying land!”





The king called for his court magistrate.
“Tell the people that I will award the royal position of Official Land Steward to the person who solves the problem of our decaying land. That person will be allowed to live in the castle for the rest of his or her days. If this problem goes unsolved, hope will fade and our future will be threatened.”

Away from the castle lived three men, Ricardo, Roger, and Randy. Some might consider them country folk, but each lived happily in his own way. Each man had heard the king's decree, and each one devised a plan that might save the kingdom. Although the land around their own homes showed signs of use, it was healthy and gorgeous. The men were content and enjoyed their lives. The plans they had for the entire kingdom were based on the way they already lived.





“Reduce”

Big mountains, roaring rivers, and thick forests surrounded Ricardo’s land. His small home was high on a mountain. Because his home was far away from stores, he had to get by with only the things he needed. Ricardo thought about what he owned and realized he didn’t need much at all. If he didn’t use an item, he would sell it or give it away. Most importantly, if he didn’t like it, he wouldn’t own it at all. He didn’t buy much, and consequently, Ricardo’s home was tidy and efficient. He didn’t spend lots of extra time taking care of things. Reduce your load, increase your joy, and save your environment—that was Ricardo’s plan to help save the land.

Even if his plan wasn't accepted, he believed the king should know that it's possible to live with less and yet have more. Ricardo's plan meant more for everyone, and with that thought Ricardo left for the castle.





“Reuse”

Roger’s home was in a lush, open valley. He had many children, and neighbors helped each other regularly. Healthy animals and plants grew all year long. Roger thought, “Our life and land are wonderful, and I should share this with the king.”



Roger could be described as creative and frugal. No item entered his home without being reused in many different ways. For example, after finishing a jar of jam, the jar was used to store beans. If the beans were eaten, the jar was used as a vase for flowers. When Roger's berries were ripe, he made more jam, cleaned the jar, and refilled it. Roger's goal, out of necessity, was to not waste anything, and just find other ways to use things. Roger's family couldn't afford new stuff, but they lived happily reusing things and trading services. They replaced what they took from the land, and they kept the land around them clean. They made compost and used it to fertilize new crops. Roger began a journey to tell the king about his plan.



“Recycle”

Of the three men, Randy lived the closest to the castle. He designed ways to take used things and make them into new things. For example, he had a machine that melted cans, poured the melted metal, and shaped it into new cans. He had a simple hand process for remaking paper. People would give him their used cans, glass, and paper, and he would make new products from the used materials.

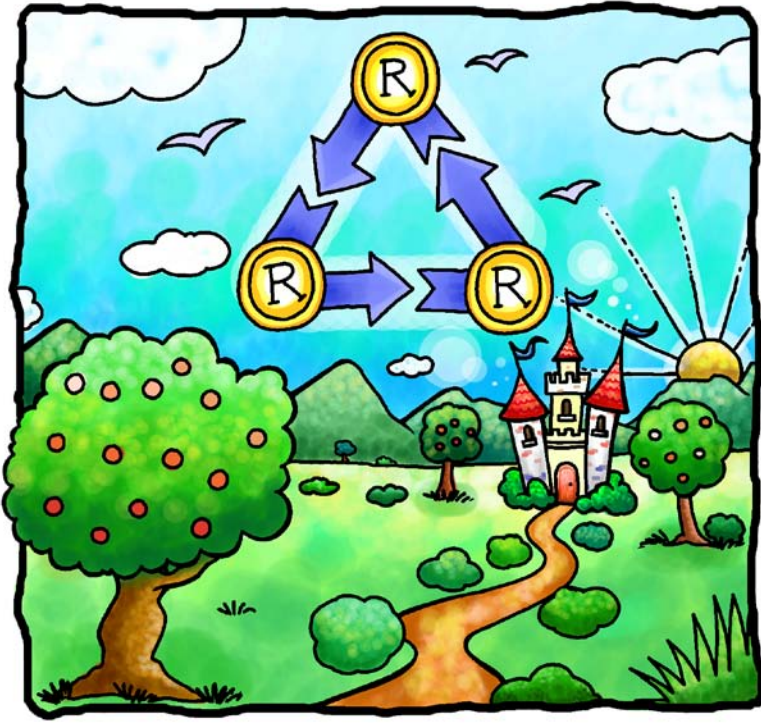
Then he sold these new recycled products to people who needed them. He rarely needed new things made from natural resources such as trees. He believed that by recycling things that were already made, the citizens wouldn't need to use up the land and other resources, and the land could be saved. Randy went to present his plan to the king.



“The Three-R Plan”

By this time, the king and queen already had heard many plans. The men were weary by the time they arrived, but they still had hope. Each man, one at a time, presented his plan to the king and queen, and each man agreed that the others had good plans as well. The king and queen also thought each plan had benefits and were willing to try each one. “Let’s try all three at the same time,” said the queen. “The one that shows the best results will be accepted as the plan to save our kingdom.”

Things didn’t happen overnight, but improvements were soon seen. The forests started to regrow, and the water cleaned itself out and ran clearer. The animals became healthier. People enjoyed working toward their common goal. Although they all were still busy, they talked and laughed more often with each other. Everyone felt more ownership in the plan.



The king and queen decided that all three men should live in the castle. They called the plan “The Three-R Plan” and invited Randy, Roger, and Ricardo to stay at the castle. None of the men accepted the royal offer. The men already considered themselves stewards of the land and were pleased that the rest of the kingdom did, too. With the Three-R Plan—reduce, reuse, and recycle—the land improved, and all the citizens of the kingdom were happy.

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LEVEL Q	
Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30

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A Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Book

Word Count: 971



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