



## Parent's Guide to the Rag Man Project

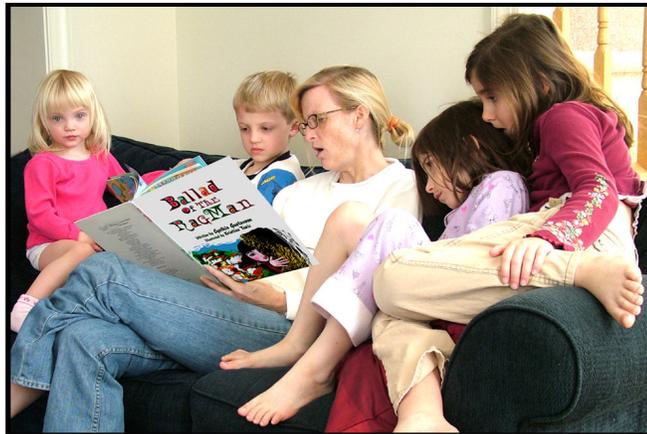
### Goals of the Rag Man Project:

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1. To encourage understanding that other people who might look or act differently are human beings who have positive feelings just like those of your family. To counteract the fear (of the different other) that children are often taught through the media.
2. To teach the "green" concepts of reduce, recycle, and reuse.
3. To encourage dialogue between your children and other people of the community.

### Questions for Discussion:

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1. What makes a person "safe"?
2. What makes a person seem scary? Can that perception change?
3. Who do you know in your community that is in some way different from you and your family? Is that difference by choice? By birth (heredity or culture)? Or by accident or disease?
4. How can you get to know some of these "other" people in your community?
5. Is it safe to get to know a stranger before checking with your parents or a responsible adult?
6. Do you ever get hand-me-down clothing from a sister or brother or cousin? Do you go to garage sales? Do you ever shop at Goodwill stores, Salvation Army stores or re-sale shops?
7. When clothes are worn out, what other kinds of useful things can you do with them?
8. What can you do with toys you have "grown out of"?
9. How can you help your family and/or your community reuse, reduce, or recycle?
10. Do you ever use your feet or your bicycle to get where you are going, instead of always using a car? Why is this important?



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### Art:

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1. Go to Goodwill stores and buy old (gently used) clothes and let children alter them in some way (embroider flowers on the jeans, shorten the pants by sewing up the hem etc.) to become usable clothes.
2. Make collages using rags, or paint with rags.
3. Have children gather things that would otherwise be thrown away (toilet paper rolls, lint from clothes dryers, used wrapping materials, etc.) and use them for art projects.
4. Ask artists from the community to tell and /or demonstrate how they use "found objects" in art.

### Writing:

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1. Collect magazine photos of people of different races, gender, ages, cultures, and people with physical disabilities. Have children choose a picture and write or tell a compassionate story about that person.
2. Write a limerick about someone different from you using the phrase:  
There once was a girl/boy from . . .
3. Write a letter to someone in your community who is different from you.
4. Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper telling about their experiences and feelings about people who appeared to be different from them, but were really wonderful people.
5. Invite a writer from the community to tell about how he/she develops "characters", and how they need both "good and bad" sides to them.



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### Social Studies:

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1. Invite someone from an older generation to tell about what it was like when he/she was a child.
2. Invite a person with a disability to talk about the daily obstacles in his/her life.
3. Set up the blue eye/brown eye experiment, where one group is valued and the other group is devalued, just by the color of their eyes. Discuss the resulting feelings.
4. Hand out monopoly play money unevenly. Then let the children buy stickers and crayons and such with the play money. At the end talk about what it was like for those who had less play money, and for those who had more. Did they begin to treat one another differently?

### Science:

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#### Ecology:

1. This story is a wonderful way to introduce the ecological concept of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Discuss what happens to children's clothes when they grow out of them. (Garage sales, to cousins or siblings, used for cleaning rags, rag rugs?)
2. Sponsor a garage sale, or a swap-your-clothes event.
3. Ask your child to help make your home a "green" home by starting recycling, reducing, and reusing.



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### Science (continued):

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#### Physics:

1. Suggest that your children collect broken toys. Each child could take one or two and, along with their parents and/or grandparents, try to fix the toy and make it look like new. The toy could then be sold at the garage sale. This assignment would encourage children to work with parents, and they would learn to use some of the old fashioned simple machines of physics.
2. Discuss how a wheeled cart (a simple machine) makes it easier to carry things than a backpack.

#### Botany:



1. Compare the different qualities of the cloth in the old clothes that they bring in. Can it be used as a cleaning rag (nylon, linen, cotton, polyester?) What plants (or non-plants) do these textiles come from?

### Math:

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1. The money made on the garage sale can be added up, and then the children can decide where they want to donate it (to an organization in their town to help people who are different, or to Goodwill, which recycles clothing?) If they want to donate to more than one organization, then they need to "divide" the money between organizations.



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### Reading:

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1. Go to the library and have the children check out books about famous people. Ask them to think about and report about what makes them different from “normal” people.
2. Read the poems of Shel Silverstein and discuss how his characters are far from “normal.” Is that okay? Who says what “normal” is?
3. Have your child volunteer to go to the library or to some group of small children and read *Ballad of the Rag Man* aloud to the younger children.

### Music:

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1. Help your child to write a simple song about someone who is different, but is important.
2. Find (and sing) folk songs that illustrate this.
3. Discuss how rock musicians dress and lead their lives. Are they more like “normal” people, or the Rag Man?

### Physical Education:

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1. Ask your children to look at their sports equipment and find some in need of repair. Encourage them to figure out a way to repair the equipment and reuse it.
2. For one month, have the children’s physical education period be confined to sports that use only re-used and recycled sports equipment.
3. Turn *Ballad of the Rag Man* into a jump-rope rhyme.