The Chemistry of Cat Litter: Activities for High School Students To Evaluate a Commercial Product’s Properties and Claims Using the Tools of Chemistry

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Abstract

Educating future scientists and citizens is more effective if students are guided to correctly apply what they learned in school to their daily lives. This experience-based work is focused on the study of a well-known commercial product: cat litter. This material offers different starting points for a critical examination. Questions related to physical properties at the origin of the litter’s efficacy, to information on chemical composition provided in the packaging, and to environmental features and possible noxiousness of cat litter were asked to be investigated by secondary school 14−15 year old students, through laboratory experiments based on problem solving approach, analysis of tag claims of different cat litter brands and cooperative learning activities. This multidisciplinary approach gives the chance to learn effectively chemistry core concepts and to avoid the typical students’ lack of attention.

Keywords: High School/Introductory Chemistry, Laboratory Instruction, Inquiry-Based/Discovery Learning, Problem Solving/Decision Making, Consumer Chemistry

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