Rain barrel art is a unique activity that promotes ecoliteracy, while encouraging an understanding of the environment. This type of program inspires knowledge about sustainable living, environmental pollution, and water consumption, among other conservation topics.

Materials

- 55 gallon plastic drum
- Stencils
- Sandpaper
- Exterior flat latex paint (various colors)
- Protective finish/semi-gloss (Ex: Ultra Cover Premium Latex Paint)
- Primer (Ex: Valspar Primer for Plastic)
- Paintbrushes
- Masking tape
- Pencils
- Examples of painted rain barrels

Method

- Clean and sand the barrel for priming. Sand paper should be used to smooth any rough surfaces.
- Prime the barrel for painting. It is best to use at least two coats.
- Paint and decorate the barrel using exterior flat latex paint.
- Seal the barrel with several coats of protective finish.
- *If adding the faucet and overflow components, refer to “How to Build a Rain Barrel” by the State University of New Jersey. Instructions and step-by-step photos can be accessed here:  
**Enhance your program**

- Have students deconstruct water advertisements from companies like Fiji, Dasani, Evian, and others. What strategies do companies use to market their bottled water?
- Have students taste test various bottled waters. Does one brand taste different than another brand? Do any of the brands taste different than tap water?
- Discuss ways in which water pollution impacts our world.
- Provide and discuss books about rainwater and water consumption. Examples include Stephen Leahy’s *Your Water Footprint: The Shocking Facts about How Much Water We Use to Make Everyday Products* and April Pulley Sayre’s *Raindrops Roll*, among others.
Primed plastic drum

Children’s barrel as part of an early literacy program