

LIVING IN A GIANT FOAM COOLER!



On the way home from a trip to Ottawa, Tara and her mom, Gatleen, stopped in Brockville to visit some friends. Their friends, the Narangs, were building a new home. Soon after arriving at the apartment, Tara and Gatleen were ushered into the Narang family car and taken to the construction site. When they arrived, Tara was surprised by what she saw. On a patch of muddy ground was a framework of walls made entirely of pure white foam. There were none of the typical building materials that Tara had seen before on construction sites—no bricks, no cement blocks, and no wood frames. It looked as if the Narangs were going to live in a giant foam cooler!



Fascinated by what she saw, Tara watched as a construction worker built a wall. He stacked foam blocks, one on top of the other. The blocks were about the size of backpacks, and they were light enough for the worker to stack them with one hand. Tara wondered why the Narangs were building their home with such lightweight materials. Could such a house ever withstand strong wind, rain, and heavy snow?

The Narangs explained that the workers were using Polystyrene Block Form Construction to build the house. They said that this type of construction would help keep the house warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Mr. Narang explained that the blocks are hollow. They are filled with concrete once the wall is built.

Tara was not sure how the foam and concrete walls would help keep the Narangs' house warm in winter and cool in summer. She did remember learning in science class that polystyrene is a plastic that may harm the environment. She asked the Narangs why they were using so much plastic in the construction of their home. The Narangs explained that the environmental benefits of using less fuel and electricity to heat and cool their home justified the use of the foam blocks in the walls. Tara thought about that, but was not convinced. How could having foam walls be so good for the environment? She planned to do some research on the Internet when she got home to find out if the Narangs were right.



LINKING TO LITERACY

Asking Questions

When you do not know the answer to something, you ask a question. The same is true for reading. But in reading, you end up answering most of the questions yourself. Questions can be asked before you start reading, while you are reading, or after you are finished reading.

- 1 Talk to a partner about the questions you had when you were reading about the Narangs' new home.
 - Which questions were answered for you as you read more?
 - What questions do you still have?
 - Pick one question that you can do further research on to find the answer.