

Waste Stories guidance: Solway Firth Partnership version

Waste Stories are stories that we create by using our imaginations about waste. That doesn't mean they are always *about* waste, or the *avoidance* of waste. It doesn't mean they tell us the story *behind* waste – at least not in the sense of telling us the facts. Instead, Waste Stories are stories we tell when we make stuff up about rubbish. We believe that Waste Stories can grow out of our imaginations, making us think differently about things that might otherwise be discarded or written off as rubbish, and so changing our relationships with the very idea of waste.

Getting started: ways to grow your own waste stories

The first thing you need to grow a Waste Story is seeds. Some of the seeds you need will come from the resources you are provided by organisations such as the Solway Firth Partnership (or even the Waste Stories project). Others will come from your own experience. And others again will come from your imagination.

Let's start with an object or collection of objects found on a beach. We might bring the objects into the classroom, or alternatively we might bring photos to pass round.

Here are two examples:



To create a Waste Story based on one of these, we might imagine what happened in the past – how did it get to be where it is? Or we might imagine what happens in the future. Or both! If you want to make your Waste Story grow faster, sometimes it can be helpful to start by writing down answers to some of the following questions:

- What is it? Does (or might) it have a name?
- Was it thrown away, or was it lost?
- Who threw it away or lost it?
- Why or how?

- Where is it now?
- How did it get there (for example, was it blown by the wind, driven by the ocean currents, or carried in the belly of a beast)?
- What did it see, and who did it meet, on the way?
- If someone has found it, who and how? Was it an accident or were they out searching?
- What happens next?

Now you can go ahead, take the answers you have come up with and write (or draw or tell) a story.

Collaborative Story-Growing

Sometimes it's more fun to make up stuff with other people. We don't all think the same way, so each of us will look at an object or a picture and think of something different. If we work together, we can combine our imaginations to grow stories that none of us would ever have thought of alone.

One way of doing this is to break into small groups of 4-5 people. Each group writes down some possible answers to the questions above, using post-it notes or laminated cards to record them. The teacher (or someone in the class) collects all the answers, mixes them up and shares them back out. The challenge now is to make a story out of answers you didn't necessarily think of yourself! Each group makes its own story to tell the rest of the class.

Waste Story Telling

Of course there are lots of ways that we can tell stories, once we have made them up. We can write them down, in prose or poetry. We can speak them out loud and record ourselves doing it. We can tell them using pictures – drawings, photos – and sometimes combine pictures and text like a comic strip. It's entirely up to you!

Waste story examples

To help you get going, we have provided a couple of examples. You can make up your own or take these and change them. This is how stories grow, as they are told and re-told from person to person, culture to culture and era to era.

Billy Cooper Scores a Goal



Billy sits on the substitutes' bench, watching the game unfold without him. The Bowness-on-Solway Boys are playing Cummersdale in the under-15s league. It's a crunch match: if Cummersdale win, no one will be able to beat them and they'll be guaranteed top of the league.

Billy shivers in the bitter wind and looks out across the Firth. The tide is out and grey sunlight reflects dully from the wet mudflats. He wishes he could get on the pitch and run around a bit, if only to get warm. But he knows that won't happen – the captain, and the rest of the team, think he's a bit of a loser. He's small for his age, still waiting for the growth spurt that has started to turn the other boys into young men. He's not yet learned to swagger and swear as confidently as his peers. He's just not cool.

The game is close – the teams are well-matched, and it's still a goalless draw with only six minutes to go. There's a scuffle as one of the Cummersdale boys – the striker, Georgie Worst – tries to take the ball away from Bowness. Suddenly, Bowness's own striker, Ron Wainey, is on the ground, rolling around clutching his shin and howling in agony. The captain looks on in horror as Ron is carried off by the coach. He's reluctant to call on that useless waste-of-space Billy, but there may still be time to score and there's no point finishing the game a man down.

Billy steps onto the pitch. Georgie Worst immediately runs rings round him, dribbling the ball like a pro and openly mocking Billy. Billy feels a heat building up, rising red from his chest and up his neck. His own team mates are laughing with Georgie, at him. Georgie is so confident, so amused at his own antics, he isn't concentrating when Billy chips the ball away, swivels and kicks it with all his might in the direction of the Cummersdale goal. The pitch falls silent and the boys all stare, slack-jawed, as the ball punches into the top right corner, rips the net away from the posts, and continues out in a long, long arc, out over the Solway, all the way to the other side.

Treasures of the Nurdelii



Mhurricuik peers through the glass at the small, brightly-coloured objects mounted on a plinth. They glint and glimmer in the brightly-lit display case. She thinks she has never seen anything so beautiful before.

“Ah yes,” says the museum guide, clearing his throat and puffing out his chest. “We may only be a small, provincial museum, but we are proud to be the home of one of the most important Nurdelological discoveries in the world. For it was not far from here that what is now known as the *Great Hoard of the Nurdelii* was unearthed in 3073, in a discovery that provided the first solid evidence that the Nurdelic civilization was more than just a myth or an old-wives tale.

“The famous archaeologist and, indeed, Mother of Nurdelology, Kree Stjan, was digging at a site close to what we believe would have been, one thousand years ago, the shoreline. She and her team were searching for evidence of the Nurdelii when she came across the Hoard, almost perfectly preserved in the sandy soil. What you see in this display is but a small a selection of the objects that made up the Hoard – objects that we now understand as not only characteristic of but central to the Nurdelic Age. When the discovery was first announced, there was a flurry of academic activity, with all sorts of outlandish hypotheses being put forward as to their use and purpose. In those early days, scientists and scholars had very little to go on, and some of what was suggested was, in hindsight, almost laughable – for example, one school of thought had it that these objects were somehow joined together to make playthings for children! But common sense prevailed in the face of the evident high value of these precious objects, which were perhaps deliberately buried to keep them safe during an attack by marauding enemies. More hoards were discovered, scattered all over the country, but particularly along the courses of ancient waterways and coastlines. Prof Stjan’s own theory came to be widely accepted amongst most serious Nurdelicists and Nurdelologists. She postulated that these are objects of great spiritual and symbolic importance, used to decorate the garments and headdresses of the powerful and elite, vivid illustrations of power and authority. Their beauty and durability does indeed seem to make this likely, and of course the twine, thread, wool, hair and leather that they might have embellished has long decayed away. It’s also consistent with how paleolinguists understand the term Nurdelii, which they believe has its origins in the word “noor,” meaning “light” in one of the ancient languages in use at the time. However, more recently, Prof Makla Ghan has put forward an alternative theory that seems to be gaining some momentum. He contends that the objects had a much more practical use, as a form of currency. As he points out, there is no doubt that they are durable – witness the fact they have survived more than a millennium, through the mysterious disaster that put an end to the Nurdelic civilization, and into our own times. They are also clearly portable, divisible and apparently in limited supply. And it is easy to imagine how they might be viewed as fungible and universally acceptable. Prof Ghan has several supporters but, as is the nature of the past, we will probably never know the truth. Shall we move on to the next display?”