

# Waste Stories

MAKING UP STUFF ABOUT RUBBISH

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## Waste Stories guidance: farms

### Waste Stories?

Waste Stories are stories that engage us imaginatively with waste, the stories we tell when we make up stuff about rubbish. That doesn't mean they are always *about* waste, or the *avoidance* of waste. They don't have to tell us the story *behind* waste – at least not in the sense of telling us the facts. Waste Stories can grow out of/from our imagination: they make us think differently about things that might otherwise be discarded or written off as rubbish and so help change our relationship 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 might come from resources provided by organisations such as the Royal Highland Education Trust (or even the Waste Stories project). Some will come from your own experiences, or from people you know. And some will come from your imagination.

Let's start with an object or a collection of objects that are in some way connected with farms and the countryside, found in your local environment. They might come from farms, outdoor places you like to visit such as burns, lochs or woodland, or towns and villages. You might bring the objects into the classroom or you might bring photos to pass round.

Here are some examples of story seeds that the Waste Stories team have found on farms or in their local area:



*A piece of farm machinery, looking a bit the worse for wear*



*A moss-covered pencil case found in a farm yard*



*Tyres dumped on a path*

**Commented [A1]:** Hannah, if you have a good picture of a tyre dump that would be even better. I've tended not to take them as they're so depressing

To create a Waste Story based on one of these, you might imagine what happened in the past – how did the object or objects get to be wherever they are? Or you might imagine what happens in the future: what happens tomorrow, or next week, or in 1000s of years' time? Or both! To make your Waste Story grow faster, you could start by writing down answers to some of the following questions: What is it? How did it get here? What happens next? If your story struggles to germinate you could try out some additional questions, such as:

- What is it?
  - Does (or might) it have a name?

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- Where is it now and how did it get here?
  - Was it thrown away, or was it lost? Who threw it away or lost it? Why or how?
  - Was it left where it is, or has it been carried by the wind, the ocean currents, or in the belly of a beast?
  - What did it see, and who did it meet, on the way?
- What happens next?
  - Does someone or something find it? If so, who and how? Is it by accident or are they out searching? When do they find it – is it now, or in the future?
  - Does it go somewhere new?
  - What part does it play in a new story?

Now, take the answers you have come up with and write (or draw, or tell) a story that grows from them.

## Collaborative story-growing

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

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, as if they were dealing from a deck of cards. The challenge now is to make up a story that uses the answers your group has been given – answers you didn't necessarily think of yourself! Each group makes up their own story to tell the rest of the class.

## Waste Story-telling

Of course there are lots of ways you can tell stories, once you have made them up. You can write them down, in prose or poetry. You can speak them out loud and record yourselves doing it. You 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; they are told and re-told from person to person, from culture to culture, from era to era.

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Slow decay: new life



A pencil case, sunglass case  
or a holder of sorts  
Canvas, already crushed underfoot.  
The dirt is now part of its form.  
moulded and mouldy.  
Crushed from its plumped up boombox retail shape,  
it folds in on itself to look like goggles,  
leather edging, embossed metal label, canvas and dirt.

It's the smell of wet woodland after a rain,  
when the ground oozes mud and the trees' scent is great.  
Fell from a rucksack or trodden underfoot near a tree,  
at a picnic when a sudden rain cloud put out the fire  
and sent people packing.

Left to itself at the end of a summer,  
leafy autumn piles land on it like a bed.  
Later there is snow.  
It slipped into hibernation.

Strong woven fibres that yield but hold,  
drawing in soil, leaf mould and insects.  
It is used as a plant holder to shield new roots,  
weather a plant slowly into new ground,  
a slowly disappearing barrier  
between fresh compost and established ground.  
Slow decay  
to help protect new life.

Commented [A2]: Need attribution and comment about it being written in a workshop

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## The Braeside Tar Pit



Cuik looks at the most recent images taken by Site Security and groans. Her old school-mate, Mhurri, is at the forefront of the raggle-taggle mob of protestors, prostrate on the road in the path of the work crew. She's covered in mud but it's clearly her. Cuik first saw that stubborn glare back when they were kids and Mhurri's brother Bek called her a hypocrite for eating meat while objecting to hunting with dogs. She'd recognise it anywhere.

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Mhurri sees a flash and hears a rapid series of clicks as the media crew tries to capture the scene. Not for the first time, she wonders whether her involvement in the Pit Preservation movement will mean the end of her career in archaeology. And not for the first time, she repeats a mantra to herself: 'This is what Professor Stjan would have done.' Mhurri is absolutely certain: the Mother of Nurdology would have been lying on the ground too, fighting to stop the destruction of this special place.

Mhurri was obsessed with stories of the Nurdelic Age ever since she first saw a Nurdel Hoard on a school trip. Her initial attraction to the brightly-coloured ritual objects that gave the Age its name had blossomed into a more intellectual fascination, eventually leading her to undergraduate – and now postgraduate – studies in archaeology. She is specialising in the late Nurdelic period and she had the exceptional good fortune to be volunteering on the Braeside dig when the first cursus monuments were uncovered.

The site had been selected for excavation because of its proximity to one of the recently-discovered black nurdellium pits. The archaeology suggested these pits were located in areas that had been centres of a largely agricultural civilization that had, up until now, been thought to pre-date the Nurdelic Age (although there had been speculation that it may have existed alongside it, a technologically backwards culture persisting in the remote, inaccessible northern lands that some associated with the mythical Hislandia). Mhurri's mentor, Roh, was in charge of the summer dig, staffed by volunteers who wanted to know more about these ancient farmers.

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The discovery of the first pits, in the south-west of the country, had rocked the scientific and archaeological communities. Nurdellium had previously only been found in solid form; when careful chemical analysis showed that the black tarry sludge was basically the same as the bright crystals and rigid forms that characterised objects from the Nurdelic Age, all sorts of wild theories began to develop. However, while nurdelologists and nurdelicists argued over historical meaning, the techno-scientific communities pursued their own studies. It wasn't long before the Alchemical Studies group at Mhurri's own university had discovered that nurdellium tar could be heated and treated in ways that transformed it into something else altogether.

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Cuik feels like she has been continuously buzzing for the last six months. She'd barely been able to believe her luck when she got the job of technician at the new lab being constructed for the Alchemical Studies group. It wasn't just that the job was a huge improvement over working on the fruit farms or in the copper mines. The results coming out of the lab were all over the news, and Cuik was excited to be part of something so important – to be part of *progress*. It wasn't only the boffins who were fascinated by nurdellium tar: Jok Redhill, the entrepreneurial visionary and founder of IDEOS, believed it had the potential to transform society, and was pouring millions into nurdellium tar research and development. You couldn't work in an environment like that and not share the excitement. And today – well, today is the culmination of months of technical work and legal wrangling. It was only yesterday that the final appeal judgement was passed and IDEOS was given the go-ahead to start extraction. Cuik knows that no matter what Mhurri and her friends try, the Pit Preservation movement and its desperate, last-ditch protests will soon be cleared away and the future will be one step closer.

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It was Mhurri's old school friend, Cuik, who had first told Mhurri that the scientists believed they would soon be able to turn the tar into crystalline forms. Cuik worked there so she should know. Mhurri's gut reaction to this news was a profound fear. She couldn't explain it, but she worried that the alchemists were messing with powers that they did not understand and might not be able to control. Cuik told her not to be ridiculous. This was progress! The alchemical specialists Cuik worked for were talking excitedly about lightweight, durable materials that might reduce humanity's dependence on wood, stone, clay and metal, saving the remaining forests and freeing thousands of people from lives of hard, physical labour.

Mhurri had to accept that her own chosen path, in the field of nurdelology, was a privileged one, and so she kept her fears to herself. But then came the incredible discovery of the cursus monument at Braeside.

She still shakes whenever she thinks about it. She had been working in Trench P when she heard voices raised in excitement over in Trench T. Roh had been carefully removing soil from the base of the trench, at a depth of about 1000 years, when he had uncovered the first of the moulded, circular black forms. Over the next few days, the team had neglected all other parts of the dig, concentrating on that one corner of Trench T, completely abandoning the basic rule of archaeology – horizontal excavation. As they removed more earth, they found an almost perfect ring of black material, about the length of an adult's leg from foot to hip across and a full forearm in depth. A second, identical ring appeared beside it, perfectly level with it. And then a third. They were packed with what subsequent analysis showed to be a mix of good soil and midden. The team dug deeper and wider and soon revealed a

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cursus built out of some two dozen such rings, stacked, packed with earth and formed into a tall, linear, wall-like structure that extended across the south end of the site.

The precision with which this structure had been built took Mhurri's breath away. Seeing it, no one could continue to believe that ancient Braeside was merely an agricultural community. And later, when it was realised that the rings had been made using the nurdellium tar in the nearby pit – well, this was world-changing. This meant that the people of the Nurdelic Age had been in possession of knowledge that enabled them to solidify the nurdellium tar and shape it into these totemic, ritual objects.

And it is this – the immense cultural and historical value of the Braeside site, still to be fully explored and understood – that Mhurri is determined to protect. She steels herself as the uniformed IDEOS Security Team approach. She will do everything in her power to stop them draining the Braeside pit.

*Waste Stories is funded by the Leverhulme Trust. It is led by Anna Wilson and Hannah Hamilton of the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. For more information and stories, visit <https://wastestories.org.uk>, follow us on Twitter @waste\_stories, or contact info@wastestories.org.uk.*