

Waste Stories guidance: Marine Litter

This version of our guidance and sample stories was produced for the Solway Firth Partnership.

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 you need will come from the resources provided by organisations such as the Solway Firth Partnership (or even the Waste Stories project). Others will come from your own experience. And others still/again will come from your imagination.

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

Here are two examples, both courtesy of the Solway Firth Partnership:



Football-buoy in net



Nurdles in beach vegetation

To create a Waste Story based on one of these, you might imagine what happened in the past – how did the object get to be where it is? Or you might imagine what happens in the future. 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? 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 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?
- If someone has found it, who and how? Was it by accident or were they out searching?
- What happens next?

Now you 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 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.

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.

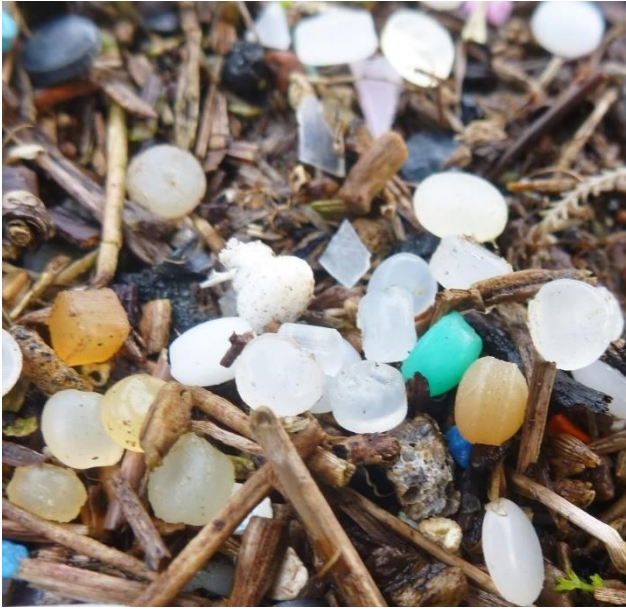
Billy shivers in the bitter wind and looks out across the Firth. The tide is out and grey sunlight reflects dully from the wet mudflats. He wishes he could get on the pitch and run around, if only to get warm. But that won't happen, and he *knows* it – the captain, and the rest of the team, think he's 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. Worse, he's not learned to swear properly. He just isn't cool.

The game is close and the teams well-matched. With only six minutes to go, it's heading for a goalless draw. Just then there's a scuffle as one of the Cummersdale boys – the striker, Georgie Worst – tries to take the ball away from Bowness. Next moment, the Bowness striker, Ron Wainey, is on the ground, rolling around and clutching his shin, howling in agony. Billy sees their captain's look of horror as Ron is carried off. He can almost hear the captain thinking: they're a man down and they've only that waste-of-space Billy to bring on. Well, thinks Billy, this waste of space is going to show them all.

He steps onto the pitch. At once, things go downhill. Georgie Worst starts running rings round him, dribbling the ball like a pro and loudly mocking him. Billy feels a heat building up, rising red from his chest, rising up and up. Soon his own team mates are laughing at him. Georgie gets so carried away with how clever he is, he stops concentrating on the ball – and Billy sees his chance.

He tackles, chips the ball clear, 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



Mhurri peers through the glass at the small, brightly-coloured objects in the display case. They glint and glimmer under the bright lights. She thinks she has never before seen anything so beautiful.

‘Ah yes,’ says the guide, clearing his throat and puffing out his chest. ‘We may only be a small, provincial museum, but we’re 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, providing the first solid evidence that the Nurdelic civilisation was more than just an old wives’ tale.’

Mhurri turns and looks at him. His uniform is really daggy and he’s old, probably even older than her Mum. But she’d like to know something at least about the treasures in front of her.

‘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.’

Cuik whispers to Mhurri: ‘Let’s go, or *WE’LL* be here a thousand years.’ But Mhurri is interested and wants to stay a bit longer.

‘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 here is but a small selection of the objects she found – objects that we now understand as not only characteristic of but central to the Nurdelic Age.’

‘But what are they?’ asks Mhurri. The man looks pleased at her interest; Cuik doesn’t. The guide continues:

‘At first, all sorts of outlandish hypotheses were put forward as to their use and purpose. Scientists and scholars had very little to go on, and some of the suggestions were, in hindsight, almost laughable – for example, one school of thought had it that these objects were somehow joined together to make playthings for children!’

Mhurri tries again: ‘What are the pretty things in the display case?’ But the man has only paused to draw breath, not to listen. He continues:

'In the end, common sense prevailed. These objects were clearly precious, perhaps deliberately buried to keep them safe during an attack by marauding enemies. More hoards were discovered all over the country, but particularly along the courses of ancient waterways and coastlines. Prof Stjan postulated that these were objects of great spiritual and symbolic importance, used to decorate the garments and headdresses of the elite, vivid illustrations of power and authority.'

Mhurri turns back to the case. 'Is the man saying they were used for dressing up? Maybe for parties?' she wonders.

'And her theory came to be widely accepted among most serious Nurdelicists and Nurdelologists. The beauty and durability of these objects 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. Prof Stjan's theory is 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.'

Cuik rolls her eyes and pokes Mhurri in the ribs. 'Come ON,' she whispers. 'Let's get out of here before we die of boredom.' Mhurri touches the glass longingly, leaving sticky finger marks. The man drones on:

'However, more recently, Prof Makla Ghan has put forward an alternative theory that seems to be gaining a significant following in nurdelological circles. He contends that these objects had a much more practical use, as a form of currency. As he points out, there is no doubt that they are durable –they must have survived the mysterious disaster that put an end to the Nurdelic civilization more than a thousand years ago. 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.'

Mhurri and Cuik exchange glances, suppressing giggles. *Fungible?! They start to move away, hoping he won't follow.*

'Prof Ghan has several supporters but, as is the nature of the past, we will probably never know the truth. Ah – I can see you are interested in the next exhibit – another highly significant find. Allow me to explain!'