



HISTORY OF WASTE - TEACHER'S NOTES

KEY MESSAGES

Human waste management has evolved over time. Historical perspectives on waste help students make informed choices for a sustainable future.

CURRICULUM LINKS- NSW

- This program explicitly teaches HISTORY Stage 2

Community and Remembrance

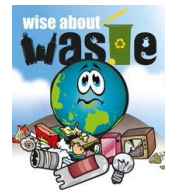
A student:

HT2-2 describes and explains how significant individuals, groups and events contribute to changes in the local community over time.

HT2-5 applies skills of historical inquiry and communication

INQUIRY QUESTION/S

- How has our community changed? What features have been lost and what features have been retained?
- How does rubbish from the past show us how people lived and what the impact they had on the planet?



HISTORY OF WASTE - TEACHER'S NOTES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Humans are the only species on earth that produces waste. All other species use only what they need and their by-products then become a resource to be used by other organisms. However, humans have polluted land, air and water to an extent that our health, the health of other life-forms, and the health of the planet is at risk. (see History of Waste Timeline)

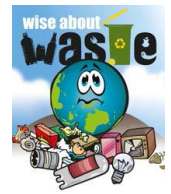
Throughout history, humans have discarded things for which they had no further use. Nomadic people left waste behind. In towns, people threw waste onto the streets, however as settlements grew, so did the quantities of waste to the point that public health was put at risk. This meant that communities had to develop different ways to safely manage waste.

Aboriginal people, who lived in Australia for over 60,000 years before colonial settlement, produced very little rubbish. Archaeologists have found piles of debris consisting of bones, shells and stone tools. These are called middens. However all the other waste produced by Aboriginal people was organic and therefore broke down or decomposed naturally, leaving no trace..

Early European settlers also produced little waste. In 1788 when the first European settlers arrived in Australia, they brought animals, plants and products from England including flasks, bottles, metal tools and other technologies.

Early settlers were good at finding new uses for unwanted items. Food scraps were used to feed their animals and other items were often repaired or remade into new items. This was often necessary as new items were not easy to obtain and the technology to access many raw materials was minimal.

Industrialisation and the extraction of natural resources on a huge scale has led to mass production of consumer goods and packaging. Our changing patterns of consumption have led to a big increase in the amount of waste produced and the need for its disposal. The waste that Australia is creating at the moment is not sustainable. Historical perspectives on attitudes towards waste help to inform our decisions now to help shape a more sustainable future.



HISTORY OF WASTE - TEACHER'S NOTES

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1) **Focus question: what do we already know about waste?**

Today students will be learning about how waste has changed during human history. A few hundred years ago, people had very different waste to what we have today. The rubbish we have today comes largely from packaging and items that didn't even exist 100 years ago.

By reflecting on how people managed waste in the past we can learn how to live more sustainably in the future.

Definition of sustainability: "The patterns of activities that meet the needs of the present generation without prejudicing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. More sustainable patterns of living are largely shaped by people's behaviours."

2) **Waste Timeline – What's in the bin?**

Preferably this activity will be completed outside (weather permitting). Roll out 5m of jute webbing as the timeline. Each metre represents 50 years. The teacher places labels along the timeline starting at 1766 (Before Captain Cook)

1766 1816 1866 1916 1966 2016 2066

Organise five groups of students and lay out the resources (pictures and props) for the five moments in history, with the Inquiry Questions (see attached).

Each group can spend about 5 minutes at each DATE on the timeline. Discuss the questions and make notes on their worksheets.

Bring the group back together and ask them:

- a. ***How do you think waste has changed? Why?***
- b. ***Do you think attitudes to waste have changed or stayed the same? Why?***
- c. ***"Imagine travelling forward in time in a 'time machine'", ask the students;***
 - ***Think about 2066 (50 years into the future)***
 - ***What do you think things will be made of in the future?***
 - ***What do you think people's attitudes to waste will be in the future?***
- d. ***How can we change our current behaviours to be more sustainable?***



HISTORY OF WASTE - TEACHER'S NOTES

REFLECTION - Head/Heart/Hands

Ask students the following questions to facilitate a reflection of the lesson;

- Head – what have you learnt about the history of waste?
- Heart – how are you feeling now about waste?
- Hands – What is one thing you are going to do differently now?

TO SIMPLIFY

Lay out pictures in order and invite kids to look along timeline.

- 1) What are their observations?
- 2) What has changed?
- 3) What can we learn from this?
- 4) Complete activity on Page 4 of 'Wise About Waste' booklet.

GOING FURTHER

- Watch Wall-E movie as a platform to discuss the impact of waste in a futuristic setting. If this was a real prediction, what should we start doing differently?
- Interview oldest person you can find – what was in family shopping basket, what went in the bin?



HISTORY OF WASTE - TEACHER'S NOTES

SOURCES

- 1) NSW Environment Protection Authority (1996). *Earth Works, Living with Less Waste*. Anne Munroe (ed).
- 2) <http://www.wastenot.org.au/flash/> (Website to accompany short film by Total Environment Centre 'Waste Not')

RESOURCES

- 1) Jute timeline and labels for 1766, 1816, 1866, 1916, 1966 and 2016.
- 2) History of Waste Timeline.
- 3) A card for each 'time' with questions to consider and some historical facts on the back.
- 4) Historical artefacts and images for "What's in the bin".
- 5) 1766 - string bag, digging tool, bones, bush tucker pics. *[image: midden]*
- 6) 1866 - Leather belt, wooden bowl, metal plate and cup, brass bell, candle-holder. *[image: metal bin, rag & bone men, chooks and pigs]*
- 7) 1916 - Canvas pack, woollen jumper, leather boots, shoe polish and brush, book, biscuit tin. *[image: incinerator – burning rubbish, community bonfire, bottles being refilled]*
- 8) 1966 - Picnic basket, music record, plates, cups, thermos, table-cloth, magazine. *[image: backyard rubbish burning, metal bin, chooks, backyard compost, council rubbish collection]*
- 9) 2016 - Backpack, mobile phone, drink bottle, lunch-box, synthetic clothing, squeeze torch, chip packet, poppa. *[Images: chemical waste, e-waste, plastic packaging, council's 3-bin system]*
- 10) 2066 - Draw what you think would be in the bin in 2066...

