

What is Rubbish?

KEY CONCEPT: Rubbish



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Rubbish

KEY WORDS:

Rubbish, trash, discard, dispose, unusable, unwanted, rejected, debris, junk, litter, dustbin, recycled, reuse, compost, biodegradable, dump, worthless, broken, empty, waste, consumerism, economy and man-made.

LEARNING INTENTION:

To understand our responsibility as individuals and as a society in relation to the management and/or disposal of rubbish.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

We can

- Describe what rubbish is and the impact it has on our environment.
- Create ideas and possibilities for how to deal with rubbish.
- Explain the differences between recycling, reusing and disposal.
- Recognise and accept our own role and responsibility for disposing of rubbish in an environmentally-friendly way.

STRATEGIES USED:

Sorting and Classifying

Concept Target

Concept Line

1. Identify Important Concepts:

Some of the key areas to investigate within and around the concept of 'rubbish' are the following:

- The impact of rubbish on the environment
- The link between our perception of, and attitude towards, rubbish and our economic status
- Our use of the word 'rubbish'
- The physical properties of rubbish
- The role of humans in the creation and existence of rubbish
- Effective and ineffective ways of dealing with rubbish
- Use of excess packaging and the nature of a disposable society

Activity 1: Provoke the discussion

Resources

Activity cards can be used here. Alternatively, or in addition to these resource cards, you could provide a selection of clean rubbish: a variety of milk cartons, plastic bottles, plastic tray containers, cake boxes, cereal boxes, newspaper, juice cartons, egg boxes, magazines, yoghurt pots, sweet papers, glass jam jars, glass bottles, metal tins, metal spoons, metal keys, metal plate, old shoes, stale bread, orange peel, used tea bags etc.

Set Up

Tip all the rubbish out onto the floor, or set up strewn rubbish in the outdoor environment to provoke discussion. Define the situation by asking questions:

- What is all this?
- How has this been created?
- Where did it come from?
- Do we use these sorts of items?
- What can we do with it all?
- Does it belong to anyone?
- Why might it be here?

2. Challenge Students' Understanding of the Concept:

Here are some examples of cognitive conflict we expect your students to experience:

Opinion	Conflicting opinion
If we throw something away it is rubbish.	If someone else reuses it then it is not rubbish.
Something is rubbish if we think it is.	If someone else doesn't think it is then it is not rubbish.
We should all take personal responsibility for ethically disposing of our rubbish.	If no one else bothers there is no point in me bothering either.
Rubbish is something you don't want.	I don't want a cold but that is not rubbish.
Rubbish is something that is discarded.	Trees discard their leaves in autumn.
Packaging protects goods and can make things look attractive.	Most packaging is unnecessary and wastes resources.
So long as you recycle waste containers it doesn't matter that you've used them.	To recycle some materials uses large amounts of energy.

Questions for challenge:

- What is rubbish?
- What does rubbish look like?
- Can anything be rubbish?
- What does it mean if something is 'rubbish'?
- What is the difference between litter and rubbish?
- Could everything be rubbish?
- How do animals deal with rubbish?
- What do we mean by the word rubbish?
- What do we do with our rubbish?
- If we keep our rubbish is it still rubbish?
- Can we always use things again?
- What would be the best thing we could do?
- What would be the worst thing we could do?
- Why does it matter what we do?
- What should we do with it if we collect it all up?
- Where can we take it?
- What is the harm of rubbish?
- What are the benefits of clearing up the rubbish?
- Is any of it food for the animals, birds or insects?
- What dangers are there?
- What would happen if we leave it here?
- How might the changing weather conditions effect the things left lying around?
- Is rubbish only rubbish if we decide it is?
- Is rubbish a man-made creation?
- What is the difference between rubbish and waste?
- If you throw something away does that make it rubbish?
- Is the word rubbish a noun or an adjective?
- For something not to be rubbish do you need be able to use it again
- Is rubbish a modern-day invention?
- What are the links between our wealth and our perception of rubbish?
- Is there such a thing as natural rubbish?
- What does recycle mean?
- What does reuse mean?
- If we can't see or touch something could it still be rubbish?
- If we throw something away but someone else uses it is it still rubbish? If not, was it ever rubbish?
- What are the links between consumerism and our view of rubbish?

3. Construct Understanding:

Activity 2: Sorting and Classifying

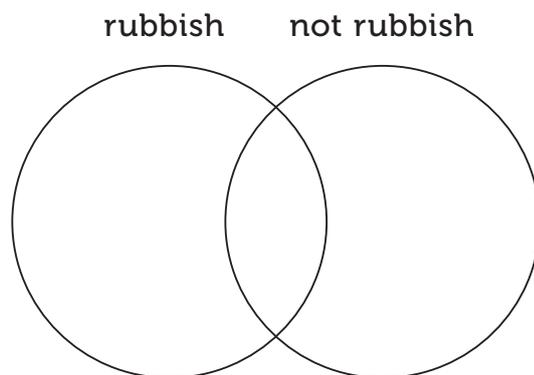
The key to comparing two or more concepts together is to draw out connections and distinctions. As your students do this, you could suggest that they use the Venn Diagram activity as a visual tool to help them order and record their thinking.

Allow your students the opportunity to investigate the rubbish; handle it, test it out, and look at connections and links between any of the resources. Also start discussions for pros and cons for any of the resources and their properties e.g., metal, hard, soft, water proof, not waterproof, large, small, will it decay naturally, would an animal or insect be able to eat/feed from it? Is any item broken? Could anything be re-used? Could someone else find a use for these things?

Students should investigate the various properties of the resources, talking about each item at a time and whether or not they think this qualifies as rubbish. The students should be encouraged to justify their answers with reasons.

- Why do you think that is/is not rubbish?
- What is it about it that makes it rubbish/not rubbish?
- Does anyone disagree/agree? Why?

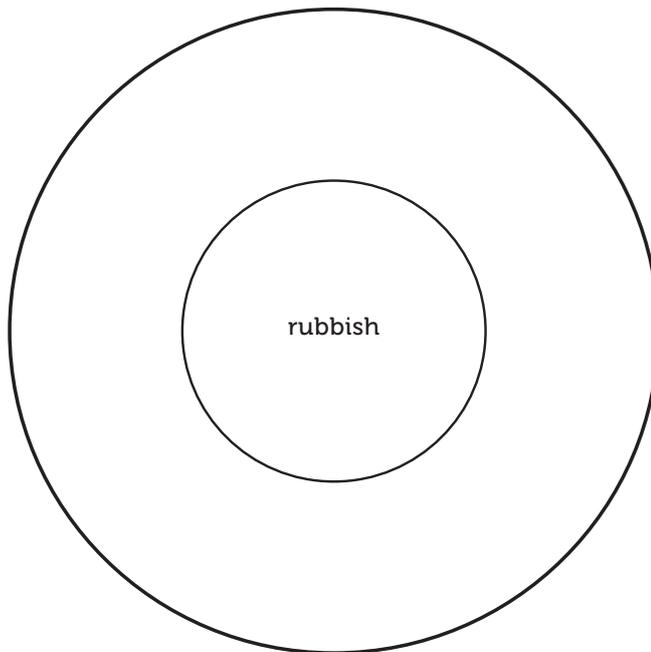
Your students can sort the information into 2 large hoops on the floor, one labelled '**rubbish**' the other '**not rubbish**'. They should be encouraged to talk about the criteria they are using to sort the resources or **Activity cards**.



Activity 3: Concept Target

Ask your students to draw a Concept Target like the one shown below. In the inner circle they should write **Rubbish** and in the outer circle they should write all the ideas that relate to that concept or that have emerged through the dialogue process and/or the ideas identified below.

Students should take each idea in turn and decide whether it is a necessary characteristic of the concept (in which case they should move it to the inner circle), a probable characteristic (in which case they should put it in the outer circle) or a very rare characteristic (in which case they should move it outside of the outer circle).



Some examples they may think of might be:

- Something we no longer want
- Smelly and dirty
- Waste
- Rejected matter
- Anything that can't be recycled
- Litter
- Unimportant
- Worthless
- Nonsense
- Something that is broken and can't be fixed
- Useless
- Very bad
- Poor quality
- Words or ideas that are foolish or untrue
- A negative word
- Pollution
- Mess

Activity 4: Concept Line



To further clarify their ideas, your students could use a continuum line of string or rope with **'definitely rubbish'** at one end and **'definitely not rubbish'** at the other. This will encourage them to evaluate each of the activity cards or the objects you shared and its current or potential properties in relation to the others.

Adaptation

For younger students reduce the number of cards or resources they are categorising at any one time. They can also be provided with a number of possible definitions that they can consider and evaluate.

Extension

Introduce recycling bins, compost bins, ideas for future use?

Would these options be an ethical way of reducing our overall rubbish?

Would these options be an effective way of reducing our overall rubbish?

Which is the best solution to the problem?

What is your opinion?

What could happen next?

How can we prevent this from happening again?

Why should we try to prevent this from happening again?

Experiment to see which materials decompose if buried and left for a period of time. Introduce the metal detector to gain further skills, knowledge and understanding.

Investigate the possible impact of recycling, reusing or composting rubbish to see how much rubbish would be left?

They should consider the questions:

- What does 'recycle' mean?
- What does 'reuse' mean?
- What is the difference between recycle, compost and reuse?
- Does everything have the potential to be recycled or reused?
- If you recycle something but it never gets used again is it still rubbish?

Your students can rank recycling, reusing and composting in terms of which would reduce our waste rubbish the most and the least.

4. Consider The Learning Journey:

At the end of the activity it is usual to encourage the students to review their learning journey and the thinking process they have engaged in throughout the session.

This can include reflection on the thinking that has taken place to this point and a summary and conclusion of the new understanding reached.

They can do this by returning to and re-examining some key questions.

- What do we know about rubbish?
- How can we reduce the amount of rubbish we create?
- What are the most effective ways of dealing with rubbish?
- What is the impact of rubbish on the environment?

A Consider Chart can be used to help your students reflect on the dialogues they have had about rubbish and to encourage them to think about any positive or negative aspects of rubbish.

...is good because...	...is bad because...

They should look at each 'rubbish card' in turn and decide whether it should go into the '... is good because' column or the '...is bad because' column based on the new learning and understanding they have co-constructed during the previous elements of the session. A student may select the yoghurt pot card and based on the previous discussions may choose to put it in the 'good because ...' section for reasons such as "you can make a bird feeder from it" or in the 'bad because ...' it is not biodegradable.

Ideas for transfer

Your students could conduct an environmental review within their school grounds, highlighting areas of the school that need to be addressed.

Your students could be given the opportunity to make suggestions for what they believe should be included in a class Eco-Code. They could all agree on one together based on the suggestions collected and present it to their peers for approval.

There could be an organised 'clean up' of a local public space such as the park, town centre or beach where your students collect rubbish and sort it for waste disposal and recycling. There would need to be a risk assessment exercise done beforehand to make sure your students know which 'waste' is acceptable to collect and which is not.

ACTIVITY:
What is Rubbish?
1-1

Old trainers



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ACTIVITY:
What is Rubbish?
1-2

Old computers



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Old clothes



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Old car



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Outgrown boots



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Newspapers



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Kitchen waste



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Jam jars



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Hair



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Grass Cuttings



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Glass bottles



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Tin can



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Animal dung



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Chewing gum



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Cereal box



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Balloons



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Used wrapping paper



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ACTIVITY:
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Untidy room



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ACTIVITY:
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Old car tyres



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Teabag



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ACTIVITY:
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Mouldy food



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ACTIVITY:
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Food packaging



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ACTIVITY:
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Dog poo



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Plastic bottles



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ACTIVITY:
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Paper lanterns



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