



The History of Solid Waste*

Activity M.c

GRADE LEVELS: 7 - 8

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this lesson your students should be able to:

- Identify four historical methods of solid waste management.
- Provide examples of items whose disposal has changed over time.

OVERVIEW:

This lesson places the solid waste issue in historical perspective. The key questions raised are: what did past societies do with the trash they produced? What did people do with solid waste earlier in our history, when we were a more agrarian society? What do other societies do with their solid waste today?

PROCEDURE:

Distribute and discuss Handout 1. Have your students complete Handout 2 and then Handout 3.

EXTENDED LEARNING:

- A Museum Visit:
- Visit the archaeological section of a local museum, paying special attention to the trash disposal methods of earlier societies.
- A Solid Waste Bulletin Board
- Have your students bring in illustrations of items from the past and place them on your solid waste bulletin board. A good source of such illustrations is pictures in old magazines, history books, and even illustrated novels set in the past. The items chosen should be representative of the way of life of the selected time period. How does the amount and type of waste differ from that of today?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

William L. Rathje, "Once and Future Landfills," National Geographic, May, 1991.

William L. Rathje, "Rubbish," Atlantic Monthly, December, 1989.

Franklin and Associates, "Analysis of Trends in Municipal Solid Waste Generation 1972 to 1987."

* Source: Kraft General Foods Environmental Institute Solid Thinking About Solid Waste