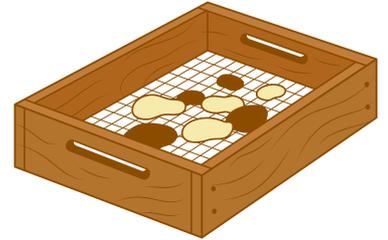


## A Journey Through Archaeology

# Episode 1 - What is Archaeology?

We have learnt that archaeologists look for the evidence left behind by the people of the past and this often involves digging to find things that have been left behind. These are often things that have been dropped, lost or thrown away. It may sound like archaeologists are only looking through rubbish, but rubbish can reveal a lot about what happened in the past.



### Activities



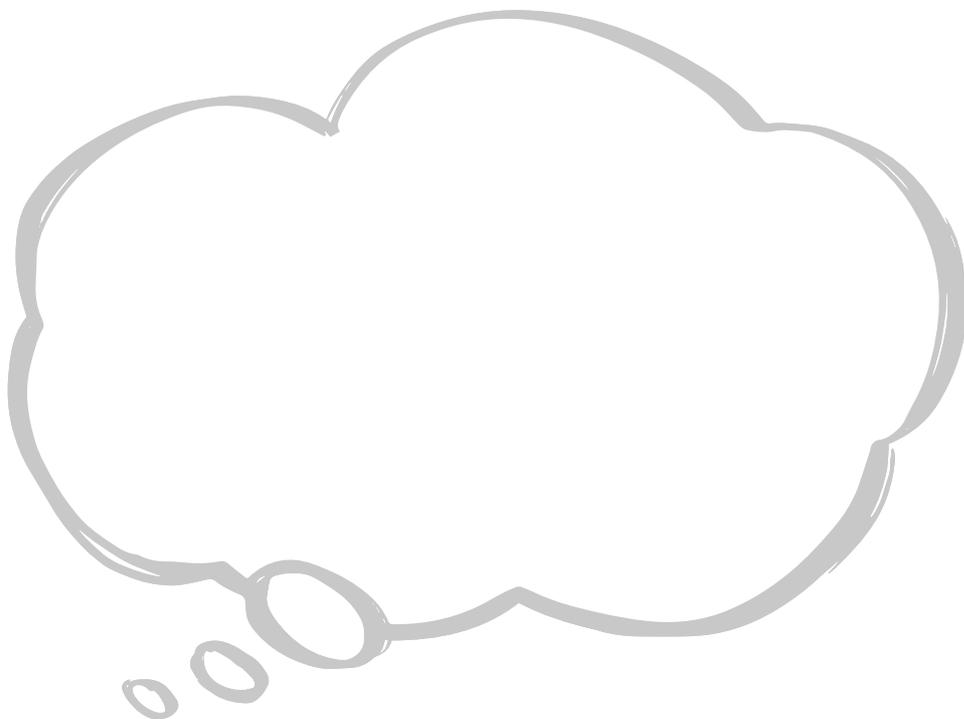
1. Try to remember all of the rubbish you have thrown away in the past week. Have a look inside a classroom bin or a bin at home to remind you! **Draw all of the items you have thrown away inside the bin, and label them.**



2. Now, imagine that someone who did not know anything about you was studying the rubbish drawn in your bin. What conclusions would they come to? **Around the edge of your bin, write some "facts" about yourself based on the evidence of the rubbish you have thrown away.**  
**Examples: Crisp packet - evidence that I ate crisps. Broken pencil - evidence that I use pencils.**



3. What does the rubbish in your bin NOT tell us about your life? If a future archaeologist wanted to learn about you, what gaps would there be in their knowledge? **Write your thoughts in the bubble:**



### Do Your Own Study!

Archaeologists sometimes get an incomplete picture as not all objects survive in the ground for long periods of time. Some materials decompose not long after burial, sometimes leaving a chemical trace in the soil. Other materials undergo changes when they come into contact with chemicals in the soil, but do not decompose completely. Have a go at testing this at home or at school with an easy experiment.



### You will need:

- Jam jars or tubs with lids
- Stickers or post-it notes
- Compost or garden soil
- Protective gloves
- Tweezers, or something to dip into the compost to retrieve your materials
- A tray to catch any mess

- **Some materials to cover in compost.**

#### You could use:

- Vegetable or fruit peelings
- Scraps of paper or cardboard
- Scraps of fabric or string
- Small pieces of wood or twigs
- Small metal items such as a screw or nail (check with an adult first!)

**Experiment Instructions:**

- 1) Put your jars or tubs on your tray and half-fill each one with compost.
- 2) Place a different material into a different jar, then cover with some more compost.
- 3) Label each jar with a sticker or post-it note so you know what's in each one!
- 4) After a week, it's time to check your jars. Wearing gloves, carefully tip the compost out onto your tray and observe the material you buried. Record your observations on the chart below.
- 5) Repeat for another two weeks, recording your observations.



Material	Observations after 1 week	Observations after 2 weeks	Observations after 3 weeks

- **Did any materials stay exactly the same after 3 weeks? Have any changed?**
- **Did any of your materials decompose at all?**
- **Did some decompose faster than others?**

The type of material is a big factor in decomposition but the environment in the soil matters too - moisture, acidity and temperature can all make a difference!

