

Story in a Box

Curriculum Strand: Construction

The objective of Diorama construction is to enable children to explore the possibilities of materials in designing and making constructions.

The best way to describe what a Diorama is is to think of a room in a doll's house or of a stage in a theatre.

Suggestions for diorama work

- | nursery rhyme scenes;
- | scenes from fairy stories;
- | poems on a particular theme;
- | Irish Folklore and Folktales;
- | stories from other cultures;
- | a series (e.g. Oscar Wilde stories);
- | scenes from a class novel/film scene;
- | historical scenes;
- | imaginary or real places;
- | illustrating a piece of process writing;
- | a sports event or a pop concert.

In designing and making dioramas children have to consider:

- | the background;
 - | the sides (flats);
 - | the floor area;
 - | the roof; and
 - | the outside;
- and how these might be decorated.

They must also solve problems and choose materials in order to people their constructions.

KEY MESSAGE

If we aim to provide a broad and balanced visual arts programme for the children we teach, we must strive for a balance between two and three dimensional work in our classrooms.



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- | will we make card figures?
- | if we do how will we make these stand? or might we hang some?
- | might we use clay models?
- | could we use fabrics?
- | can we use other smaller 3D found objects to create internal parts for our diorama?

KEY MESSAGE

The task of the teacher is not to teach clever techniques or to demonstrate ways of producing images and forms s/he finds acceptable but to build on interests and strengths by drawing the children out and making suggestions as appropriate.

Teachers' Guidelines (Page 12).



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VISUAL ARTS TIPS

Classroom Management

Most Common Scenario:
On Thursday I asked the children to bring in lots of materials for construction on Friday. Half brought in nothing, the others brought in so many cereal boxes that we were falling over them for the rest of the day.

A Teacher.

The Alternative

- 1 Plan to do construction well in advance – ideally as part of exploring a theme across the six strands.
- 2 A few weeks before the construction is to begin divide the class into construction groups.
- 3 Ask each group to decide on what they would like to construct and to tell you and the class about it.
- 4 Ask each group to design (draw) their proposed construction and to decide what materials they will need to make it.
- 5 Ask each group to write down a detailed list of the materials they will need to collect to build their construction and allocate the task of finding particular materials to individuals in their group.
- 6 As a class make an inventory of classroom materials that will be needed – scissors,

Cinderella



card, staplers, masking tape, glues, coloured papers, paints, brushes. Order materials as necessary.

- 7 On the day before your construction project is to begin, ask the children to get back into their groups, get out their plans and lists and remind themselves of who has to bring what from home.
- 8 Have a small supply of found materials for emergencies – in case someone is ill.

ASSESSMENT

- n Display dioramas on shelves, or on table tops placed against notice boards – secure with thumbtacks.
- n Use a digital camera/still camera to take photos of completed constructions.
- n A coloured image of each group or individual construction might be printed out for display purposes.
- n Each individual or group member could make a photocopy of this for inclusion in an art portfolio/art journal.
- n Each child could write about the process they went through in their art journal.



The Happy Prince

Note: Always leave the option open for children who may prefer to work alone to do so – or maybe to work with a partner.

n Compiled by members of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme, Elizabeth Brady, Gemma McGirr, Michael O'Reilly, Mary Quealy and Anne Marie Ryan. Check out www.pfsp.ie for lots of ideas on construction for children.

Dioramas illustrating this article are from INTO/ARK Summer School 2003.