

Playroom:

Case study by Fiona Bailey & Stoke Damerel Primary School

Art & design and ICT activity



Image from Add-Text software © limbomedia

Key Stage: 2 (adaptable for key stage 1, 3, & 4)

Resources:

- Home furnishings/interior style magazines catalogues photographs, paintings & illustrations of interiors
- A4 paper, pencils, scissors, glue
- Access to PCs; scanner; digital camera (alternatively, a conventional camera and film)
- Software: Adobe Photoshop or similar (e.g. Paint Shop Pro from Jasc Software)
- Worksheet: Using Photoshop Tools (supplied in pdf)
- Worksheet: Useful Photoshop Procedures (supplied in pdf)
- Template: for Add-Text Room Layout (supplied)
- Add-Text software (supplied)

Timescale At least six 1hr sessions recommended
e.g. 1 session per week over a half term

Outline

Catalogue images often present us with a 'perfect' ready-made, vision of an ideal home and 'perfect' people live in these ideal rooms. These environments can appear too clean and sterile in contrast to the way children really see their rooms. Using a range of

catalogue images as a starting point, the Playroom project involved 20 children in the construction of an interactive artwork that explored both the fantasy and reality of children's personal spaces.

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[Download a pdf of this resource](#) (includes Photoshop Worksheets; Using Photoshop Tools & Useful Photoshop Procedures & a Template: for Add-Text Room Layout)

[Go to images](#) created by Stoke Damerel Primary School

[Go to an evaluation](#) by Stoke Damerel Primary Headteacher

Activity summary:

- The aim of the activity is for pupils to design and create an interactive (image/text) digital portrait, depicting themselves within their ideal room.
Pupils will:
- explore and discuss a range of media images and artists representations of interior space
- investigate the significant characteristics of their own personal spaces – what makes each pupil's personal space special to them
- develop visual ideas which draw upon both real and imagined spaces, and explore their relationship to these environments
- use discussion, sketches and collage to produce initial ideas and designs
- adapt and progress ideas and designs using the computer: scanning images, using digital cameras, creating and manipulating images in Photoshop (or similar package)
- devise and create interactive commentaries and stories which extend their images using the Add-Text software
- Links can be made with National Curriculum schemes of work:
Art & Design: Exploring and imagining ideas; Investigating and making. If using QCA Scheme of Work, there are links to Portraying Relationships (Unit 3A); Viewpoints (Unit 4A); Objects and meanings (Unit 5A); A sense of place (6C)

ICT: Finding things out; Developing ideas and making things happen; Exchanging and sharing information. If QCA Schemes of work in use, there is potential for linking to: Combining Text and Graphics (Unit 3A) Writing for different audiences (Unit 4A); Developing images using repeating patterns (Unit 4B); Graphical modelling (Unit 5A); Multimedia presentation (Unit 6A)

English: Speaking and listening – Speaking; Listening;
Group discussion and interaction, Language variation
Writing – Composition; Planning and drafting.

Potential connections with NLS Text Level Work
include: Y4:T2:T10; Y5:T1:T24; Y5:T2:T21 & 22;
Y5:T3:T18; Y6:T1:T14 & 18.

- Extension tasks:

History: Research and create an historical interior as part of a British, European or World history study.

Activity Plan: Preparation

Prior to the first session, it may be helpful to ask pupils to bring in some objects from home (for example a toy, an ornament, a picture). If pupils have access to digital cameras, they can be asked to take pictures of their favourite room and bring them to school.

Research and select a range of different home-style and catalogue images (including children's/young peoples interiors and furnishings), images of real rooms (these could be photos from your own home) and a selection of artists and photographers' work depicting interiors and/or portraits in rooms. Book illustrations could also be a source of images for discussion.

If you have access to a projector or Smart Board, it would be useful to scan images ready for presentation. Alternatively create enlarged copies for display.

Create a Project Folder on each computer, (this could be in your class's shared folder). Download and 'Un-Zip' the Add-Text software. Save it into the shared Project Folder on each computer in your ICT Room (see Using Add-Text for further detail). Each pupil will need an individual folder containing a copy of this software. Once installed, duplicate the entire software folder as many times as necessary (one copy per pupil) and rename each folder with the name of each participant.

Lesson Plan:

Introduction

1. Show and discuss a range of images, focusing on the interiors, the contents and (where present) the person or people occupying the space. What are the differences or similarities between the catalogues, the artist's images and the 'real life'

rooms? What are the differences and similarities to pupils' own rooms? Discuss their favourite room at home. What makes these rooms special for them - the colour, the contents, the atmosphere, the people they share the space with? In what ways do these rooms reflect the personalities of different pupils?

Ask pupils to imagine their ideal room, taking the most important aspects of their real rooms and combining them with their dream ideas. If they could design and furnish their own room what would it be like? What would be the most important features of the room?

Using A4 paper & a pencil, ask pupils to draw a plan of this imaginary room, making notes and captions about their ideas on the sketch. Following this, pupils can spend time looking through a range of catalogues selecting and cutting out* up to 5 items they would like include in their rooms.

(* These images will be scanned. Scanning and 'cutting out' in Photoshop can be very time consuming. The more accurately pictures are cut out with scissors, the easier it will be later.)

[Preparation for following sessions: After Session 1, all the selected catalogue items and images/objects from home need to be scanned or photographed into Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro. Set the scanner to 72 dpi RGB colour. To save time, do not scan items individually – place as many cutouts on the scanner as possible. Once scanned, select each item and then copy and paste into individual files. Name individual files and save into each pupil's named folder, inside a shared project folder. If using Photoshop, click all around item using the Polygonal or Magnetic Lasso Tool, (see Photoshop Reference notes) to select and delete any remaining background. Crop away any excess background using the Crop Tool, and Save]

Designing Backgrounds

2. Using the paper plans created in Session 1 as a guide, during this session pupils will begin to design their room background on the computer. Begin with a demonstration of Photoshop or comparable software. Highlight the range of tools and facilities pupils can use to create their background - these can include for example, the Paintbrush, Pencil, Paint Bucket and Gradient Tools, Marquee, Lasso and Magic Wand Tools, Colour Palettes and a range of Filters



Using Add-Text in the Playroom workshop

Designing backgrounds in Photoshop

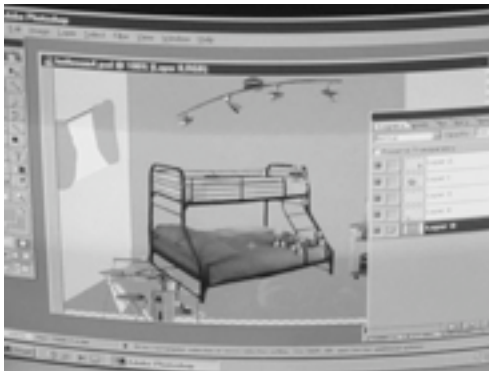
(NOTE: see attached notes for a detailed step-by-step guide to all procedures described).

Create a new 72 dpi RGB file measuring 640 x 420 pixels. Using the Line Tool, sketch an outline perspective view of the inside of a room (see example template)*. Once complete, you must select Layers > Flatten Image from the Menu Bar before continuing. Using a combination of Paint Tools and Filters, pupils can design and decorate the walls, ceiling and floor of their room, and add features such as windows and doors. Save as Photoshop (.PSD) files into individual folders.

*(Alternatively, you can save time by downloading the supplied background template 'room.jpg')

Pasting and Placing Content

3. This session involves adding the chosen contents and positioning them in the rooms. To begin with, open background images from Session 2 and complete if necessary.



Pasting content onto the background

Following an initial demonstration, pupils can copy, paste, scale and position their selected room contents onto the backgrounds. Encourage pupils to consider how scale and perspective can add to the drama and/or realism of the space.

Placing Content and Digital Portraits

4. During this session, it may be helpful for the class to rotate activities as two groups.

Group 1: continue and complete placing content onto backgrounds.

Group 2: decide how they would like to appear within their room, then pose for digital photographs*.

Swap groups round half way through session.

* It is advisable that pupils stand against a plain (preferably white or light) background if possible.

[Preparation for Session 5: All digital portraits need to be selected and any background detail deleted in advance of the next session. If possible, pupils could do this during lunch and/or break times. Images should then be saved into each pupil's folder within the shared Project Folder.]

Introduction to Add-Text

5. Begin the session by pasting and positioning digital portraits (following the same procedure as with room contents) within the rooms. Once complete, rooms must be named 'background' and saved as a JPEG (.JPG) file into the Background Folder.



Creating a text rollover in Add-Text

Demonstrate the Add-Text software (see Using Add-Text). Pupils can try out the software for themselves in pairs or groups, and can begin to develop ideas and make notes for their written commentaries. Commentaries can be informal, highlighting personal significance of specific items, and can be descriptive of pupils' ideas, thoughts and sense of place within their space.

Hot Spots and Text Commentaries

6. Creating interactive 'hot-spots' in Add-Text (see Using Add-Text), and further developing written commentary linked to items and areas within the space.

Follow-up

7. If possible, try to arrange a presentation of the completed work to other classes, or if possible the whole school. If you have access to a data-projector, an assembly may be a good opportunity. Alternatively, other classes could be invited to explore

the work on a rotational basis in the ICT room or classroom computer.

Recommendations:

- Depending on number of computers available, pupils may have to work in pairs or small groups, which could affect timescale.
- The activity can be extended or scaled down as appropriate.
- Larger classes with access to fewer computers could consider organising the activities on a rotational basis.
- To ensure activities run to time, preparation of images should be done in advance of certain sessions (as indicated). The class teacher and/or classroom assistant can help with this or, if possible, can be done by pupils during lunchtimes.

Adaptations:

In all Key Stages the activity can be scaled down and used across the curriculum. The Add-Text software is versatile, and can be an accessible and engaging way of adding captions and commentary to images, incorporating ICT into a range of subject areas in a realistic and meaningful way. For example, images can be downloaded from the web in relation to a Geography activity and imported into Add-Text, where pupils can develop a topic-based commentary. Also, images from a digital camera can be imported, presenting an opportunity to document and create interactive labelling of a science project, for example.

Key Stage 1: The activity can easily be adapted for Key Stage 1. For example, pupils can use programmes such as KidPix, Dazzle or Paint to create their own backgrounds. The collaging process can be simplified if teachers pre-select and scan a range of images and objects in order to build up a picture library or topic related 'image bank'. Pupils would be able to create collages from a range of ready-to-use pictures, or import selected images directly into Add-Text.

- Links can be made with National Curriculum schemes of work:
Art & Design: Self-portrait (unit 1A); Picture this (Unit 2A); Can Buildings Speak? (Unit 2C)
ICT: Labelling and Classifying (Unit 1D); Creating Pictures (Unit 2B)
English: NLS Links: Y1:T2:T22 & 23; Y1:T3:T14, 20 & 21; Y2:T2:T14
History: How are toys different from those in the past? (Unit 1); What were homes like long ago (Unit 2)

Images by Fiona Bailey & Stoke Damerel Primary School:



Image from Add-Text software © limbomedia



Image from Add-Text software © limbomedia

What they said about it:

An evaluation by Stoke Damerel Primary Headteacher

The work was very valuable in that it extended the children's use and understanding of ICT as well as allowing them to spend an appropriate amount of time focussed and guided through a project.

These new opportunities enthused both the children and the teaching staff.

The children were encouraged to examine and consider the way in which the media portrays people in order to sell products. e.g. appearance, contexts and facial expressions.

The children were able to quickly recognise that media images often had little resemblance to "real life". This led to a very focussed discussion about how choices are influenced and how they can use this information in the future.

The Add-Text software is an ideal example of educational "open" software. Children are able to evaluate the software and adapt it for their own purposes. It is suited for any situation where images and text generated by children can be combined to communicate.