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Abstract

Inspired by the section on Money Containers in DATA's Primary Helpsheets and ACCAC's scheme of work plus assessment materials and work sheets (written by Jim Newcomb at University of Wales College Newport*), Nerys Jones asked her Year 5 group at Clytha Primary School in Newport to design and make belt bags or purses for a specific purpose or function. The focus of this project was the designing and making of a quality product using simple textiles techniques. Opportunities were provided for the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of ways in which such materials can be fashioned. The pupils were given a wide range of materials to work with.

The pupils began by investigating and researching existing products. They were encouraged to look at colour, shape, functions, users, purposes, materials, joining techniques, as well as what they liked and disliked about the products. The information gleaned was kept to form part of the pupils' portfolios. Specific questioning was used to stimulate and encourage the pupils to think as critical consumers as well as to distinguish positive and negative aspects offering some reasons for why they prefer some types to others:

- Who would use it?
- What materials have been used?
- How does it fasten?
- Are there separate compartments?
- Are there any special features?

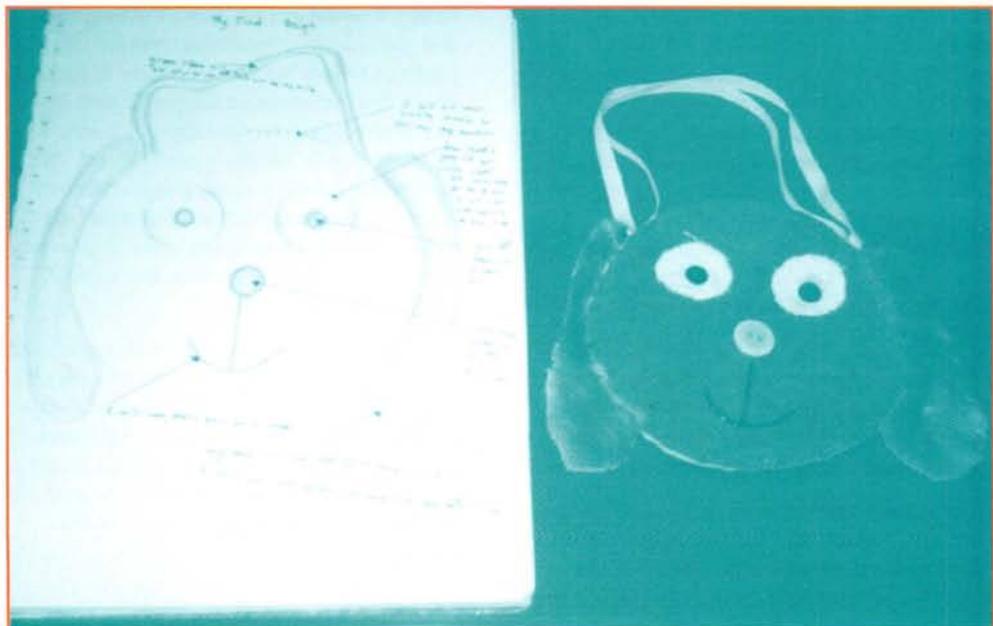
For the first focused practical task, the pupils were shown a purse that had been disassembled, so they could see how the separate pieces would initially have looked. Attention was focused on seams and how fastenings were joined to the main material. The importance of making a paper model was discussed with the pupils. A demonstration of how to make a paper pattern to allow for a seam, how to pin the pattern to a piece of fabric, how to cut out the fabric and how to stitch right sides together using back stitch were covered.

The pupils were then given a task to make a simple square purse 8cm x 8cm out of paper. This highlighted to the pupils the importance of accurate marking out and cutting.

The second focused practical task involved the pupils using hessian or spare material to practise various joining techniques, such as back stitch, running stitch, backward stitch, cross stitch and over sew stitch. We discussed this work as a class and together decided which method made the strongest seam. Pupils decided on which stitch they would use on their designs. They were given opportunities to try fabric paints, embroidery, simple appliqué and batik.

Constraints with regards to materials were then clarified. The pupils were shown what fabrics, glues, threads, Velcro, buttons, poppers, zips, sequins, ribbons, glitter glue, fabric paints and threads were available to use. Most resources were ordered from the TTS catalogue. Poppers were purchased from a haberdashery shop. Equipped with this information and using the ideas from their research the pupils began to think about

Figure 1: Elisha Matthews' final product and annotated design.



* This project was based on a scheme of work produced by ACCAC, not QCA, as stated in a previous article featured in Modus.

possible users of their products. Most of the pupils chose to design and make a money container for themselves.

Innovative designs began to develop, but it was important to remind the pupils of the constraints and to ask themselves if they had the skills to actually make it. The pupils began to realise that 'simple is effective'. Some pupils required additional teacher support to help them form ideas. Relating to pupils' interests and hobbies sparked their imaginations. Some pupils used pictures from books to help them. They were encouraged to evaluate designs throughout.

Questions asked were:

- Who is it for?
- What will it hold?
- How will it be carried?
- What will be needed to keep the money safe?
- What shape will it be?
- Which fabric will be used?
- Will it be personalised?

The majority of pupils were able to explore many different designs before choosing a final design and developing it. The pupils were shown various sketching and shading techniques to help them with the presentation of the designs. Pre-prepared examples were required here to show the pupils what was expected from them. The pupils' designs were annotated clearly showing their intentions.



Figure 2: Rachel Davies shows her flower purse and design.

The next stage of development was to start encouraging the pupils to think about sizes and measurements for their products. Using paper, card, cellotape, and staplers, the pupils began to make models of the proposed designs. This proved to be the most challenging area of the project. There were strong links with maths as the pupils had to mark out, measure and cut pieces separately, whilst others made a net and folded it. Some pupils found the modelling stage challenging, whilst others found it frustrating. The pupils experienced difficulties in seeing a 2D design transformed into a 3D working model and to allow for a seam. Looking at nets in maths followed this up. Teamwork played a big part here, as the pupils helped and supported one another.



Figure 3: Year 5 students and their designs.

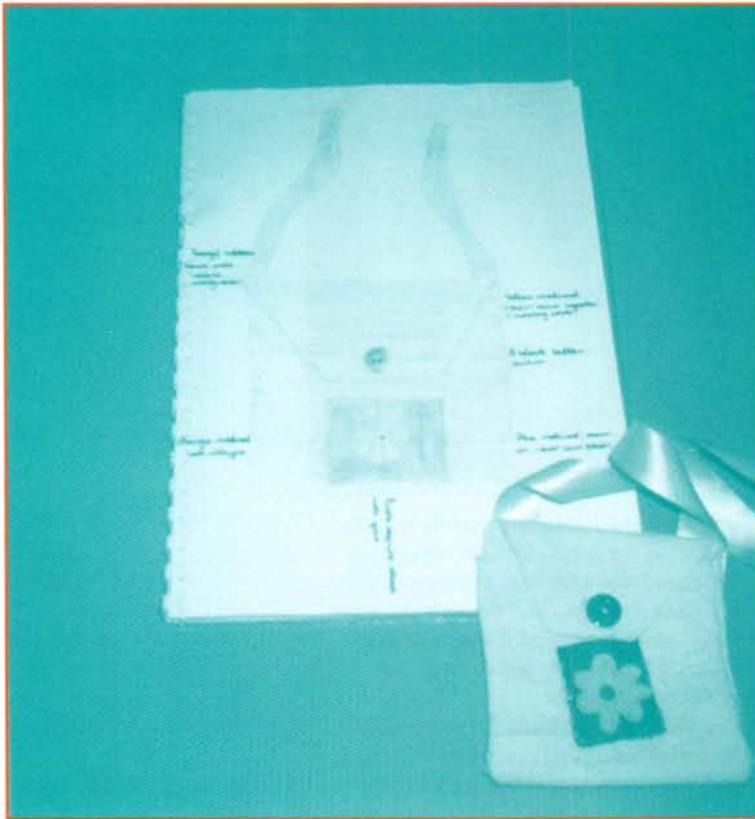


Figure 4: Kelly Amos, Year 5 textiles. Kelly wanted a purse and a bag. She used Velcro to attach the ribbon handle, so that it could be removed to form a purse.

Figure 5: The finished products.



After discussions and evaluations of working models, some pupils modified their designs, usually simplifying them. The pupils produced a simple list of the materials and equipment they intended to use for the making of the container. Reference to a word bank display in the classroom supported the pupils. They also produced a plan to give an idea of the order in which they intended to carry out their work. Some pupils needed support to place in the appropriate order.

Card/paper templates were pinned to the fabric and using fabric scissors it was cut out accurately. The pupils needed to be reminded to cut from the edges and not the middle, avoiding wastage.

It was not until the final production that the pupils realised the importance of making an accurate model. Problems with symmetry, seam allowance and separate pieces were a few encountered. Parental help was invaluable at this stage, especially at the early stages of development, as pupils were excited and keen to get the task done. At all times pupils were encouraged to explain any choices and to give reasons for any changes they made with regard to their original intentions.

Once the pupils had finished their money containers, written evaluations on how well they had met the design specification were completed. The pupils were asked to reflect on both the process (how they went about their work) and their product (quality of their finished model). They reflected upon how well they felt the work had gone and which part of the project they enjoyed the most. They reflected upon which parts proved most difficult and if they had problems how they were overcome. The accuracy and overall appearance of end product was evaluated, how independent they were and what improvements could be made. The pupils tested their containers and commented on how well it held objects listed at the outset. Prompt questions were used to help the pupils and writing frames were available for some pupils. The strong links with literacy were made to full effect. The use of the digital camera by the pupils enhanced information and communications technology skills as well as the presentation of their portfolios.

Working with textiles is an activity which the pupils thoroughly enjoy. They have designed and made a product that will be well used and purposeful.