

Crime Scenes: Systems and Control Dioramas

Reviewed by Les Porter, Course Director, Design Department, Brunel University



Design Against Crime is aimed at reducing crime through good design. The project is a joint initiative between Sheffield Hallam University, Economics Education, The Design Council and The University of Salford.

School centred Design Against Crime Activities support students in developing their design and technology capability, whilst encouraging them to become responsible citizens who will grow to recognise the benefits of living within a crime free society.

This Design Against Crime project (one of a series) is about designing and making a moving picture called a 'diorama'. A diorama is a three-dimensional representation of a scene where people and objects are arranged against a background. Dioramas in exhibitions and museums are often static. In this project, however, students are encouraged to use electric motors, PIC microcontrollers and mechanisms (or maybe use lighting effects or other special effects) to bring their diorama to life.

The resource is supplied as a class pack of stimulating 'Designer's Books' for the students to work with and record their design activities and design thinking in. The booklets are supported by a set of teacher's notes which put the work into context and outline how the project could contribute to developing D&T capability at Key Stages 3 & 4. Embedded into the project is additional teaching and learning material to enable design and technology teachers to make positive contributions to numeracy, literacy and ICT. Above all, this total teaching package enables D&T teachers to make a valuable contribution to the teaching of citizenship.

The student workbooks have been designed for students to use in place of their usual folio. Each workbook has spaces for students to complete set exercises, record research data, generate and record ideas, and engage in evaluation exercises. Additionally the workbooks contain material to support differentiated learning. In some cases the text describes a particular manufacturing process, in other places the books supply the students with help for their designing activities. In all cases information, such as websites, is available to stimulate further investigation and to support learning.

The artwork is done using a cartoon format and is annotated in an inspirational manner that encourages the students to undertake further research into the topics being studied.

Included in the pack is the game of DACtiles. This is a type of domino game that can be played in groups. It uses the character 'Terry Dactile' to develop themes taught elsewhere in the project. The words used in the game relate to crime topics explored during the project; to designing and making and systems and control. The aim of the game is to form a string of tiles by pairing up the halves that have the same, or similar, meanings e.g. 'vandalism' matches 'criminal damage'.

The workbooks conclude with reflective tasks designed to promote further discussion about crime issues that will enable pupils to reach conclusions which they can record in their workbooks. The activities culminate with several scenarios and ask students to record their responses. These activities could ideally be used for homework activities.

Presented with the resource material is a high quality classroom poster to promote the activity.

I feel that one slight lost opportunity about the pack is the section on assessment. The authors suggest that the assessment of the project should be inline with school and departmental policy. They comment that "there is ample opportunity to establish formative assessment" but for me it would have been better if the authors had supplied examples to support their thinking.

This is a splendid publication and the authors are to be congratulated on the way they have developed this material. The way that PIC control is introduced in a non-threatening manner will please many teachers who are new to this form of control technology. The whole resource is stimulating and motivating. It lends itself to producing high quality outcomes with which the students can engage. A must for the next academic year.



Crime Scenes: System and Control Dioramas

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Appropriate Content	✓✓✓✓	Generic Use	✓
Pupil/Student Use	✓✓✓✓	One of a series	✓
Teacher Resource	✓✓✓✓	Photocopiable	✓
Visuals	✓✓✓✓	Pupil/student activities	✓
Overall Style	✓✓✓✓	Cross-curricular	✓