

Design and Technology – Ideas to Inspire

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This is a photocopiable resource designed to stimulate thinking skills in support of the Key Stage 3 strategy and in particular to enable the strategy in Year 7.

The introduction forms a useful summary of the rationale to the strategy. It highlights the significance of the literacy and numeracy strands and how these impact on Design and Technology. The aim is to help Design and Technology teachers take up their responsibility within the whole school scheme. As stated the resource:

aims to provide busy teachers with ideas, activities and resources to support the teaching of thinking skills, literacy objectives and numeracy priorities.

It sets out to encourage thinking skills for, as the authors state, the Design and Technology teacher

works harder than many of their pupils, and that many pupils lack the confidence or the ability to work through the design and development process independently.

This is a statement with which I have some sympathy. The authors believe that by developing thinking skills pupils will become independent learners and become better at their work.

The rest of the resource is divided into three sections entitled: Food Technology, Textiles Technology and Product Design which includes graphic products, resistant materials, electronic products and systems and control. Each section uses high quality, black and white copiable resources. These resources

include word lists and large-print copies of key words to be displayed on walls. There are modified versions of card games such as a variation on "Taboo" and other games such as dominoes using circuit symbols. There are high quality black and white photos to stimulate discussion and to help students to think. Activities are well described for the teacher's benefit and they include a cross reference to the literacy objectives, numeracy priorities and the foundation strand modules. Obviously useful if visited by OFSTED or in justifying the department to senior managers. The authors state that all the activities have been tried in schools and have been found to be successful in helping students to enhance their thinking skills.

While the printed resource is in black and white there is an associated web site that will let you download full colour versions of the printed pages to make OHP transparencies or put them into digital presentations. This service is free to purchasers of the resource pack.

Overall I can see the benefit of the resource for those departments selected to be part of the foundation strand in the pilot scheme. I think the material will be interesting to all Design and Technology departments as the strategy moves on from the pilot phase. It does cut out a lot of the work of thinking and preparing resources and it does provide a framework for making judgements about progress across a cluster of schools.

The materials themselves comprise of 235 A4 photocopiable pages in a sturdy ring binder. Each activity is on one or several pages.

While I see the benefits of the work and I feel that the authors have put together a useful pack of materials I do feel uneasy that Design and Technology may end up being a paper based subject and I really hope that the balance between the cognitive and practical can be developed. I appreciate that in schools the importance of thinking skills has been underplayed and that those outside of Design and Technology departments may have a limited view of the thinking skills required to develop good products but I also feel that the subject is unique in the way it provides less academic students to develop their technical skills and I hope this is not lost.

