



Objects and Stories: Enhancing Understanding in Year 7 Boys

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Further Information

This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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Introduction

Teaching DT for 14 years, I wanted to develop an alternative approach to the design process that doesn't "end in a disappointing result" (Miller & McGimpsey, 2011, p. 10). By incorporating story into the design process, I hoped to encourage boys to understand and value products they designed and used (Chapman, 2006).

Research Context and Participants

Participants were 10 eleven-year-old boys at Dulwich Prep London. A seven-week creative programme rotation encouraged open-ended investigation and exploration.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, filmed discussions, prototypes, museum worksheets, reflective journals, and written peer feedback. I transcribed the interviews and selected particularly interesting excerpts. I looked for commonalities within the personal object stories, the final design products, and the boys' reflective interviews and broader themes about the understanding of objects' significance across these categories.

Action Steps

Precious object story

• "It's one of the things I value most, I've been playing since I was 4."

Personal story

• "Playing music seriously means I have no time to keep fit."

Future prototype model

• "A suit that helps your muscles exercise while you play music."

Research Question

How can incorporating story into the study and design of artefacts help Year 7 boys understand the significance of objects?

"Everything has a story,
I have a story,
everything needs a story."

"First we were just a group of people who had no idea what to do. Now we are just a group of people who are friends, good people who know how to work."

Conclusions

• Pupils produced prototypes for meaningful, significant products based on real narratives.

• The boys understood the significance of each other's future designs.

• The boys recognised that everything has been designed, all objects have a story...

Research Findings

• Connecting stories to objects triggered deep emotional responses in boys:
"This blanket helped me feel safe."

• Using stories helped students understand how everyday products have significant stories.

• Sharing personal object stories required a safe community.

• Boys offered better feedback/guidance to peers based on an understanding of the story behind an object:
"Super idea... I think the designs are also unique but the ideas should be more subtle ...but it is good for people who want to express their disabilities."

Key Readings

Chapman, J. (2005). *Emotionally durable design*. London: Routledge.

Miller, J. & McGimpsey, I. (2011, August 1). *What's wrong with DT?* Retrieved from <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/whats-wrong-with-dt>

Turkle, S. (2010). *Evocative objects: Things we think with*. London: MIT Press.

"We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with"
(Turkle, 2010, p. 5)

