Objects and Stories: Enhancing Understanding in Year 7 Boys

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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."

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.

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.”
- 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...

Conclusions

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

Key Readings


“We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with”

(Turkle, 2010, p. 1)