

SESSION 1: CAN INFORMATION BE BEAUTIFUL?

Age range: 11 - 14 years

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| <p>Outline</p> <p>In this session, learners will be introduced to the art of infographics. They will firstly have to try and guess possible purposes of one design stripped of its explanatory labels. Learners will then watch a presentation by its designer, the data journalist David McCandless, which will stimulate a discussion about why it has become increasingly popular to communicate information in this visual way. Finally, learners will choose another infographic by McCandless to analyse and interpret in more detail, using the prompts on Activity Sheet 1.2 as a guide.</p> | | |
| <p>Learning objectives</p> <p>Learners will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin developing an understanding of the design elements of an infographic • Listen to a designer speak about his own work • Analyse the method and meaning of the work of a contemporary British designer, David McCandless. | <p>Learning outcomes</p> <p>Learners will learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To decode a blank infographic based on visual clues and connections • To appreciate how and why designers use infographics to make sense of vast amounts of data • To explain the effect of different design choices (on Activity Sheet 1.2). | |
| <p>Key questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do data journalists, such as McCandless, choose to report statistics graphically? • What information does/n't lend itself to being represented graphically? Why/ why not? • What creative choices has McCandless made about colour, typography, space and texture? • How does this affect your reading of the graphic? | <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer access for all learners (optional) • Projector and speakers • Session 1 slideshow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Print notes pages • Session 1 Teacher's Guide, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity Sheet 1.2 (one per pair) ○ Activity Sheet 1.2, Teacher's Edition | |
| <p>Curriculum links</p> | | |
| <p>England Art & Design curriculum links</p> <p>Pupils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design. | <p>Wales Art & Design curriculum links</p> <p>Pupils should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be given the opportunity to use their knowledge of the work of other ... designers to enrich and inform their work through analysis, comparison and evaluation. | <p>Scotland Art & Design curriculum links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings (EXA 3-07a). |

Before Session

- Print enough copies of *How do designers make all that information so beautiful?* (Activity Sheet 1.2) for working in pairs.
- If possible: ensure internet access so that your learners can scan a range of options before choosing a design for themselves in Activity 1.2. If not, choose an example yourself that you think may be of interest to your class from <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net>.
- Set up the projector/slideshow:
 - Open the hyperlink on slide 6 (by clicking on the web address with the right-hand mouse button), so that it has time to load.
 - Check that your sound system is working.
 - Check whether the text on slide 3 will be legible from the back of the class. If not, you could print out a full-page copy of the slide or ask individuals to approach the board to read out particular sections.

Activity 1.1

This is not abstract art!

- Follow the notes on slides 2–5 to lead learners through this activity.
- Before being introduced to the art of infographics, learners are asked to analyse a design by David McCandless that has been stripped of its explanatory labels. The aim of this activity is to alert the class to the aesthetic potential of capturing and communicating complex data sets. Predictions made about the work's meaning can then be compared to the designer's own description of his purpose.
- Show slide 6 which links to a David McCandless talk. McCandless explains the purpose and processes behind his designs. While the first five minutes of this TED talk (18min 10sec) is the only essential viewing for this session's objectives, teachers may choose to show more, depending on time and ability.

Activity 1.2

How do designers make all that information so beautiful?

- If all learners have access to a computer with the internet, direct them in pairs to David McCandless's website <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net>. Allow five to ten minutes' scanning of the site. OR If yours is the only computer, project your pre-selected example now.
- Distribute *How do designers make all that information so beautiful?* Activity Sheet 1.2 and read through the questions as a class to check for understanding.
- Monitor the learners' progress for at least 20 minutes while they analyse and interpret the significance of the designer's choice of colour, typography, space and texture.
- Redirect any learners who are off task or having difficulty by providing ideas from the Teacher's Edition of the worksheet. Definitions can be written on the board for all to read and copy.

Further ideas

- If any pairs finish early, they could either:
 - Use coloured pencils to draft an alternative design for the same data used in the infographic they analysed in Activity 1.2.
 - Use the same table to analyse a different infographic representing a theme of their choice by typing into Google “infographic+music” or “infographic+sport” or “infographic+fashion”.

Please note: Source information and ideas for differentiation can be found in the slideshow notes.

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How do designers make all that information so beautiful?

Activity Sheet 1.2

| | |
|---|--|
| Title of your chosen infographic | |
| Why did you choose this one? | |
| Without looking at the designer's notes, what would you guess this graphic represented? | |
| What would you change about the design to make it easier to understand and/or more beautiful? | |

| | What creative choices has McCandless made about this design element? | What effect does this have on the meaning and impact of the work? |
|------------|---|---|
| Colour | | |
| Typography | | |
| Space | | |
| Texture | Hint: In design terms, <i>texture</i> refers to the creation of depth rather than surface quality | |

How do designers make all that information so beautiful?

Activity Sheet 1.2

Teacher's copy

| | |
|---|--|
| Title of your chosen infographic | |
| Why did you choose this one? | |
| Without looking at the designer's notes, what would you guess this graphic represented? | |
| What would you change about the design to make it easier to understand and/or more beautiful? | |

| | What creative choices has McCandless made about this design element? | What effect does this have on the meaning and impact of the work? |
|------------|---|---|
| Colour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturation • Opacity / transparency • Evocative • Complementary/harmonious • Categorisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and/or cultural associations of colours chosen |
| Typography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Font – type and size • Format – justified, range left or range right • Kerning – creating perfect spacing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of interpretation |
| Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition • Focal point • Alignment / Gridlines • Balance – of negative to positive space • Bleed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When subjects bleed over the frame of the page it can suggest vastness, infinity or being overwhelmed. • By contrast, fully contained content suggests order, harmony or control |
| Texture | <p>Hint: In design terms, <i>texture</i> refers to the creation of depth rather than surface quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlapping • Relative scale, location Linear perspective • Flatness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illusion of depth • Visual interest • Aesthetically pleasing • As David McCandless said in the TED talk: "You start to have a different relationship to the numbers... [the data becomes] a landscape or a map." |