

Images and artefacts

CPD activity 2: Presenting positive images through artefacts

Artefacts are interesting and enjoyable to work with, and can help to bring cultures alive. They stimulate pupils' curiosity, discussion, creativity and powers of observation and detection.

They help pupils realise the limits of their understanding, as well as encouraging their research skills in finding out more.

Handling artefacts can develop pupils' ability to respect and care for things sensitively that are part of people's everyday lives. As Rigoberta Menchu Tum, the Guatemalan activist, pointed out (in Burr 1991: 25):

"What hurts us most is that our costumes are considered beautiful, but it is as if the person wearing them didn't exist".

Artefacts can be acquired from a number of sources: charity shops, from Fair Trade catalogues, markets, or from collecting them (or asking others to do so) when visiting different places.

Here are some suggestions of the kinds of artefacts that may be useful in building up a collection from one particular country - in this case Tanzania:

- a stove;
- a coconut grater;
- a radio;
- a stamp;
- a crisp packet;
- a toy made from recycled wire;
- a musical instrument;
- a kanga - a multi-purpose piece of material used, for instance, for carrying children and wearing as a wrap (some have Kiswahili writing on them, which would be of added interest);
- some locally produced coffee;
- a training shoe;
- a sisal bag or basket.

Such a range of items may enable pupils to realise that some things are common to many countries, to appreciate the ingenuity of Tanzanian craftspeople, and to see that there are various ways of doing things.

Learning intention:

To help educators develop ideas on how to promote positive images of artefacts, people and places, through work with artefacts.

Activity:

1. Ask participants in small groups to list five artefacts that represent the country they are in.
2. Share with the whole group, giving reasons for choosing each item. Discuss what impression of the country would be given by this representation.
3. Then choose one of the artefacts and apply the following list of questions to it. These constitute some points to think about before starting work with artefacts.
 - What aspect of life does this artefact portray?
 - What else would you include to give an all-round view of a place or country?
 - What do you know about the artefact?