

## Making a Set-Box



This is a really good project to get the children to think about the setting of the play. This can be used to tie in with literacy work in terms of creating the different settings for different scenes, but can also be used to discuss the practicalities of staging a production and how a theatre designer would use backdrops and scenery to create contrasting settings and atmospheres. This could then be extended into how sound and music would be used within a production.

Once the boxes are complete they could be used for display in class and referred to while teaching literacy and drama. With some imagination (and some little toy figures like Playmobile or Sylvanians) the boxes could be used as sets for some photo story work or stop-frame animation.

## Materials needed.

Cardboard Boxes - ideally the boxes that the photocopier paper comes in.

Wire

Balsa Wood and Square section

Tin Foil

Papier-mâché

Cardboard tubes

String

Paper

Cardboard

Chicken Wire

Computer and colour printer.

I would expect these to be done over two or three afternoon sessions of an hour and a half. This leaves time for glue, paint and papier-mâché to dry between sessions. You could do it in two sessions, but it would be a struggle.

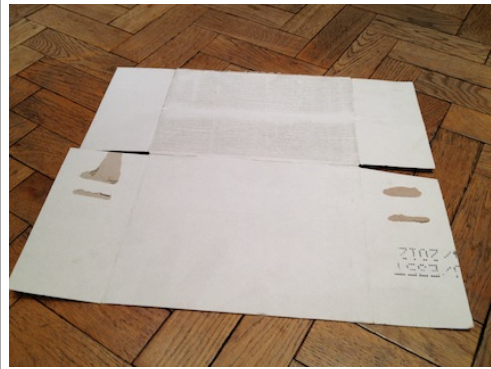
Week 1.

The first thing that you need to do is to go through the play with the children and decide together what are all the settings for the play. This would best be done shortly after the first drama / story telling session so that the play is fresh in their memories. You will want to think in advance about how many set-boxes you want to make and therefore how many different settings you want. Children working in threes or fours works well.



Once the settings are agreed and allocated to groups the children will need to understand what they are making and why. At this point it is sensible to discuss the idea of a performance: “if you were going to put on the play, what would the stage need to look like in each scene”.

It is a good idea to show the class a set-box already made up with floor and backdrop glued in place. The children need to understand that the first part of the project is to decide on a floor surface and a background and create them.



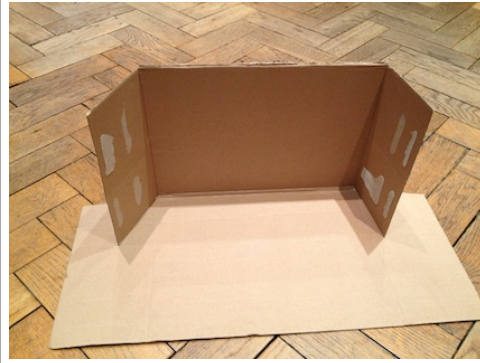
The floor surface and background can of course be painted or drawn, however it is quicker and perhaps more aesthetically pleasing to allow them to use computers and search for images using a search engine. The images can be photos or pictures, but it is worth explaining that pictures / photos that have been taken straight on (rather than at an angle) will work best. They will also need to overlap the pictures so they might look for patterns / pictures that can easily be glued together.



Once the children have found, saved and printed out their pictures they need to glue the pictures to the floor and the walls before they start to construct their set-box.



When the floor and walls have been decorated then the boxes can be made. First, create the shape you want for the boxes. (The pictures show a set-box with no floor and wall decoration).



Next, use cardboard strips to fix the "wings" in place.

Do so for both sides.



The box will now stand up on its own and is the constructed stage.



This is a good point to leave the first session, with all the stages built and ready to decorate with scenery,



Week 2.

<p>This next part of the project is an opportunity to allow the children to be creative without too many boundaries.</p>	
<p>It is a good idea to get each group to think about what items of scenery they want to make (perhaps a maximum of five items per group) and ask them to list them, sketch them and think about how they might make them.</p>	
<p>The next issue to deal with is one of scale. It is perhaps a good idea to bring in a model figure for each group from something like Playmobile and ask the children to try and make the scenery so that it is proportional to the figures. If you can't use Playmobile perhaps draw a number of people and photocopy and give them to each group. Ask the children to cut them out and use to get the scale right.</p>	
<p>The next step is to start making the scenery. This is a much looser type of lesson where you can give materials like the ones listed above and any others you can think of and ask the children to make things in whatever way they think. They might need help with cutting the wood or chicken wire, but it is a good idea to let them try as much as possible on their own. At the end of this session it is worth asking the children to review the materials and think about what works and what doesn't and ask them how they might use them differently if they were to do it again.</p>	
<p>By the end of this session it is good idea to have all the scenery made and drying, so that it is ready to paint and set in the boxes for the last session.</p>	

Week 3.

Now you have all the scenery, it needs to be painted and the stage set. Acrylic paints work best and dry quickest.



When everything is painted get the children to set up their individual set-boxes; to create their stages.



When they are all made it is a good idea to write a brief description of each one, where it figures in the play and perhaps a brief synopsis of what happens in the scene.



The boxes can be set up chronologically – so that the children can see the order of the play and critically assess each other's work.



By Nick Turner