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**Dissertation Abstract**



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| **Student** | : | Patricia Coen |
| **Title** | : | "We Drew Pictures . . . " Using Fantasy Strategies to Promote Evaluative Discussion in the Art Class |

This study aims to determine whether or not the use of fantasy and role playing strategies during class evaluative discussions can promote:

1)    Pupil participation

2)    Quality of content.

The nature of evaluative discussion in the classroom is examined through the literature review.   This is followed by a three-part research project in which traditional and fantasy approaches are incorporated into two modules of work undertaken by first-year pupils.  Conclusions drawn are based on:

1)    Analysis of taped evaluative discussions with and without a fantasy element.

2)    Pupil response to game playing strategies in the classroom

3)    Analysis of pupils personal notebooks written during the course of this study.

# "We drew pictures . . ."
# Using Fantasy Strategies to
# Promote Evaluative Discussion
# in the Art Class

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education

in

Candidacy for the

B.A. DEGREE IN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

by

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# CHAPTER 1

## EVALUATIVE DISCUSSION IN THE CLASSROOM :
## A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### The Value of Evaluative Discussion

There is a growing awareness among art educators of the importance of evaluative discussion in the classroom as a means of helping children to develop an ability to express their thoughts and feelings about their own work. The Junior Certificate syllabus recognises the need for children to "use an appropriate working vocabulary" and to "approve and evaluate his/her own work in progress and on completion".[1] However, developing children's critical awareness of their work can be a problematic task. George Szekely describes how, during displays of his pupils' work

> My being openly joyful at seeing beautiful works around me often leads to conversations with the students, many of whom do not see, feel or hear my joy, or understand my reasons for celebration.[2]

The value of discussion as a way of helping people to come to know their own work, and to verbalise it has been proven.

> Discussion enables learners to express themselves and to interact with each other . . . The satisfaction generated by classroom discussions enhances learning outcomes, prepares students for subsequent learning, and contributes to class morale.[3]

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The processes of evaluating and discussing in the classroom have a long-standing tradition in education history. Evaluation has been defined as "a qualitative statement of value of some kind".[4] In the art class, the purpose of evaluating the work is "To gain insight into the student's fulfilment of the learning objective in order to determine what to do next".[5] Pupils can maintain steady progress from one project to the next if they are aware of both the visual and expressive qualities of their work. By definition, discussion is "a form of group interaction, people talking back and forth with one another. What they talk about is an issue, some topic that is in question for them".[6] As an educative process, discussion has an ancient tradition, from Socrates' dialogues of the fifth century, to John Dewey's seminal writings on group participation.[7] It is hardly surprising, then, that discussions of an evaluative nature have come to be recognised as a key method of improving pupils' critical awareness of their own work, promoting self-expression and interaction. In the course of such discussion, achievements can be acknowledged and future goals set out.

Evaluative discussion can only be of value to pupils if they develop the vocabulary to make meaningful statements about their work and come to see the difference between quick statements of preference and deeper judgements. This will also benefit pupils' practical work, for "Although verbal language is not now and never can be a substitute for the visual, it can function as a midwife to the aesthetic experience".[8] The benefits of discussion in the art class are, however, not restricted to the child's artistic development alone. It also provides the opportunity to "stimulate language development and promote conversations that eventually lead to a greater willingness and ability to express oneself verbally".[9] Auditory skills of listening and following directions are also

reinforced. It would seem that discussion can benefit the holistic development of the child.

## How do we Evaluate Works of Art?

Once it has been accepted that it is beneficial to children to discuss their work in an evaluative manner, several questions arise. How do we evaluate children's achievements through their work? What is it that we want them to discover through the process? Evaluation has been defined as "A form of research that alters what we do".[10] In order to determine what direction they should take, children need to ask themselves:

> What they think of the work they produce?
> What is it that the believe they learned from doing it?
> What did they like least about a particular project?
> What would they like to work on next?[11]

A number of strategies for making a critical analysis of art works have been developed over the years. Feldman's 1970 model proposed a subject-centred approach based on descriptive analysis, interpretation and evaluation of art objects.[12] His method forms the basis of subsequent developments in this area, with perhaps the most comprehensive model developed since being that of Elliot Eisner (1972).

Eisner proposed inststructional devices focusing on three broad categories:

1.  **Descriptive Statements**

These require students to attend to the subject matter and form of the work in a matter of fact way, for example, "the dominant colours are orange on a yellow field".[13]

2   **Evaluative Statements**

Require students to make judgements about the value or significance of a work which are not merely preferential but which can be supported with reason.

3   **Interpretive Statements**

Require students to look beyond literal visual qualities in order to experience the expressive meaning of a work, for example, "Shreds and patches of porous colours; blond pinks sieved by lavender blues".[14]

Within the category of interpretive statements, Eisner defines six further sub-categories of statements

1   **Experiential** - Referring to how the art work makes one feel.

2   **Formal** - Referring to relationships between visual elements - colour, texture, line, etc. - and the compositional arrangement of these.

**3**     **<u>Material</u>**  -  Referring to technique, use of media to achieve desired effects, the possibilities and limitations associated with the media used.

**4**     **<u>Thematic</u>**  -  Referring to ideas embodied in the work, for example, in Picasso's *Guernica* the theme is man's inhumanity to man.

**5**     **<u>Symbolic</u>**  -  Referring to the meanings which may be attributed to various elements, the symbols used by the artist.

**6**     **<u>Contextual</u>**  -  Referring to the art work's relationship to its historical, social and technological context.[15]

Broudy's 1988 model for aesthetic scanning identified four characteristics of art works which need to be addressed:  sensory, formal, expressive and technical properties.  He suggested that criticism should focus on the following considerations:

**1**     **<u>Historical</u>**  -  Relating the art work to the context in which it was produced.

**2**     **<u>Recreative</u>**  -  Requiring the observance to know what to look for and to use the appropriate vocabulary to explain it.

**3**     **<u>Judicial</u>**  -  Involves comparing the work under review with similar works using the criteria of formal excellence, truth and significance.[16]

In relation to Broudy's 'judicial' criteria, it has been pointed out that further criteria are necessary in order to define these, so clearly his method is in places somewhat vague.[17]

A more straightforward model was put forward by Taylor in 1986. He identified four standpoints from which to approach art objects:

1.     Content : What is the work about?
2.     Form : How has it been arranged?
3.     Process : What materials and techniques did the artist use?
4.     Mood : How does the work affect you?[18]

This model has been adjusted and developed recently by Richard Hickman (1994) who suggested that, in order to make art more meaningful to students, we must shift the focus of aesthetic response back towards themselves. He proposed an overall general strategy which is "A synthesis of pupil centred and subject centred approaches based on four areas of activity".[19] These are:

1     **React**

An initial response to the art object, feelings, associations, etc.

2     **Research**

A systematic inquiry on two levels:

a)     Within the art work : involving formal elements, content, processes used to make it;

b)      Without the art work : investigating artist's intention, relationship between the art work and process, and the social/historical/cultural contexts in which it was produced.

## 3    Respond

A considered response based on what has been discovered through systematic enquiry as distinct from reaction.

## 4    Reflect

An opportunity to think over and contemplate the meaning and nature of the work in light of the above.[20]

These models are useful in an instructive way for helping teachers to understand how evaluative discussion may be approached, but there is no "perfect model", no absolute way of doing it. Eisner has identified the need for teachers to develop their own models for evaluation to suit the specific purposes for which they are to be used. We can then test the particular skills and understandings which the programme was aimed at developing.[21]

## Developing Evaluative Models for Particular Classes, Particular Programmes

Paul Cartwright gives the following description of the approach of children who have developed an understanding of self-evaluation to their work:

> The pupils are remarkably honest about their reactions, if anything they tend to be rather hard on themselves . . . they very rarely pretend that it's more successful than they actually feel it is.[22]

When evaluative discussion works in this way it benefits not just the pupils but also the teacher:

> Some of the comments, it's like the untutored eye., (the pupils) pick out things that surprise you because you've got so used to a particular manner of approaching images that you forget that there are other ways of doing it.[23]

However, bringing about meaningful discussion is no easy task. "It is common in beginning level art classrooms to see students who earlier were engrossed in making art sit speechless as the teacher attempts to elicit discussion about their work".[24] Getting pupils to participate is not the only problem faced by teachers in this area, however. Group criticism forces students to deal with their own reactions and the reactions of others, but students may find presenting their work for discussion to be uncomfortable, embarrassing and often counterproductive.[25] It is up to the teacher to choose the strategy most likely to solve these problems in his/her classroom.

The following characteristics of effective discussion in the classroom have been identified:

1.    A common topic of interest;

2.    A felt freedom to talk;

3.    A sense of deeper personal involvement;

4.    Elaboration of ideas;

5.    Alternative explanations and representations of subject matter;

6.    Comments on previous statements;

7.    Responses to other children, not just the adult;

8.    Children initiating the talk;

9     An unpredictable turn allocation;

10    Outcomes which are not predetermined.[26]

During discussion, "the interaction between teacher and pupils will determine the picking out of trivial aesthetic judgements . . . and by discussion make pupils more aware of those".[27]

So how can one initiate effective, honest discussion from which pupils will learn without damaging their self-confidence, in which the majority of pupils will participate?  Several approaches may be taken.  Gene A Mittler suggests that one way of building self-confidence initially is to break the class into smaller discussion groups so as to allow students to share ideas in a more relaxed atmosphere.[28]  Effective discussion can only happen when students are instructed to listen to what others have to say, take turns speaking, and plan ahead what they themselves intend to say.[29]  Recent work suggesting the value of game-playing and fantasy strategies in the classroom show that these can be a valuable aid to effective discussion.  The inclusion of these may come about through teacher questioning which includes the use of playful ideas, for example:

> Students may be asked to make believe that they have a magic pair of scissors that lets them cut out special parts of an artwork revealing specific qualities, or magic glasses that pick up only certain colours and details in a work, or the means of making an artwork talk and describe itself in terms of certain criteria.[30]

Malone and Lepper (1987) suggested that effective fantasy strategies "must contain a meaningful connection to the content area, yet evoke mental images not actually present".[31]

In a recent report on the use of fantasy strategies, Jean Ellen Jones described how fantasy roles can be played out on three separate levels:

1.  **Analogies to the art criticism role**

    This strategy involves using verbs other than 'doing' or 'writing' when referring to criticism. Students are asked to "search" the work, "scan" it, or "put it in the spotlight". These may develop into more elaborate scenarios, for example, "Be like a detective - search for clues", or "turn your microscope/TV camera on the work and zoom in".

2.  **Familiar Art Criticism Roles**

    These are longer exercises inviting students to model, simulate or take a particular perspective, for example, talking on the telephone to classmates describing works, or recovering a lost work of art at the police station by providing a detailed description of it.

3.  **More Fantastic Roles**

    This involves using role-play fantasy situations, for example, earth is about to have a major atomic war. The student, part of

an elite group, has an opportunity to escape to another planet. Which works of art will he/she take, and why?[32]

A recent example of the use of one such strategy is the case of a teacher using creative writing techniques to involve her students in art criticism. She describes how "Embarking on an adventure in poetry writing we looked at paintings and responded with a variety of poetic forms".[33] Two different poetic forms were used, Haiku: which is used to capture a moment or a view of nature in three lines;  and Diamonte, which involves writing different kinds of words in eight lines.  Below is an example of a student's poetic response to Matisse's *The Open Window*.

Open, Welcoming
Glistening boats on water
Shining through the room.[34]

In order for fantasy strategies to work, the pupil's art criticism "must follow standard practice and come straight from the art work".[35]  It has been suggested that any format for art criticism will work, "so long as the student is motivated enough to get beyond the surface".[36]

# FOOTNOTES

1     NCCA, <u>The Junior Certificate Art, Craft and Design Syllabus,</u> (Dublin : Department of Education 1989), p. 3.

2     George Szekely, <u>Encouraging Creativity in Art Lessons,</u> (New York, Teachers College Press, 1988), p. 140.

3     Gene A. Mittler, "Instructional strategies in art education;  a closer look. <u>School Arts,</u> Nov. 1993, p. 38.

4     Brian Allison, "Some aspects of assessment in art and design education" in <u>Assessment in Arts Education; A Necessary Discipline or a Loss of Happiness?</u> ed. Malcolm Ross. (Oxford : Pergammon Press), 1986, p. 115.

5     John A. Michael, <u>Art and Adolescence;  Teaching Art at the Secondary Level.</u> (New York : Teachers College Press, 1983), p. 34.

6     James T. Dillon, <u>Using Discussion in Classrooms.</u> (Buchingham : Open University Press), 1994, p. 7.

7     Ibid., p. 2.

8     Elliot Eisner, <u>Educating Artistic Vision,</u> (New York : Macmillan Company), 1972, p. 226.

9     Debra Cooper-Solomon, "The arts are essential", <u>School Arts,</u> (Feb. 1995), p. 30.

10    John A. Michael, <u>Art and Adolescence</u>, p. 34.

11    Elliot Eisner, <u>Educating Artistic Vision</u>, p. 233.

12    Richard Hickman, "A student centred approach for understanding art", <u>Art Education,</u> (Sept. 1994), p. 48.

13    Elliot Eisner, <u>Educating Artistic Vision</u>, p. 224.

14    Ibid., p. 225.

15    Ibid., pp. 226-227.

16    Richard Hickman, "A student centred approach for understanding art", p. 49.

17    Ibid.

18    Ibid.

19    Ibid., p. 50.

20    Ibid., p. 51.

21    Elliot Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 235.

22    Paul Cartwright, "Assessment and examination in arts education, teachers talking" in The Claims of Feeling : Readings in Aesthetic Education, ed. Malcolm Ross, (Sussex : The Falmer Press, 1989), p. 297.

23    Ibid.

24    Jean Ellen Jones, "Using Make-Believe to Motivate Student Art Talk", Art Education, (Sept. 1995), p. 12.

25    Gene A. Mittler, "Instructional strategies in art education", p. 39.

26    James T. Dillon, Using Discussion in Classrooms, p. 48.

27    Elliot Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 226.

28    Gene A. Mittler, "Instructional strategies in art education", p. 39.

29    Ibid.

30    George Szekely, Encouraging Creativity in Art Lessons, p. 145.

31    Malone and Lepper, quoted by Jean Ellen Jones in "Using make-believe to motivate student art talk", p. 14.

32    Jean Ellen Jones, "Using make-believe to motivate student art talk", p. 15.

33    Jane Page Ferriss, "Matisse through poetry", School Arts, (Oct. 1995), p. 22.

34    Ibid.

35    Jean Ellen Jones, "Using make-believe to motivate student art talk", p. 16.

36    Ibid.

# CHAPTER 2

# USING FANTASY STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE EVALUATIVE DISCUSSION IN THE CLASSROOM : THE RESEARCH PROJECT

## PART 1

## Introduction and Background to the Project

The literature on evaluative discussion in the classroom acknowledges that pupils often find it difficult to participate for a variety of reasons. If pupils are to feel free to take part in such discussions, they must be able to relax and lose their fear of being wrong, or of being laughed at. Fantasy strategies can promote a friendly atmosphere in which pupils can build up their vocabulary and likewise their confidence in their ability to make critical judgements about works of art.

It is my intention, by means of this research project, to find out if the use of fantasy and role-play strategies can promote pupil participation and quality of evaluative discussion.

For this purpose, I have designed a programme using fantasy and role-play strategies as a vehicle for discussion to undertake with a class of sixteen pupils with whom I am currently working.

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## Details of the Class Undertaking,
## The Project and Their School

This programme was designed for a group of first-year mixed-ability students from an all-girls' secondary school in north suburban Dublin. The group has had little experience of art craft and design, and generally find it quite difficult to discuss their work. The school has a very positive attitude to art as a subject and a well-equipped art department. There are 696 pupils in the school and of these, ninety-one are currently taking art for the Junior Certificate examination, while thirty-four are taking art for the Leaving Certificate examination. The high regard for art as a subject in the school is reflected in the choice of subjects offered at both junior and senior level. At Junior Certificate level, art is placed opposite music, science and home economics, while at the senior level, pupils choose from the entire range of subjects to make whatever combination they wish.

During my placement in the school I have found the pupils very positive in their attitude to art as a subject, and very willing and co-operative.

## Research Project : Stage 1

## Examining the Quality of Evaluative Discussions
## in my Class, Using the Traditional
## Approach

In order to establish the kind of changes I hoped to bring about in my evaluative discussions with first-year pupils, it was necessary to analyse the content of one of these discussions. I had the opportunity to do this

at the end of our first scheme of work, which was a large-scale painting project. We held an extended discussion about the finished displayed pieces, which lasted thirty minutes and was videotaped by a neutral visitor. I hoped that having someone the pupils' did not know present to operate the camera would provide as little distractions as possible, and that the pupils would relax and be their usual selves.

### The Scheme of Work Discussed
### by Pupils During the First
### Videotaped Education Session

The scheme discussed in the first taped evaluative session was the pupils' first second-level art craft and design experience, a large-scale group painting project, the details of which are summarised below:

**Duration of scheme** : Six weeks.

**Aim** : To develop awareness of line shape and colour.

**Objectives** : 1) To explore line and shape through drawing.

2) To explore colour mixing and to develop skill in the manipulation of paint, by experimenting with various mark-making media.

3) To use the elements of line, shape and colour to create large-scale group compositions using a jigsaw approach.

**Theme** : "The great outdoors."

**Media** : Pencil, poster paint, PVA, washing-up liquid, washing powder, various painting implements, for example large and small brushes, sponges, pipe cleaners, matchsticks, kitchen scrubs, etc.

**Sources** : Still lives of objects relating to the outdoor world, for example, gardening implements, sunhats, buckets and spades, fruit and vegetables.

Pupils worked in mixed ability groups of four for the painting part of the project and four finished pieces were produced (see Figures 1 to 4). Evaluation sessions of five to ten minutes duration were held during each class of the scheme, but at the end of the project, when we displayed the paintings, we held an extended discussion of thirty minutes duration as Part 1 of the research project. During the course of this discussion the finished works were examined on three levels:

1      **Formal Elements** : The art elements used in the finished pieces, namely shape, line colour, space, etc.
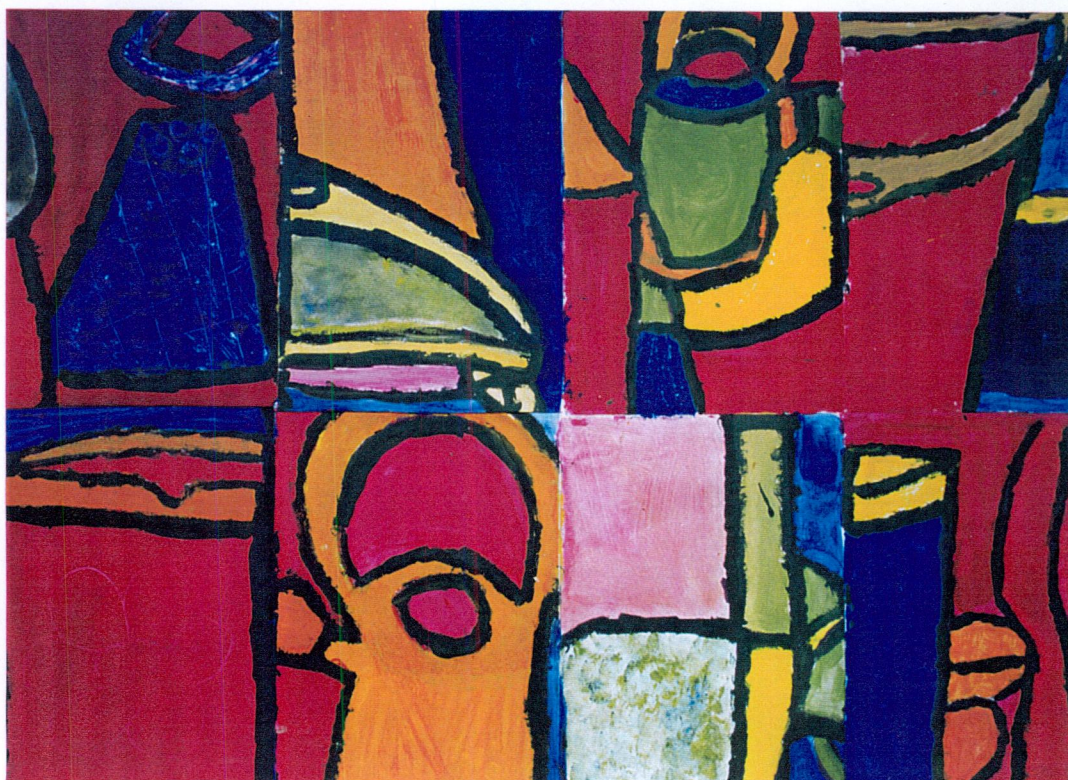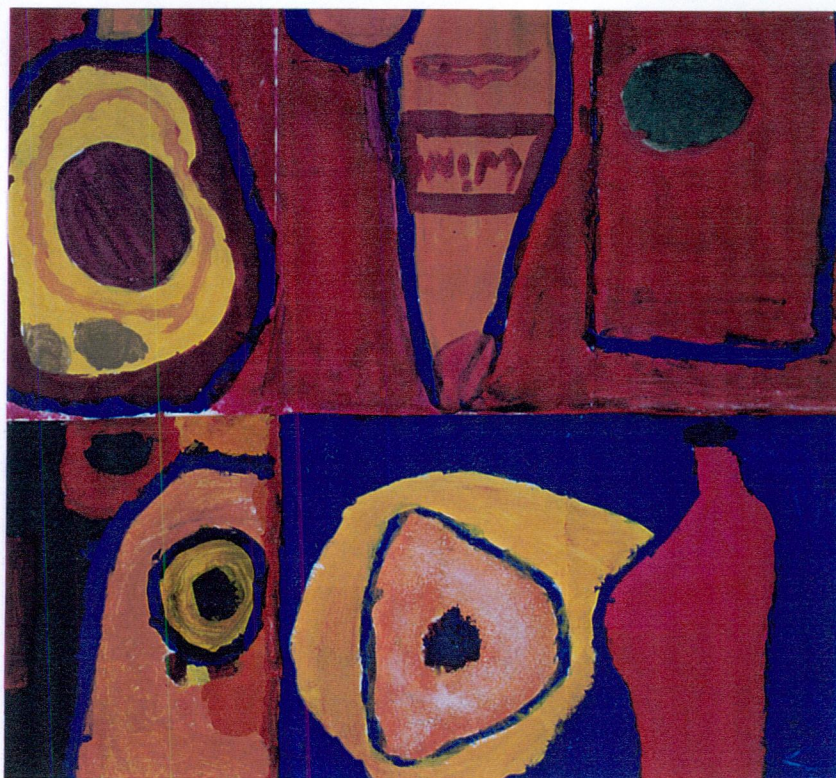
**FIGURES 1 and 2 :** "The Great Outdoors" : Pupils' finished paintings

**FIGURE 3 and 4:** Pupils' finished painting, and close-up detail

2    **Techniques** : The use of materials during the course of the painting project, namely painting media and implements.

3    **Personal Response** : The reaction of the individual to a piece of artwork - in this case pupils finished paintings - for personal reasons: intuitive, associative, etc.

## Analysis of Taped Evaluation Session 1 :
## Part A : Extracts from the Discussion

### Formal Elements in the Works

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *We begin this project by looking at and recording outdoor-related objects. Why did we use those objects?* |
| Pupil | *To paint.* |
| Trish | *What was it about the objects that we wanted to paint?* |
| Pupils | *Fill up the space.* |
| | *Get the shapes an all in.* |
| | *Use secondary colours.* |
| | *Use primary colours.* |
| Trish | *Why did we use colours in the painting? Would it have worked if we had just used black for instance?* |
| Pupils | *No, 'cos we wouldn't be able to see anything . . . it wouldn't be nice.* |
| Pupil | *See the way the yellow is used in that painting there . . . You've got to look, like, it catches my eye.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *So you weren't just putting colours down anywhere in the painting. How did you get your eye to follow the colours?* |
| Pupil | *You use the colour in different places in the picture.* |
| Trish | *So you used the colours to lead your eye around. How were you working?* |
| Pupils | *In groups.* |
| Trish | *What difference did that make?* |
| | No response |
| Trish | *Suppose you decide to paint a section of your piece and you're working with Edel, but you don't tell Edel what you're going to do. Would that have worked?* |
| Pupils | *No. You have to tell each other what you're doing an' all, and see if they agree. And if they don't . . . You have to do something else!* |
| Trish | What did you have to talk about? |
| Pupils | *Figure out what we were doing.* |
| | *The different colours an' all.* |
| Trish | *Supposing none of the colours were repeated, what would happen then?* |
| *Pupils* | *It wouldn't look as nice.* |
| | *All boring and dark!* |

## Techniques used in the paintings

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *What about the paint itself, what kind of things did we use with it?* |
| Pupils | *Glue and washing up liquid and washing powder.* |
| Trish | *Would we have been better off using straight paint?* |
| Pupils | *No, 'cos the glue makes it thicker.* |

*It makes it shine.*

*The washing powder makes it go all stoney, sort of.*

Trish    *What does the washing-up liquid do for the paint?*

Pupils    *It makes it bubbly.*

*Makes little holes an' all.*

*It's a picture, it's not holes!*

Trish    *Are they real holes?*

Pupils    *No.*

Trish    *So how have the bubbles affected the paint?*

Pupils    *It makes it . . . come up.*

Trish    *What happens when a bubble bursts any time?*

Pupils    *It splashes.*

Trish    *Okay, so the splash makes the paint hit the paper in different ways, which is what gives you that effect. How do you think these techniques work?*

Pupils    *Alright.*

Trish    *What do they bring to the picture?*

Pupils    *Colours.*

Trish    *But you had colours in the paint anyway.*

Pupils    *Designs.*

Trish    *What do you mean by designs?*

Pupils    *No, different textures.*

Trish    *What about the things you painted with?*

Pupils    *Brushes, sponges, cloths, matches.*

Trish    *Why didn't we just use the small brushes that came with your poster paints?*

Pupils    *You need fat ones for a bigger space.*

*You'd be there for ages with a small brush.*

*A small brush makes it all . . . small* (giggles)

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *What about the other things you used. What did they do?* |
| Pupils | *The matchsticks put shapes and squiggles on it.* |
| | *There, see, on my hat* (pointing), *I just scraped it across.* |
| Trish | *What sort of things did these implements change?* |
| Pupils | *Lines . . . it wasn't all the same . . . colour.* |
| Trish | *What is it about Edel's hat that she has shown with the matchstick?* |
| Pupils | *The weaving . . . the way it's made up . . . the shapes.* |

## Pupils' Personal Responses to the Paintings

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *Laura, is there a painting here that you'd like to take home with you?* |
| | No response. |
| Pupils | *My one!* (giggles). |
| | *I have a great one!* |
| | *So have I!* |
| Trish | *Okay, Laura's not so sure yet. Which one would anybody else take?* |
| Pupil | *I'd take the honey jar.* |
| Trish | *Hang on. I'm not talking about individual sections now, I mean one finished painting.* |
| Pupil | *No, I'd take the honey jar and the bananas* (roars of laughter). |
| Trish | *We're talking about four finished pieces here!* |
| Pupil | *Oh! Well, I'd take the one with the honey jar then.* |
| Trish | *What do you like about it?* |
| Pupil | *The colours.* |
| Trish | *What feeling do you get from it?* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Pupils | *Huh? Happy . . . sad . . . miserable . . . summery.* |
| Trish | *What does it remind you of?* |
| Pupils | *Doin' your garden* (laughter). |
| | *Spain, drinking wine.* |
| | *Is that a sombrero in it?* |
| | *Is that a guitar or something?* |
| Trish | *Annie, is there any painting you like there?* |
| | No response. |
| Edel | *No. She says no.* |
| Annie | *I don't know.* |
| Trish | *Something you might buy in a shop for your wall at home because it's nice?* |
| Annie | *The honey jar.* |
| Trish | *Why?* |
| Annie | *Because of the colours.* |
| Pupils | *It's really summery.* |
| | *It's like a commercial, you want to eat it.* |
| Trish | *Do you think that when people are painting a picture they think about how the audience will feel about it?* |
| Pupils | *Yes* (some). |
| | *No* (others). |
| Trish | *Did anyone think about that during painting?* |
| Pupils | *Yes* (some). |
| | *No* (others). |
| Trish | *How do people feel generally about the finished pieces?* |
| Pupils | *Turned out a bit messy.* |
| | *Colours are too dark.* |
| | *Don't like the lines on the bottle, it's too much!* |

(At this stage the group began to get restless, making faces into the camera and so on.)

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *What you say about the finished pieces overall; are you happy with them?* |
| Pupils | *They're alrigh'!* |

## Drawing Conclusions Based on
## Taped Evaluative Discussion No. 1

### Pupil Participation

Examination of the videotape showed that levels of participation in the discussion were quite uneven. Among the group of fourteen pupils, the results were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Participated freely in the discussion | 50 per cent |
| Participated when asked | 23 per cent |
| Participated in a very limited way when asked | 18 per cent |
| No participation at all | 9 per cent |

### Quality of Discussion

### Discussion of Formal Elements

Pupils showed a fair knowledge of the art elements in their work and were able to identify shape, space, line and primary and secondary colours. They did have difficulty in expressing how these elements function to create a composition and were lacking in the vocabulary to explain visual effects. For instance, Edel noted colour balance in her

group's work, but expressed it with some uncertainty. "You've got to look . . . like, it catches my eye". The questions best understood and best responded to by pupils were those which presented hypothetical but concrete situations, for example, "Supposing you decide to paint a section but you don't tell your partner what you're going to do?" Pupils found it easier to relate to this sort of questioning than to more abstract, open questions used later in the discussion, for example, "What feeling do you get from it?", to which the unanimous reply was "Huh?"

### Discussion of Techniques/Materials Used

This part of the discussion was the most successful both in terms of participation and in terms of the quality of what was said. Pupils showed a good understanding of both how and why various media and implements were used and of the effects achieved. The benefits of discussion as a method of learning and clarifying ideas is evident in this section; for instance "What do they (the materials) bring to the picture?" Pupils' answers progressed from colour to designs, and finally to texture, as the process of discussing this point made them consider their answers more carefully. The practical implications of choosing mark-making media were well understood, such as using bigger bushes or sponges for bigger areas, whilst pupils had to put more thought into the effects achieved in terms of texture, finish and variety.

### Discussion of Pupils' Personal Responses to the Paintings

Pupils found this part of the discussion most difficult to respond to. This was evident in the level of participation which was much more

limited, except when people were asked specific questions and even then most pupils found the ideas very abstract and difficult to relate to. They found the notion of getting a particular feeling or mood from a piece very confusing, as I have mentioned in the section dealing with discussion of elements. Relating the paintings to the familiar or to a particular memory was a more successful way of getting a response, and several ideas were generated with enthusiasm, for example "Spain, drinking wine", "Doin' your graden". In general, the pupils responded most to what they saw as useful or realistic in the paintings, with particular admiration reserved for edible parts of the composition, for example the much-sought-after honey jar.

## **What Am I Seeking to Improve Through**
## **The Use of Fantasy and Game Playing**
## **Strategies for Evaluative Discussion?**

The first video-taped evaluative discussion shows problems or weaknesses in two areas which I would seek to improve through the use of fantasy strategies. These are:

**1** **Pupil Participation** : I would like to see if the adoption of fantasy strategy for discussion will lessen pupils' inhibitions about joining in freely when they wish without having to be put on the spot by me.

**2** **Quality of Discussion** : If fantasy strategies can improve pupil participation and raise interest in the topic in hand it should follow that their vocabulary and general ability to express their ideas clearly should improve.

In order to put this theory to the test I have designed a programme to coincide with a six to eight week scheme of work which includes fantasy and game playing elements throughout, as a vehicle for evaluative discussion. At the end of the programme we will hold another thirty-minute evaluative discussion, this time with a fantasy element, which will be videotaped in order to draw comparisons between the effectiveness of this and the traditional method. I hope to be able to determine in this way whether or not fantasy strategies can be beneficial in improving both pupil participation and quality of discussion content.

# CHAPTER 3

## MAKING FANTASY A REALITY :
## RESEARCH PROJECT PART 2
## THE GAMES WE PLAYED

### The Scheme of Work Undertaken
### by Pupils in Conjunction with The Research Project

The research project was undertaken in conjunction with pupils' second art craft and design project. This was a graphic design project in which pupils designed callcards, the details of which are summarised below:

**Duration of scheme** :  Six to eight weeks.

**Aim** :  To develop awareness of tone, colour and shape.

**Objectives** : 1)  To explore tone in colour through drawing with chalk pastels.

2)  To explore tone colour and shape as compositional elements through designing callcards.

3)  To explore space and shape by incorporating block lettering into the designs.

4)  To explore tone in colour through painting the final callcard designs.

**Theme**:       "Special occasions" : pupils each worked on a design for a particular occasion.

1)       Halloween

2)       Christmas

3)       Valentine's Day.

**Media** : Pencil, marker, paint.

**Sources** :   Still-life drawings of objects relating to each occasion, for example for Valentine's day flowers, bears, etc.;  for Christmas, tree decorations and a large plastic deer;  for Halloween, masks, pumpkins, nuts and fruit.

Pupils worked individually on this project with five to six pupils taking each special occasion.  Fantasy strategies for analysing and discussing the work were used at key stages in the scheme, for example Stage One, when pupils completed their source drawings.  Stage Two, towards the end of the design process, and Stage Three, on completion of the finished callcard designs.  The research project was launched during the third week of the scheme, when pupils had just finished their chalk drawings (see Figures 5 and 6).

## Fantasy Strategies Used

**Aim** : To determine whether or not the use of fantasy strategies can improve pupil participation in, and quality of evaluative discussion in the classroom.

**FIGURES 5 and 6:** "Special Occasions" : Pupils chalk drawings, sources for callcard designs

The use of fantasy occurred in several different situations, outlined as follows:

**1      Pupils' Personal Notebooks**

**Objective**  :   To give pupils the opportunity to reflect on and write about their work on the three levels previously discussed, namely:  1) formal elements;  2) technique;  3) personal response.

Each pupil was issued with an A5 size plain-page notebook in which to record their thoughts and ideas during the course of the callcard project.   Notebooks were entitled "My experiences in art at Mercy College, Coolock" (see cover design, Figure 7).   Two short briefs were included in each notebook which employed a fantasy strategy to help pupils to understand the reason for keeping a notebook:  to immortalise their thoughts and ideas (see Figures 8 and 9).   Pupils were also given guidelines as to how to go about writing and what should be written. During the first part of this task which involved documenting chalk drawings, lettering and design, pupils were not presented with a fantasy situation in which to work, so they worked in a straightforward, realistic manner.   During the second half of the project a fantasy brief was introduced in order to compare pupils' written responses to each approach (see Figure 10).   This brief introduced three imaginary characters whom the pupils were to employ in the writing of their notebooks, one in charge of elements, one in charge of techniques, and one in charge of personal response.   Pupils were instructed to give at least one page of their notebooks to each character in the documenting of their finished callcard designs.   I hoped that by tuning in to the one-track mind of an imaginary character for each part, pupils would give a
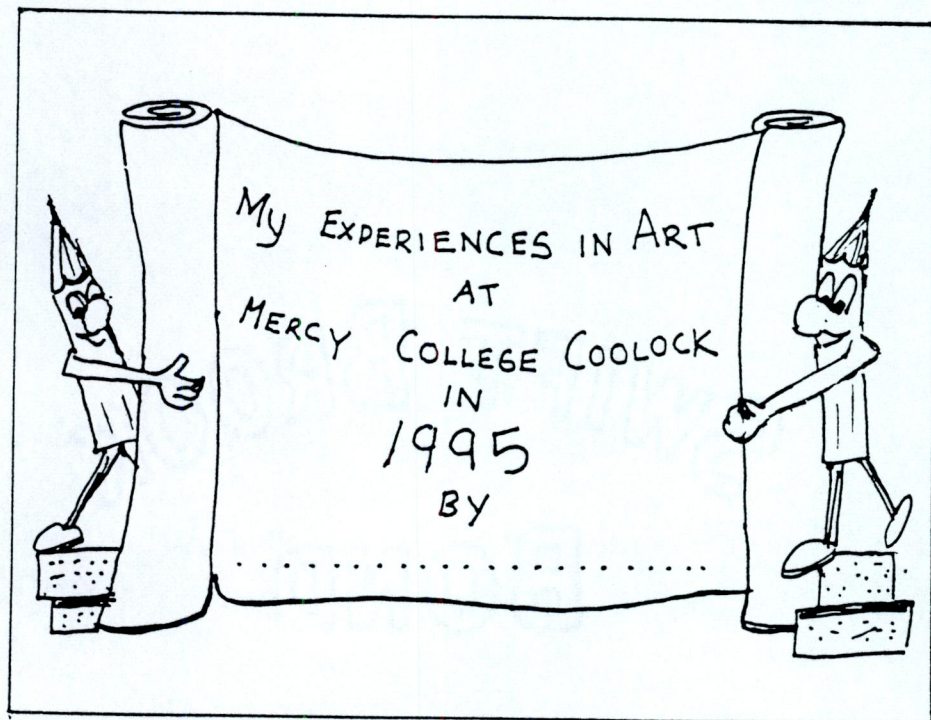
**FIGURE 7**: Pupils Personal Notebooks : Cover Design
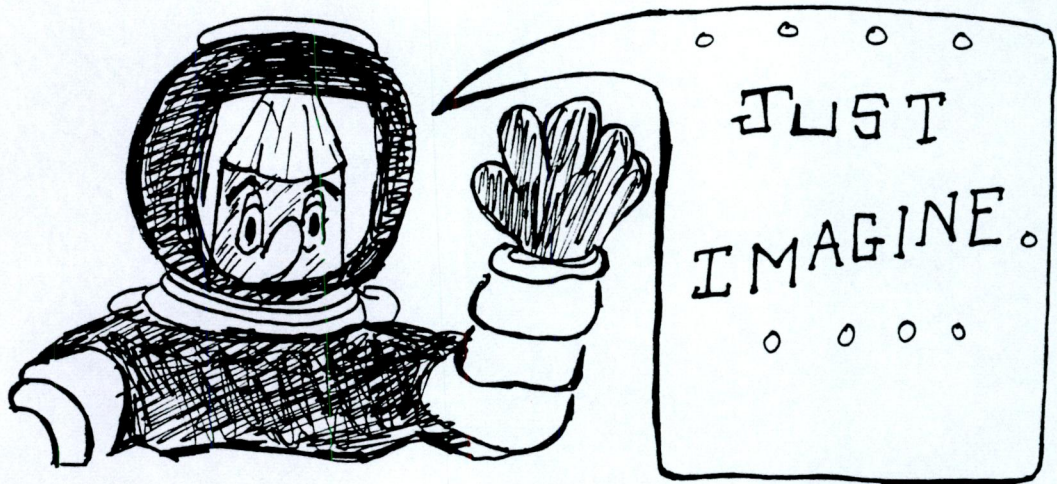
**FIGURE 8:** Notebook Brief 1
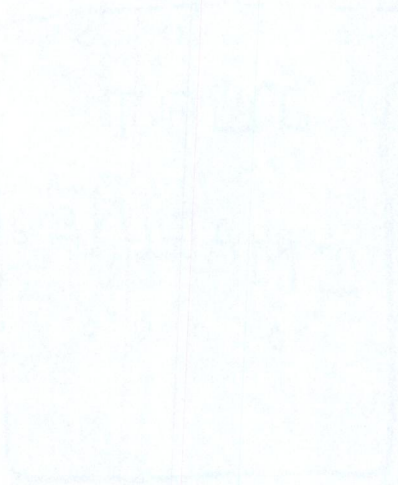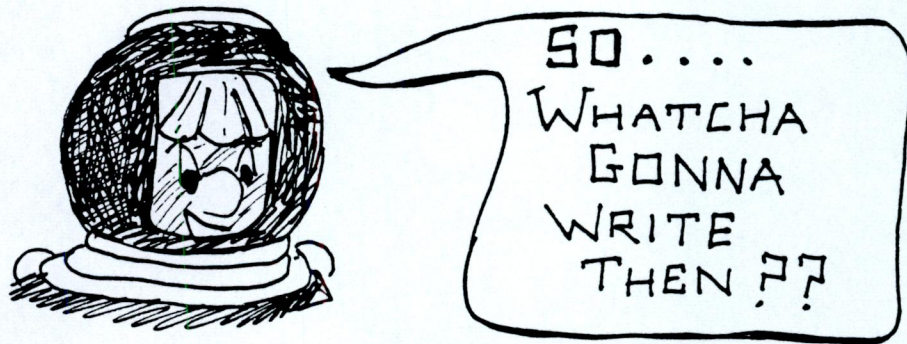
USE THIS NOTEBOOK TO RECORD YOUR EXPERIENCE IN EACH CLASS:

WHAT YOU DID?
HOW YOU DID IT?
WHY DID YOU DO IT?
YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE PIECE.

YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO WRITE, SKETCHES AND DIAGRAMS CAN ALSO BE USED TO MAKE YOUR POINT. IF YOU CAN FIND PICTURES BY OTHER ARTISTS WHO MAYBE USED THE SAME MATERIALS / OBJECTS / IDEAS IN THEIR WORK AS YOU. STICK THOSE IN TOO.

COMMENT ON ANY PROBLEMS YOU MAY HAVE HAD AND SAY WHAT YOU DO OR DON'T LIKE ABOUT A PROJECT.

THIS IS YOUR NOTEBOOK - DON'T BE AFRAID TO SAY WHAT YOU THINK!!

**FIGURE 9:** Notebook Brief 2

# INTRODUCING : YOUR NEW WORKMATES.

IN ORDER TO ASSIST YOU IN THE WRITING OF YOUR 'ART EXPERIENCES' NOTEBOOK THESE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RECRUITED:

HI THERE! SEEN THIS SEASONS COLOURS YET ?

COLOUR AND SHAPE    LINE SPACE TEXTURE

Miss Elle.

THIS IS MISS ELLE. WHEN SHE ISN'T SHOPPING SHE LOVES TO SPOT ELEMENTS IN WORKS OF ART. SHE'LL BE DEALING WITH THIS SECTION OF YOUR NOTEBOOK. A WORD OF WARNING — SHE HATES TO BE LEFT OUT !!

MR. TEX IS A HANDYMAN IN MANY RESPECTS — BUT MOST OF ALL HE SORTS OUT HOW WELL OR BADLY MATERIALS /TECHNIQUES HAVE WORKED IN ARTWORKS. HE'LL DEAL WITH THIS PART OF YOUR NOTEBOOK — NO PROBLEM !

HOWS THINGS! NICE PIECE OF CHARCOAL GETS IT SORTED IN NO TIME AT ALL !

CHALK MIXING PAINT BLENDING CHARCOAL RUBBING

Mr. Tex.

HOW PERFECTLY LOVELY TO MEET YOU!

WARM COLD EXCITING INVITING

Mr P.R.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST MR P.R. WHO LOVES TO EXPRESS HIS PERSONAL OPINION — OF LOTS OF THINGS, BUT ESPECIALLY YOUR ARTWORK. GET HIM TO DO THE TALKING IN THE PERSONAL RESPONSE PART OF YOUR NOTEBOOK — BUT DONT FORGET TO TELL HIM WHAT TO SAY !

**FIGURE 10:** Notebook Brief 3

comprehensive account of their work. An examination of the results of this notebook experiment will be given in Chapter 4, together with the results of the comparison between videotaped evaluations 1 and 2.

## 2  Fantasy Strategies Used in Class
## During the Course of the Callcard Project

### 1      Pupils Become Reporters

**Objective :** To introduce pupils to the three levels at which their work was to be documented in the notebooks, through analysis of videotaped evaluation 1.

This exercise began with presenting pupils with their personal notebooks. They were then informed that for the next half-an-hour, they were reporters working on an article entitled "Talking about art". They now had an opportunity to watch a group of artists, namely themselves, on video, discussing their work; their task was to analyse and note the content of what was being said. The video was paused at key points during which we held short group discussions on what was being said, and the conclusions drawn were noted by pupils. These points would provide a reference for pupils to remember what aspects of their work were to be discussed in their notebooks. Here is an extract from one pupil's notebook showing what she learned:

### 1      Art elements
Colour, shape, line, tone, texture, form.

A composition is made up of these elements.

**2**    <u>Techniques</u>

Ways of using materials.

Pencils, sponges, chalks.

Pipe cleaners, paint, glue, etc.

**3**    <u>Personal response</u>

How someone feels about a piece, and why.

<u>Response</u>

The reporter role-play situation proved very successful in promoting pupils' interest and concentration. Just how fully they entered into the fantasy is attested to by the fact that they objected when I suggested that they were working for the *Irish Independent* and asked, "Can I not write mine for the *Herald,* the *Times,* the *Sun,*" etc. Since they were acting as reporters, the class paid attention to the content of the discussion and not just to their TV debut, although this was obviously a big attraction. The task was successful in giving pupils the basic vocabulary and guidelines they will need for documenting their work in notebook form, how successfully this aids their writing remains to be seen when the notebooks are finished.

**2**    **<u>Pupils Become Builders : Fantasy Situation 2</u>**

**Objective :** To give pupils an experience in choosing words from an appropriate working vocabulary in order to describe their chalk drawings.

This was a game-playing strategy in which pupils were asked to build a wall using coloured card bricks (see Figure 11). Each brick had a

descriptive term written on it and bricks were colour-coded to distinguish the categories of terms used, as follows:

a)    **Orange bricks  :**  Referred to art elements.


Descriptive terms available to pupils in this category were:


| | |
|---|---|
| Secondary colours | Heavy lines |
| Primary colours | Thin lines |
| Various tones | Colour balance |
| Curved lines | |


b    **Red bricks  :**  Referred to techniques used in the chalk drawings. Descriptive terms in this category were:


| | |
|---|---|
| Powdery surface | Too little chalk |
| Chalk used effectively | Smooth surface |
| Smudged | Blended chalk |
| Too much chalk | |

c    **Blue bricks  :**  Referred to personal response.  Descriptive terms in this category were:


| | |
|---|---|
| Scary | Welcoming |
| Familiar | Peaceful |
| Happy | Dramatic |
| Exciting | |


There was a complete set of descriptive terms available to every pupil though they worked in tables of four.  The object of the game was to build the highest wall possible (maximum width three bricks) on a sheet
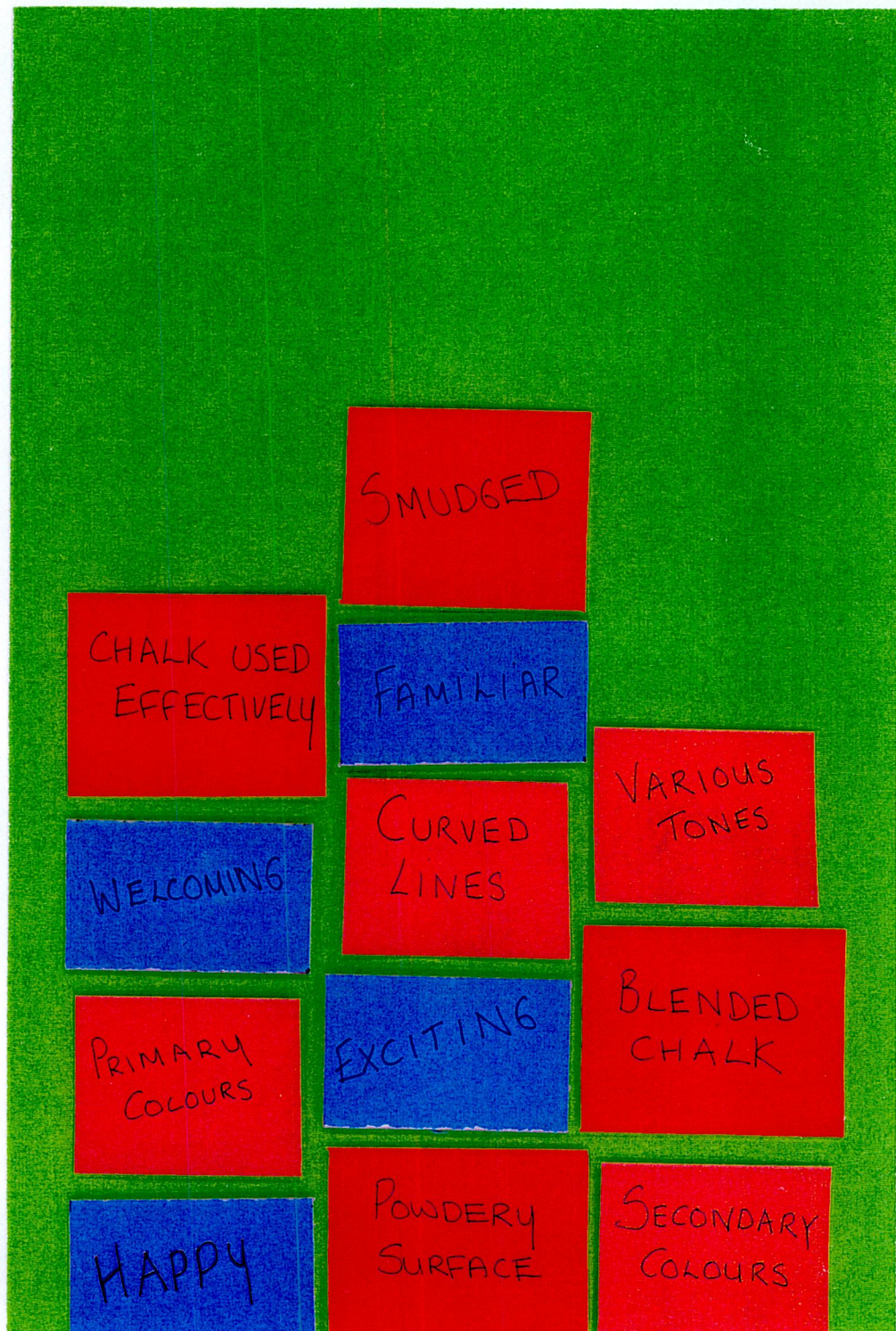
**FIGURE 11:** Wall building word game used by pupils to describe their chalk drawings

of A4 card, using only descriptive terms related to one's own chalk drawing. A group discussion was held at the end during which both drawings and walls were examined to determine whether or not everybody had used strictly relevant terms. Any irrelevant bricks included had to be taken out at this stage.

**Response**

This game proved highly successful in promoting both participation and quality of discussion. Pupils had no inhibitions about participating, as a competitive spirit took over. Since winning the game meant having to use only the most appropriate terms, pupils were forced to really consider the words they were choosing, and most did put a lot of thought into their choices. Since they had to choose bricks from each of the three categories, orange, red and blue, pupils were also made aware of the three key areas to be dealt with in their consideration of their work once again. See Figure 11, an example of a pupil's finished wall.

**3      Pupils Become Researchers : Fantasy Situation 3**

**Objective** : To give pupils the opportunity to discuss their work and ideas with people outside the group in order to obtain reactions which will help them to finalise their design decisions.

This fantasy situation involved pupils playing a role of market researchers trying to discover what it is that the public would find appealing in a special occasion callcard (see pupils' brief, Figure 12). The task was to take their three initial designs out at lunchtime and

**FIGURE 12:** Market Research Brief

discuss them with at least three different people who had never seen them. They were to find out which design was most popular and why, in terms of image, technique and choice of colour. After lunch we had a class discussion on the results of this market research.

## Response

There was a very mixed response to this task. Some pupils did not participate at all and seemed to find the idea of showing their work to outsiders too intimidating. Others had shown their designs to people but seemed no wiser about which was most popular and why. They found it difficult to ask the right questions and to remember the answers. About 20 per cent of the class did set about the task effectively and got some useful feedback which helped them to make a decision about their final choice of design.

In hindsight, I think that the brief for this task was not specific enough for pupils to relate to and they would probably have worked more successfully had we worked out a standard questionnaire or at least used the notebooks to record the answers.

## Drawing Conclusions Regarding
## Part 2 of the Research Project

The introduction of fantasy strategies as a means of discussing pupils' work throughout the callcard project was aimed at gauging pupils' initial response to this way of working. I also wanted to find out how best such strategies can be used in Part 3 of the research project, when pupils will be videotaped again, this time having a fantasy-based

evaluative discussion about their callcards. Based on the response to the strategies documented in this chapter, I have drawn the following conclusions:

1) Pupils need to have their vocabulary for discussing artworks stimulated and broadened through reinforcement and repetition.

2) Role-play situations have proved successful in stimulating greater group participation and removing inhibitions.

3) Competitive situations have been successful both in promoting participation and in making pupils aware of the quality of their discussion.

4) Discussion tasks which have proved most successful are those which involve very specific instructions and guidelines to which the pupils can relate.

I will draw conclusions about the two approaches to notebook-keeping in Chapter 4, when I will also be examining the success of the traditional and the fantasy approach to group evaluative discussion during a thirty-minute taped session.

# CHAPTER 4

## DOES FANTASY HAVE ANY VALUE IN THE CLASSROOM?

## RESEARCH PROJECT PART 3 : EVALUATING THE RESULTS

### Introduction to Taped Evaluation Session 2

This chapter examines the value of fantasy strategies in the classroom through analysis of evaluative discussion with a fantasy element and through analysis of pupils' written responses, with and without fantasy briefs.

In Chapter 2 I examined the quality of a traditional evaluative discussion in the classroom. Through the fantasy research project I hoped to improve both pupil participation and quality of content. The opportunity to compare traditional and fantasy approaches came at the end of the callcard design project when we held a second thirty-minute taped evaluation. This time a role-play fantasy was used.

Pupils played the role of professional designers discussing their work with a Telecom Eireann representative (me!) over the phone. Each pupil was given a card with a number on it which represented her line on the switchboard. I was equipped with a telephone and seated with my back to the pupil's work (see Figures 13-16 : pupils callcard designs). The pupil's task was to describe their work to me, bearing in mind that I was in an office and unable to see it, and to persuade me
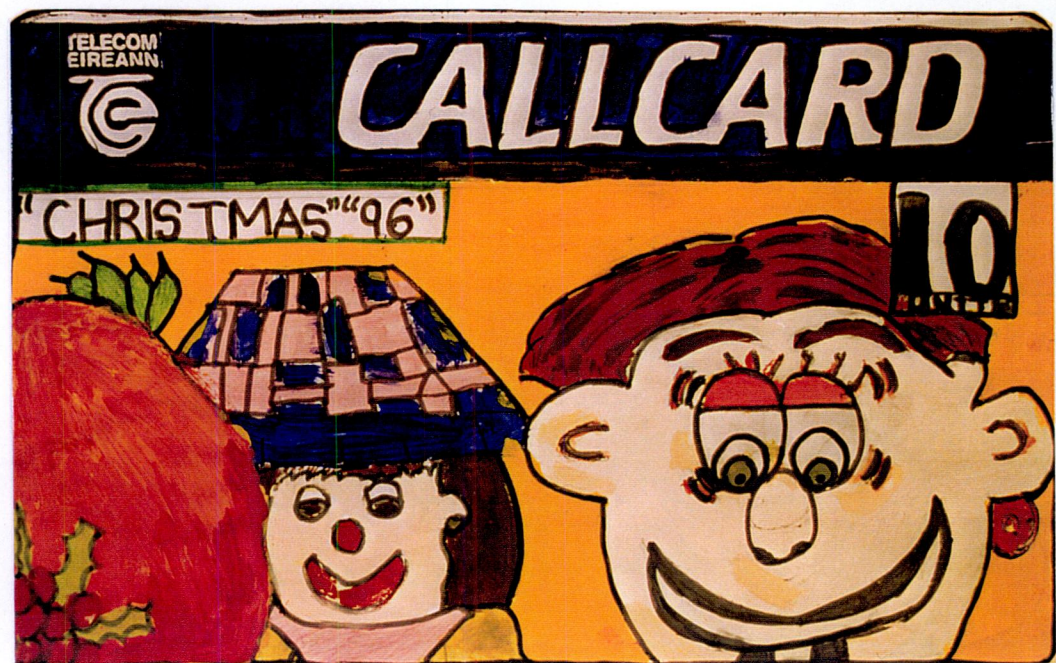
**FIGURES 13 and 14:** Pupils Callcard designs

**FIGURES 15 and 16:** Pupils Callcard designs

that Telecom Eireann should purchase these callcards. The conversation again revolved around three main aspects of the work:

1)    Formal elements

2)    Techniques

3)    Personal response.

## Analysis of Taped Evaluation Session 2
## Extracts from the Discussion

### Formal Elements in the Works

Trish          *Good morning everyone. I'm calling you from the offices of Telecom Eireann. I would like to discuss your range of callcard designs for Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day, which we may be interested in purchasing. Can you first tell me what sort of objects are features in your callcards for each occasion?*

Pupils         *Pumpkins, masks, fruit.*

               *Toys, trees, decorations.*

               *Hearts, bears, flowers.*

Trish          *So you chose appropriate objects for each occasion. What art elements have you used to portray them?*

Pupil          *Tones.*

Trish          *What kind of tones?*

Pupil          *Shades of dark and light.*

Trish          *What other elements?*

Pupil          *Colours.*

Trish          *What sort of colours did you choose?*

| | |
|---|---|
| Pupil | *Primary colours mostly, so it would be bright and cheerful.* |
| Trish | *Are there different sorts of shapes in your designs?* |
| Pupil | *Yes, round, straight, curvy.* |
| Trish | *What were you trying to do with those shapes?* |
| Pupil | *Make the shape of the objects.* |
| | *Use up space.* |
| Trish | *How did you decide where to place all these elements in your designs?* |
| Pupil | *W made rough sketches first.  To fix all the mistakes and all.* |
| Trish | *What sort of changes did you make from first to last sketch?* |
| Pupils | *Used up the space.* |
| | *Changed the colours.* |
| Trish | *What changes did you make to colours?* |
| Pupils | *Picked out the best colours for the card and then tried to mix the light and dark shades an' all.* |
| Trish | *What made you choose particular colours for a particular callcard?* |
| Pupil | *The colours of the things we were sketching, but they had to look bright and cheerful too.* |
| Trish | *What kind of lettering did you use on the cards?* |
| Pupils | *Block lettering.* |
| Trish | *What's that?* |
| Pupil | *Big, bold, capital letters.* |
| Trish | *How did you place it on the card?* |
| Pupil | *With tram lines.* |
| Trish | *What are tram lines?* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Pupil | *Two lines run parallel to each other and you put your lettering between them so it stays the same height.* |
| Trish | *What else did you have to watch out for with lettering?* |
| Pupil | *The space between the letters had to stay the same.* |
| Trish | *Why did you use lettering on the callcards?* |
| Pupil | *To show what the picture is about.* |
| Trish | *What do you think is important about lettering on a callcard?* |
| Pupil | *You have to use lettering that suits the picture, whether it's Valentine's Day or Christmas, or whatever.*<br><br>*It has to be clear so people can read it.* |

## Techniques Used in the Design Process

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *What materials did you use in this project?* |
| Pupil | *Chalk for the drawings.* |
| Trish | *Did you use chalk in the finished callcards?* |
| Pupil | *No, because it wouldn't stay permanent.* |
| Trish | *Why does a callcard design need to be permanent?* |
| Pupil | *So it can be printed.* |
| Trish | *So what other materials did you use?* |
| Pupil | *Paint, but it was harder. You'd have more control with a pen.* |
| Trish | *Can you think of any other materials you could have used for the project?* |
| Pupils | *Sand, to change the effect of the paint.*<br><br>*Glitter would have been nice.*<br><br>*We could have used crayons instead of paint.*<br><br>*We used markers for words and outlines.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *Why was a marker used for that instead of a paintbrush?* |
| Pupil | It would be too big. |
| Trish | *Is there a card in the selection in which materials have been used particularly well?* |
| Pupils | *Yes. It's a Christmas picture with faces on it and it's very neat.* |
| | *She has all different paints on it, but they didn't run into each other, or anything.* |
| | *There's a Valentine's one with a bottle and a teddy that's very neat too.* |
| | *You can see the different tones clearly on it.* |
| Trish | *Sounds good to me.* |

## Personal Responses to the Callcards

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *As designers, did you think about how people might respond to your callcards?* |
| Pupil | *I'd say they'd like them because they're different to the real ones.* |
| Trish | *Yes, but when you were designing them what did you hope people would think of the finished pieces?* |
| Pupils | *To know that they were for Christmas and Valentine's Day and that.* |
| | *To buy it because of the colours.* |
| Trish | *What other things might appeal to me if I could see your callcards?* |
| Pupils | *The way the objects are placed.* |
| | *The message on it.* |
| | *The drawing.* |

*The number of units . . . whether you wanted a ten or a twenty* (laughter).

| | |
|---|---|
| Trish | *Well, that's true as well I suppose!  Did anybody ask people what they thought of the designs in progress?* |
| Pupil | *I showed a few people my sketches and they picked one I'd chosen already.* |
| Trish | *Why that one, do you think?* |
| Pupil | *They liked the way it was drawn.* |
| Trish | *Is there a card in the selection that somebody who collected callcards might be interested in?  Why?* |
| Pupil | *The first one because it has a real Christmassy feeling, the way it's done.* |
| Trish | *What makes it Christmassy?* |
| Pupil | *The way the colours are arranged an all.  Reds and greens are Christmassy.* |
| Trish | *If you were to do this project again, would you make any changes to your finished cards?* |
| Pupil | *I'd put more colours in mine.* |
| Trish | *So you think it's too dark?* |
| Pupil | *It's not dark, just needs more different colours.* |
| Pupil | *I'd change my whole picture because you wouldn't really know what the things are.* |
| Trish | *So you'd make it more realistic.  Anybody else?* |
| Pupil | *I'd make the flower in mine smaller;  it takes up too much space.* |
| Trish | *How do you feel about yours line 10?* |
| Pupil | *I like it the way it is because things aren't too big or too small, it's just right.* |
| Trish | *Why do you think I should buy your callcards?* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Pupil | *Because they're different.* |
| | *They're nicer than ordinary ones.* |
| | *They look exciting.* |
| | *They look really colourful and interesting.* |
| Trish | *Okay.  We at Telecom will certainly consider your proposal.  Thank you very much!* |

## Drawing Conclusions Based on
## Taped Evaluative Discussion 2

### Pupil Participation

Examination of the tape showed that this time levels of participation were much improved.  This may have been due to the fact that pupils were using a telephone line system to participate so they were less inclined to shout each other down, knowing that I could only listen to one at a time.  They also seemed more relaxed about participating in this context and were much less inhibited than the last time.  This time there were sixteen pupils and rates of participation were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Participated freely in the discussion | 80 per cent |
| Participated when asked | 20 per cent |
| No participation at all | 6 per cent. |

This shows a 30 per cent increase in free participation when compared with taped evaluation 1.

## Quality of Discussion

### Discussion of Formal Elements

Pupils were more comfortable about discussing the art elements in their work, although this section of the conversation still presented the most difficulty. There was a significant improvement in their ability to discuss how these elements function in their work and to explain how they used them, for example when asked about choosing colour one pupil was able to tell me that she deliberately used "primary colours mostly, so it would be bright and cheerful". The group showed a greater awareness of the art elements as tools to be used by them, and seemed to have improved in their ability to explain their use of them.

### Discussion of Techniques and Materials Used

This section of the first taped evaluation session was the most successful, and in this session it was also of quite a high standard. This time pupils seemed more aware of materials as something to be controlled by them and the ability to exercise control over materials was held in high regard: "She has all different paints on it, but they didn't run into each other, or anything". They also showed a good awareness of how different materials can be used to achieve visual effects, suggesting uses for sand, glitter and crayon in the callcards. This sort of exchange of ideas within the group can be seen to be relatively new if compared with taped evaluation one.

**Discussion of Personal Response to Callcards**

There was a definite improvement in pupils' participation in this section of the conversation, but I believe this was partly due to the subject matter of the callcards. There are particular feelings associated with occasions such as Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day and pupils were able to relate to this quite well. One pupil was able to associate colour with feeling in this context, remarking that "reds and greens are Christmassy".

Development of pupils confidence in their ability to criticise their own work was also in evidence when I put it to a pupil that she found her callcard in need of more colours because it was too dark, to which she replied: "It's not dark, just needs more different colours". They also showed a greater ability to identify what didn't appeal to them in their work, expressing their opinion of technical qualities such as style and composition quite clearly, for example: "I'd make that flower smaller, it takes up too much space".

## ANALYSING TRADITIONAL AND FANTASY
## APPROACHES TO KEEPING A PERSONAL NOTEBOOK

In Chapter 3 I described how pupils were given personal notebooks in which to record their experiences in art class each week. Two approaches were used in instructing pupils on the keeping of notebooks:

1   Guidelines on keeping a notebook were dictated from the blackboard while the class viewed taped evaluation session 1.

They were instructed to write up their experiences under the headings of:

a)    Art elements

b)    Techniques

c)    Personal response.

2    Pupils were given a fantasy brief, in which they were required to slip into the roles of three different people in order to write their notebooks.  These characters were:

a)    "Miss Elle" : Dealing with elements.

b)    "Mr. Tex" :   Dealing with techniques

c)    "Mr. P.R." :  Dealing with personal response.

Pupils completed notebooks showed a very varied response to the task. I have chosen to examine three pupils' notebooks as a representative sample of the different responses given.

## Pupil A

This pupil's notebook showed a dramatic improvement in both quality and quantity of written response when using a fantasy brief.

## Brief B

Pupil B showed some improvement in the quality of written response when using a fantasy brief.

## Pupil C

Pupil C responded much more positively to the traditional brief than to the fantasy one which appears to have caused her confusion.  There is a

marked deterioration in the quality of her writing following the introduction of the fantasy brief.

## Extracts from Pupils Notebooks

### Pupil A

Pupil A has natural ability in the art class but found expressing her thoughts on her work quite difficult initially. Her ability to discuss art work in class improved significantly during the course of the project with a marked improvement in her participation in discussion evident if taped evaluative sessions 1 and 2 are compared. The following extract from her notebook shows how well she responded to the fantasy brief.

### Extract 1 : Pupil A's response to a traditional brief

"We got a big sheet and drew our design on it. We took out the space and coloured the background. We learned about block letters."

### Extract 2 : Pupil A's response to the fantasy brief

Miss Elle : Elements

"The shades and colours of my picture are dealing with the event Valentine's Day. The colours are pink and purple and red for the flowers and the background. For the teddy bear I used light brown so it would look furry."

Mr. Tex : Techniques

"I think I should have been much more careful about the paint I used. The paint was too thick and went all bubbly. The paint was so dark and thick the lettering was covered."

Mr. P. R. : Personal Response

"My painting was too runny and too thick. The paint came over the lines and mixed with other paint. If I had to do it again I would use some different paints and textures."

## Pupil B

Pupil B has good artistic ability but is quite easily distracted and finds it difficult to apply herself fully to practical work. She has a great ability to express herself verbally and participated very well in both taped evaluation sessions. She has shown an improvement in vocabulary in her notebook and in taped evaluation session 2. Her written responses did improve using the fantasy brief though not so dramatically as did Pupil A.

### Extract 1 : Pupil B's response to a traditional brief

"We are doing callcards. We're putting our chalk picture onto callcards. I drew an M & M man and a deer. Some of the colours were dark and light."

### Extract 2 : Pupil B's response to the fantasy brief

Miss Elle : Elements

"The elements I was using were a puppet, a reindeer and a piece of a Christmas tree. I used up all the space and in the space that was left over I painted a different colour. The colours I used were very effective in my picture."

<u>Mr. Tex : Techniques</u>

"I used paint to paint my picture. I mixed brown and red to make wine. It had a good effect. It was thick paint I used. I used many different colours to paint my picture."

<u>Mr. P.R. : Personal response</u>

"I think it turned out OK. I think I made the paint a little bit too thick. My reindeer was bit out of shape but my puppet turned out. I enjoyed making the picture."

## Pupil C

Pupil C finds practical work quite a challenge but is a hard worker and very open to learning. Her participation in class discussion was more frequent during taped evaluation 1 than taped evaluation 2. Likewise, her written responses deteriorated when the fantasy brief for notebooks was introduced.

### Extract 1 : Pupil C's response to a traditional brief

"My art. I drew a happy picture of a doll, a bear, a butterfly and roses. I coloured it dark, medium, bright. I used chalk. I used tone and I used up space. I did the roses different shapes and I did it in lines. I used a viewfinder. So I made a picture with the roses."

**Extract 2 : Pupil C's response to a fantasy brief**

Miss Elle : Elements

"I coloured a callcard and I used paints. The lines were all different shapes and colours."

## Drawing Conclusions Based
## on Pupils' Personal Notebooks

Examination of the personal notebooks of Pupils A, B and C shows that response to fantasy briefing depends very much on the individual. Pupil A benefited in a very positive way to the fantasy brief in terms of both quantity and quality of her writing, so clearly it suited her as a vehicle for learning.

Pupil B responded more fully to the fantasy brief in terms of quality and it helped her to structure her thoughts.

Pupil C, however, who showed a natural ability to write about her work when instructed to do so in a straightforward way, was totally discouraged by the fantasy brief. This leads me to conclude that, where fantasy briefs are being used to generate a practical or written response. greater discussion will be necessary in order to ensure that pupils understand what they are to do. Perhaps in this case, Pupil C would have benefited from having the brief brought back to reality by discussing what it is that Miss Elle, Mr. Tex and Mr. P.R. stand for.

I do think that the keeping of personal notebooks contributed in a positive way to group evaluative discussion by giving pupils the

opportunity to reflect on and form verbal responses to their work without the pressure of having to share them with the group. Pupils' confidence and vocabulary improved as a result and this had a positive influence on discussion in class.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research project undertaken in the course of this work leads me to conclude that fantasy and role-playing strategies can have a very positive effect on evaluative discussion. They are undoubtedly effective in diminishing inhibitions within a group and thus promote greater pupil participation. Fantasy situations also promote an atmosphere of fun, in which analysing art works becomes less of a chore and more of an adventure. In this context learning becomes more enjoyable for both pupils and teacher.

Fantasy strategies must be adaptable in order to benefit the wide range of interests and abilities with which a teacher is faced in the classroom. When employed thoughtfully and purposefully, fantasy becomes a touch of magic which can transform group discussion into group inspiration, a crucial element in any artistic endeavour.

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