



*Rewarding Learning*

GCSE

# Contemporary Crafts

Starting Points for  
Project Briefs



## Contemporary Crafts: Starting Points for Project Briefs – Suggestions

1. A Victorian house is being restored and the owners are commissioning craftspersons and makers to create the following items, giving them a contemporary twist that reflects modern thinking while at the same time echoing the style and motifs of the past:

Choose one item from the following list:

**Either:** Fireplace and hearth accessories and equipment; fireguard, poker set, coal or log basket or bucket, shovel and brush, fire-dogs.

**Or:** Rugs and mats, cushions, bedspread/quilt, curtain material, fabric screen, tablecloth and napkin set.

**Or:** Newel posts and spindles for a staircase, blanket box, small items of furniture, a child's first chair, framed mirror, wooden candlesticks, partitioned case for the display of collected natural items, wooden kitchen utensils.

**Or:** Plant pot or vase, fruit bowl, garden fountain, tiles for a kitchen, hearth or porch, glazed panel over a door, cast ceiling roses and coving, table-ware, enamelled or ceramic-backed hairbrush set, shaving brush and bowl set, enamelled trinket box.

2. Props for a film or theatre production: the art directors of a new production are commissioning craftspersons and makers to produce props for a production of a film or play. The task is to research the style and background of the selected film or play, get the era and period right, and then present ideas, maquettes, models and mock-ups of their proposed outcomes. When approved, students progress to making the final artefacts. Teachers could suggest the film or play titles.

Possible areas of activity include accessories such as jewellery, adornment, items to be worn, weapons and armour, furniture details, door handles, castle doorways and windows, lighting fixtures, furniture, textile/fabric/printed and woven materials for clothing, upholstery and floors, props of all sorts for a given era.

3. Gothic Revival: Using the motifs and icons of Gothic Revival style, design and make one of the following: balcony/balustrade, gate, door furniture, garden arch, light fittings or sconces, set of railings, sundial, large-scale mirror, weather vane, finial, chair. Show how your original research has been used to help influence your chosen design and final work.

4. Under the microscope: A craft shop has commissioned makers to create work using images and research based on microscope views of plant and human cells. Develop design ideas towards the making of craft items in one of the following areas: jewellery design, fabric prints, silk painting, decorative metal pieces, marquetry, ceramics, glass work.

5. Although plastic and metal pipes are usually used to carry rainwater off roofs and gutters, older buildings often have stone gargoyles as a decorative and functional feature to spout the water from their mouths. Most gargoyles appear on churches and historic buildings built from stone. Design and make a new gargoyle for a building of your own choosing that matches the style and age of the property.

- 6.** A local council is developing a new Business Park or Technology Park. They are commissioning you to design and propose ideas for a large-scale stone carved or cast bas-relief panel at the entrance of the Park. In real life this is likely to be several metres wide, so you are being asked to make a model, maquette or mock-up in order to explain your ideas and to show your proposal in context to the council.
- 7.** Develop ideas for a range of garden ornaments made of stone, reconstituted stone products, cement or concrete based on the theme Mythology. Produce samples and models to show how your ideas would be produced and how they would appear in use.
- 8.** Toys: Vintage children's wooden toys are now highly prized for their craftsmanship and nostalgic values. Create a contemporary range of children's wooden toys to be sold in a museum gift shop. The type of museum will obviously influence your theme and design.
- 9.** Cufflinks for a character: Design a set of cufflinks for a famous personality. Use any relevant techniques you have learned, and show how your final ideas would appear in use.
- 10.** Arts and Crafts revisited: Using the icons, motifs and style of the Arts and Crafts Movement, produce items of jewellery that reflect these influences and philosophies while at the same time showing a contemporary twist.
- 11.** Contemporary Celtic: Interpret this title through pieces of original jewellery
- 12.** A 1930s aerodrome has been brought back to life by local flying enthusiasts and business entrepreneurs. At first the place was mainly used for their flying pleasure. So many visitors came to watch that they now plan to open a cafe, viewing area, museum, gift shop, restaurant, outdoor seating area, children's play area and facilities for the repair and storage of modern and vintage aircraft. Taking this theme, develop ideas for craft work for any of those contexts, or others if you think of them. This might mean tableware, furniture, mirrors, door handles, sculptural pieces, printed fabrics or tile work.
- 13.** Inspired by the sea: You might be inspired by the shapes, textures and colours of shells, fish, crustacea, water and waves, sand, driftwood, sea creatures or coastline architecture. Develop design ideas based on the theme of the sea and produce craft items, for example bowls, vessels, enamelled items or tiles.