

## Curiosity Boxes



A project to get children exploring and talking about what sparks their curiosity.

*This is an activity that Rick Hall developed as part of his writing residency in the village of Koli in Finland in October 2019 (with thanks to the Koli Cultural Committee).*

We want children to be curious, to be capable of being fascinated and struck by wonder and amazement. And we want this for our children regardless of the times we live in.

For the writer of the Moomin books, Tove Jansson it is a matter of life or death: *Do not tire, never lose interest, never grow indifferent—lose your invaluable curiosity and you let yourself die. It's as simple as that.*

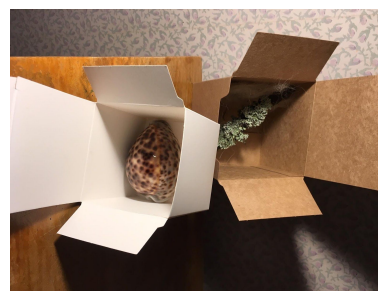
Can curiosity be taught? Possibly, but certainly it can be encouraged as a habit of mind that children regularly or even automatically adopt in their learning journeys.

## Curiosity Boxes

Learning objectives: to encourage children to be inquisitive, observant, creative and curious; to encourage thinking and communication of ideas; and to encourage children to find confidence in their choices and decisions.

Classroom (home) objectives: to build a collection of curiosities; to foster an ethos of enquiry and investigation; to support a co-operative approach to learning among siblings or across generations.

Resources: a set of cardboard boxes – we used plain brown (eco-friendly) cardboard boxes 10x10x10cms. Some examples of objects of curiosity. A location to display the boxes.



We tried the activity with children of all ages from Year 2 upwards. (It also worked as an activity with adults in a community setting).

## Descriptions, history and explanations of what you can do:

Objects of curiosity (Cabinets of Curiosity in history) were an important way of people giving others an idea of who they were, their importance in society and what mattered to them; their objects represented the breadth of their interests.. the more objects of curiosity they collected the wider their knowledge and interests (or so it was perceived).

**Now we can collect our own objects of curiosity.**

What IS an object of curiosity? It is anything that you feel curious about. What other words could you use to describe something?

Unusual? Strange? Weird? Surprising? Never seen anything like it.. I just like it, the feel of it, the shape of it, the look of it;

It makes me wonder – where it came from, how it was made, why it is the shape/size/texture/colour/ it is..

How was it made? What does it do? What did it do?



You could find your own examples to start the children thinking. In Finland I took in to a class a large cowry shell and a metal button with some letters stamped into it.

(The button was from the uniform of a member of the National Fire Service, NFS, and belonged to my mother from her wartime work).

(The cowry shell was given to me by a godfather who was in the navy, from a voyage to the tropics).

Each object can have two descriptions – the science, the facts of the object; and the story that it is part of, the narrative or fiction.

Boxes of curiosity also work on trips and outings, if these are still happening, especially into the natural environment. The children can collect objects that catch their eye and fascination.

We also attach strips of paper to the boxes for the children to draw or write notes on what they have found.. and again these notes can be factual or creative.

Objects of curiosity may also be a means of having conversations with older people (not face to face, but perhaps online). Almost every adult will have an object that is part of their growing up, their memories or experiences. Why not set up a special 'Curiosity Conversation'?

The stories attached to each object or box can also form the focus of focused conversations and 'Show and Tell' sessions at home among the other members of the family.

## Displaying the boxes



The collections of boxes can be displayed in many different spaces. One local school that we have worked with has a designated 'Wonder Room' where collections of curiosity are on permanent display. Or you could find your own special curiosity space, shelf, or table..?

And if you would like to send pictures of your home objects of curiosity or displays we would be delighted to post them online.

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