

Collage



International Labour Organization

SCREAM
Stop Child Labour

Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media



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For more information about SCREAM, please contact:

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
International Labour Office (ILO)

4, Route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 799 77 47

Fax: +41 22 799 81 81

Email: childlabour@ilo.org

Web site: www.ilo.org/scream

Aim: Produce two collages, one on a classic marketing theme and one on child labour.



Gain: Stimulates visual and artistic expression and reveals how little print media coverage is given to such a huge problem as child labour.

Time frame

1 double and 1 single teaching sessions

Motivation

The main purpose of the collage exercise is to help young people grasp the “invisible” nature of child labour and demonstrate how difficult it is to create a simple image depicting child labour from normal everyday materials.

In today’s society, images say it all, especially when it comes to young people. The written media aimed at adolescents is almost comic-book like – a multitude of photographs, pictures, cartoons and graphics, but little in the way of words. Television, cinema, videos, computer games and all manner of electronic gadgetry bear witness to the desire to hook young people’s attention and send them spinning on a roller coaster ride of fast-changing images and special effects. There’s not much dialogue, but plenty of action. Society has created a younger generation of “I want it all and I want it now, faster, louder, brighter!”

By contrast, images of child labour are few and far between. It is an invisible phenomenon to most of the world, even within the countries in which it exists.



Note for the user

The Collage module can be the very first one you implement. The group of young people you are working with need know very little about child labour in order to take part in this exercise. In fact, it is as good a “springboard” as any to get them thinking and talking about the issue and sets the tone for the informal, fun and creative style of the whole programme.



What is a collage?

A collage is a "mosaic" of photos, images and occasionally bits of text that have been cut out of various publications, for example, magazines, newspapers, old books, posters and comics, and stuck onto a larger piece of paper in a such a way as to create a new image. This new image should depict whatever subject is chosen for the collage.

Collage is a fun and messy enough activity to elicit the good humour of most young people. It invariably ends up with some images that make them laugh. It involves glue, adhesive tape, paints, crayons, felt pens and all manner of materials with which they can cover paper and themselves.

The reason for its lack of visibility lies partly in a lack of awareness and partly in the willingness of many people to bury their heads in the sand. "Children working? Surely not. Where? Don't talk rubbish!" Amazing, isn't it? A population of child labourers almost the size of the United States and many people still don't know, or don't want to know, they are there. Imagine how a country of around 245 million people would feel if most of the rest of the world was unaware of its very existence.

So, a lot of what we must do in the education process is to begin to lift the cloak of invisibility from the shoulders of child labourers. The basic objective of this module, therefore, is to show young people how little media coverage child labour receives and to convince them of the need to give a face to working children.

What you'll need

The materials are simple and generally obtainable under most conditions (quantities will depend largely on the size of the group).

- ✓ Old magazines of all shapes, sizes and sorts – glossy, colour, tattered, black and white – their condition doesn't matter too much.
- ✓ Old newspapers, comics, brochures, posters, old illustrated books (don't destroy books that are still usable, however).
- ✓ Large pieces of paper, either used or new, coloured or not, even pieces of old newspaper will do as a surface onto which to stick things.
- ✓ Scissors or implements for cutting out images, for example, straight-edged rulers or pieces of wood to provide an edge for tearing out.
- ✓ Glue of any variety that you can get hold of and rolls of adhesive tape.
- ✓ Paints, crayons, felt pens and/or colouring pencils (not essential).

- ✓ A room or area with plenty of surfaces (the floor is as good as anything). The room should have ventilation if at all possible, especially if you are using glue, to prevent toxic fumes from building up.
- ✓ Some wall space where finished collages can be hung or stuck up.



Preparation

In preparing for this activity, you should do the following:

- Make sure that you have enough materials, especially in terms of magazines and newspapers. Of course, this will depend on your specific setting and available resources, so don't be daunted or put off: the materials can be simple enough.
- Enlist the group in assembling the materials: encourage them to bring what they can from home or whichever environment they live in.
- Members of the group might have to make a trip to a dump, a paper recycling facility, a newsagent or other retail outlet or a printing firm to gather old papers and magazines.
- By involving the group more, they will develop a sense of ownership, fun, interest and motivation.
- Their natural curiosity will be aroused to know what they need all this stuff for.

Materials



Collage titles

- Think up different titles that they could use as subjects for their collages.
- Write down the titles you have thought of, and during your first session, ask the young people themselves to think of their own marketing themes.
- If they do not come up with any (which would be surprising), then you always have your own earlier ideas as a back-up.

Getting started



Basically, you will be asking the group(s) to produce two collages. The first could be on a classic marketing theme, such as, "Holidays in the sun", "Fashion", "Fitness and health", "Home and garden", "My holidays", "My country", "My family", "My friends". The second will be on the theme of child labour.

At the beginning of the session and before any work commences, explain to the group what this activity will entail. DO NOT tell them the subject of the second collage at this stage. Tell them there will be two collages, by all means, but not what the second will be. It is a simple and fun exercise and they should respond well to it. Make sure that they all get involved and the group dynamic becomes established.

Group organization



If you have a large group, split them up into as many smaller groups as your space and materials will allow. If the initial group is small (five or less), they can work in pairs or individually. Try not to have more than five to a group. Make sure that no one takes a back seat and that everyone is involved. For example, one or two can hunt through the magazines for specific images, while others can do the cutting out and others stick the images onto paper. Just make sure that there is plenty of interaction and it is all light-hearted.

Activity one: General collage

1 teaching session (preferably half a double teaching session)

Ask the group to produce a collage with the materials available (explaining what is meant by a collage for those who are unsure) on a theme of their choice. Encourage an exchange on possible titles, write some up on a board or on paper or let them pick one as they go along.

Pool the materials in a place accessible to all and then allow them about 20 minutes or so to create their collage. Do not give them too long or they risk losing concentration and interest. Move among the groups as they are working. Talk to them about what they are producing. Offer hints or advice. Encourage exchanges between the groups but keep everything good humoured and not too serious. There is plenty of time for serious issues in other modules.

When the time is up, get each group to hold up their collage for the others to see (or stick it up on a board or a wall where everyone can see it) and ask the group members or a nominated representative to explain what their collage represents. Invite comments and/or questions from the other groups.

To spice things up, you can introduce an element of competition, for example:

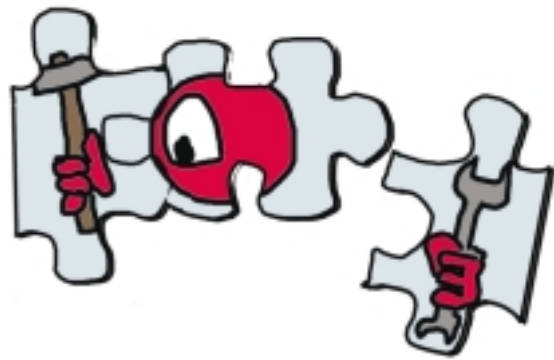
- Tell the groups to keep their collage titles a secret and then get the others to guess the title.
- Get the groups to vote for their favourite collage and choose a winner.
- Get another group of young people (another class if you are in a school environment) to come and view the collages and act as judges.



Do not create too much competition, however. The objective is not to isolate those who might be less artistically inclined than others, but to develop a light-hearted atmosphere and a spirit of camaraderie among the group. If you sense that encouraging competition would create unnecessary tension and perhaps undermine the group dynamic, follow your instincts and don't do it.

Activity two: Child labour collage

*1 teaching session
(preferably half a double
teaching session)*



Once the first collage exercise is complete, bring the group to order and tell them the subject of their second collage, namely, their vision of child labour. You should not add anything yourself at this stage. You may have already conducted the Basic Information module before implementing this one, so the group will have formed some idea of what child labour is about. Let them delve further into their own imaginations and creativity – this is not about your vision and understanding of the issue. It is time to motivate them.

Tell them that they can produce any form of collage that, for them, depicts child labour. They must produce the collage in the same way as the first, cutting out images from the old magazines and newspapers available and sticking them onto another surface. Allow them the same amount of time and work under the same conditions (it may be that they will require a lot less time as they will not be able to carry out the task as comprehensively as the first – keep an eye on proceedings).

One of two things will happen. First, the groups may go through all the material available and not be able to find much that they feel they can use to create a collage on child labour. This is OK as, in the majority of cases, this is exactly what is expected to happen. They will create something, but it might not be as detailed as their previous work.

The second possible scenario is that some of the groups might include very talented, perceptive and sensitive artists. If this happens then you will be extremely fortunate as the resulting collages will likely be insightful works of art.

As with the previous collage, get each group to hold up or otherwise display their collage and explain the concept behind it to the others. Encourage feedback from the whole group and, if appropriate, have a competition for the best works.

Do's and Don'ts

- Don't allow any group to criticise or mock another. Accentuate the positive in everything.
- Do allow banter, dialogue, teasing, jokes, humour and competitiveness if it can be controlled.
- Don't allow groups different lengths of time to complete the collage. You are not seeking works of art – you are trying to make a point later on. However, if works of art result, so much the better. So, give the group a set time to complete and move among them to encourage them to finish in the time allotted.
- Do take the time to hang each collage up and encourage mutual admiration and discussion.



Final discussion

1 teaching session

The final discussion with the group should involve explaining that child labour is one of the worst human rights abuses of our times and that it continues to flourish around the world. In spite of this, little media attention is paid to this terrible phenomenon and it largely remains a hidden secret – the skeleton in the world’s closet.

The group will now understand this better because they will have seen how easy it is to produce a collage on some aspects of life, especially good and positive things, and how difficult it is to make one on a very bad aspect of life. Even if some groups might have managed to produce a collage on child labour, and possibly a very good collage, they will still have remarked how much harder it was to create than the “feel good” subjects.

Encourage a general discussion among the group on the invisibility of child labour. Ask them what they feel about the lack of attention paid to child labour.

- Do they think it is wrong?
- Should the media pay more attention to the issue?
- Is it “newsworthy”?
- Who defines what is newsworthy or not?
- What factors should be taken into account when deciding whether issues should be published or a magazine spread devoted to child labour?

- Would any of the group necessarily buy, or even browse through, a magazine with pictures and articles on child labour? Many of them, in all honesty, probably wouldn't.
- What does this tell them about society and its principles and values today?

Some of this discussion is pretty heavy, especially for adolescents who are far more wrapped up in themselves and their immediate problems. It could turn them off and make them unwilling parties in any further activities. So, be careful in managing the discussion. Make sure that most of the contributions come from them with some well-placed comments and encouragement from you. Bring in other subjects, other areas of human rights that might be covered to a greater or lesser extent in the media, for example, civil conflict and refugees. Why is this so? What makes them more newsworthy?

The main pitfall to watch out for is not to create a feeling of hopelessness. If young people feel that the subject is too vast, complex and beyond their reach, they will lose faith very quickly. Accentuate the positive.

- They are now aware of the situation.
- They want to do something about it, maybe.
- They can tell others.
- They are consumers and therefore have a role to play.



Evaluation and follow-up



In terms of measurable indicators for this module, there are indeed specific outcomes that are measurable in so far as they will either have occurred or not:

- Collages on various themes. Each group should have produced a collage of sorts. If they don't, it would be worthwhile considering implementing this module again at a later date once awareness has been heightened among the group. It could also be that you are working with a particularly difficult group in terms of responsiveness. Stay with it, for there will be other modules that will surely stimulate their interest and commitment.
- Collages of child labour. It is as much a sign of success if collages are not produced than if they are. The groups are expected to find it difficult, if not impossible to create such a collage. However, any collages that are produced are more than likely to be very creative and you should act on this. They could be the core of a further awareness-raising campaign within local communities and environments and you should use them widely, perhaps with the local and national media as well (see below). This is an indicator of considerable success and will significantly enhance the sustainable aspect of your module.

This module is a simple but effective means of displaying the underlying difficulty of the problem of child labour – that it is invisible and that people are willing to overlook it for various reasons. The child labour education process for young people needs to raise and focus awareness among them. They should take a very important lesson away from this module. They will begin to realise the need to scratch below the veneer of society to find out the truth about what really goes on in the world. This means not necessarily believing everything that the media choose to serve up to consumers, or at least to be more objective in their treatment of information.

If you can, leave the collages up in the room you are using for the project or in another room or hall where they can be viewed by others. The different works on child labour produced by the groups are also an excellent way of publicizing the project among a wider audience. Encourage other young people to look at the art and persuade reporters to come and photograph it for local and national news.

The images will present a powerful statement on child labour and it is important that you integrate the community in appreciating the work of its young people. Organize a public exhibition of the works and invite members of the community, parents, local politicians, representatives of trade unions and NGOs and local employers to view it. Auction the works to raise funds for activities to stop child labour or for materials to donate to schools for rehabilitated child labourers. This may be the first time the community hears of the project and its theme, so begin to lay the groundwork for future promotion and community integration. The group of young people you are working with will thus also begin to see a broader purpose to their work.

Once you have completed this module to your satisfaction, move on to a new module. We recommend that the next module you tackle is the one entitled "The Image".

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