

Creative Shoebox Diorama Ideas

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Shoebox Dioramas are a part of every school year and in just about every grade they serve as a wonderful learning tool. They are used to learn the arts and crafts of making things and they are used to also learn about subjects. This article shows you some creative ideas from both the arts and crafts aspect and the learning aspect.

The Arts and Crafts of Shoebox Dioramas

There are a lot of common ways to make a shoebox diorama and they include tape, glue, construction paper and all the regular assortment of arts and crafts stuff but there are a few things you can do to make a diorama just a little bit special. Here is a list of ideas:

- If you are doing an underwater scene you can cover the front of the box with Saran Wrap or thin plastic. This gives the diorama an underwater feel
- Use string to utilize the full three dimensions inside the box; suspend objects from strings or tie strings from side to side and top to bottom and attach objects to the strings. This works well for flying objects like bird, pterodactyls or even clouds and stars.
- Cut slots in the back and top of the box and use this to insert objects that you can move across the diorama. Make a bird, boat, comet or some other type of moving object then attach a tab to the back of it. Insert this tab in the slot then you can grab the tab from the back and slide the object across the diorama. This adds a nice little interactive element. This works well with all kinds of things from a rising sun, flying bird, erupting volcano or just about anything else that would move.
- Think outside the shoebox! There is no need to run out and buy a new pair of shoes if you don't have a shoebox. A more than adequate box can be made from scraps of cardboard or even a few cereal boxes cut and taped together. And there is no need to make a typical shoebox shape. Be creative in the shape you make. It adds a dimension of interest to the project. Half round, amphitheatre shapes are commonly used for dioramas and look great.
- Achieving Depth - The most common trait of an average shoebox diorama is that it has a decorated background and objects placed on the bottom surface. You can add an attractive touch by decorating a strip of paper that is about two inches wide with a foliage pattern then attach this to the inside bottom of the diorama about an inch from the back wall - it reaches all the way from the left side to the right side. This adds a lot of depth and makes it look much more interesting.
- Using alternate materials - You don't have to use cardboard or boxes. As an example, if you are doing a polar bear or penguin diorama you could use white packing Styrofoam. If you are doing a desert scene you can apply glue to the bottom of the diorama and sprinkle real sand on it.

Theme Ideas and Learning Tools

The biggest point of a shoebox diorama is to show a natural habitat of something. In the process of drawing and cutting out the various objects a child is learning about the habitat. This is great but you can take it to new levels with a little thought and a little creativity.

- Adding a Fact Sheet - This is a great tool that should be added to every diorama. You should make a fact sheet that can be glued to poster board and stood up near the diorama. The sheet explains the basic facts of what the diorama is about.
- Freezing a moment in time - A diorama is a moment in time and you can focus on this. Some good examples are you can have a meteor streaking across the sky of a dinosaur diorama; this explains a theory of extinction. Or you can show a large predator fish about to eat a smaller fish as it is eating something even smaller. This dramatic moment in time is a good display of the food chain.
- Interactions in a habitat - The focus of a diorama is often to correctly identify and place the right objects for a natural habitat but you can take this to a new level by focusing on the interactions within the habitat. The upper layer of canopy in a rainforest blocks out sunlight from the lower layers and this is an important aspect of the rainforest. A coral reef provides shelter for many creatures in the sea and a diorama can display this.

Diorama Ideas

Here are some ideas you can use as a theme for your diorama:

- The Natural Habitat of just about any creature like fish, polar bears, black bears, penguins, wolves, humans, dinosaurs, camels, lions, tigers, monkeys, elephants, dolphins, and well you get the idea!
- A Desert theme complete with pyramids, mummies and camels is fun
- An astronomy diorama complete with sun, planets, comets, and stars in the background
- A medieval Castle scene complete with catapult or dragon
- Underwater scenes are always popular
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- A Rainforest is a good diorama for teaching about diversity and the interaction of species

- Arctic themed dioramas are fun because of the creative options for snow and icebergs

Whatever diorama you choose to make you should take a little time to make it different and unique and there are lots of creative ways to do that. Have fun with your project!