

"Avoiding the insect apocalypse - making insects visible and putting them in the correct light"

in the lessons "Performing and Designing" of the classes 8 and 9 - a project in the framework of the Erasmus+ project "Biodiversity meets music" at the Ritzefeld-Gymnasium Stolberg

The importance of small insects for the environment and biodiversity is undisputed today. The extinction of insects is an obvious problem, but not everyone has become aware of it yet. Making people aware of this problem and encouraging them to act sustainably is also a task for schools. But how do you put insects in the correct light? Mosquitoes, bees and wasps have the particular reputation among schoolchildren for biting and being "dangerous" rather than being useful. Little pests whose absence is actually more appreciated than feared. What is needed here is information about the tasks of these animals and what makes their existence and way of life so important and irreplaceable for us all.

The core of our project is therefore the design of individual insects by sewing them enlarged, and in this way to change the often rather alien creatures into haptically tangible bodies that invite us to touch them - but without trivializing them. Rather, we want to present and highlight the diversity of manifestations with their fascinating peculiarities.

The research

Our first step in the project is to introduce the contents of the topic.

A connection to the topic is quickly established through our Erasmus+ project "biodiversitymeetsmusic" and the first teaching units are under the theme "The uniqueness of insects - small things big". In this phase, the focus is first on more general information about insects and how an insect apocalypse can be avoided.

Here we have worked with the following materials, which were particularly well applicable in distance learning: <https://www.dw.com/downloads/56144313/dwglobaldeasarbeitsheft5bestauber.pdf>

The next step is to get to know individual insects better and to take a closer look at those that live in the immediate vicinity. Since observations in nature are not possible in winter, we also relied here on Internet researches to get to know insects: Naturlexikon: Bestimmungshilfe, Arten und Naturfotos (digital-nature.de).

The design of an information poster

In a further step, an insect is selected according to the students' personal preferences and a short profile with a photo is created for it. Since we not only wanted to make the fascinating appearance of the selected insects more visible by sewing, the first practical work will be the design of an information poster about the insects. For this purpose, first the characteristics for poster and poster design will be repeated and finally work assignments for the creation of the posters will be formulated. On the content side, emphasis will be placed on correct information, and on the artistic side, on the design of the lettering and the hand-drawn morphology of the insects. Especially the morphology of the insects will be important for

us in the further course of the project, because the insects should be put into perspective not only two-dimensionally but also plastically.

The plastic realization: Enlarge tiny

In the next step, the insects are sewn in survival size from white fabric and then staged with the help of black light and neon colors.

In preparation for this, however, a practical introduction to sewing has to be taken place first.

From distance learning, tutorials have again proven useful here, allowing students to learn the first stitches. Here we have focused on front and back stitch, seam allowance and magic seam. To prepare for the shapes that will be needed later, such as beads and spikes, we have also had exercises made in this regard with the help of the tutorial (Tutorials (Art 5-10, Issue 60) | Video Material (fr-v.de)).

Following the sewing exercises, the content and practical connection is made by jointly working out patterns for making a larger-than-life insect

out of white fabric. However, since most of the students lack experience in this area, this phase is postponed to the time of the classroom instruction.

The students should then work together in groups to create a pattern for an insect, which they can then use to sew the insect. There is the choice to sew by hand or by machine.

The finished insects should then be shown in combination with the information posters as an installation or as a performance in black light. In addition, neon colors can be used to create effects.

In the sense of the project "Biodiversity meets music"