

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

DESIGN

FOR REVIEW

1. Design Principles

- 1a. What are the four most important qualities of good design?
- 1b. i) Put the phrase 'utility and practicality' into your own words.
ii) Give two examples of why this is an essential feature of design.
- 1c. Give one example of a way in which designers can contribute to the good of society.
- 1d. How does a 'green building' contribute to sustainability?
- 1e. i) Do you know what 'aesthetic' means? If not, look it up in the dictionary.
ii) Can you think of a designed environment that gives you 'aesthetic satisfaction'?

2. Areas of design

- 2a. What is urban design?
- 2b. Why is the quality of urban space important when trying to encourage 'optional activities'?
- 2c. Name four ways in which buildings give us a daily experience of design.
- 2d. i) Name four types of engineering design.
ii) Can you think of an example of each?
- 2e. What kinds of spaces do landscape designers create?
- 2f. What do interior designers do?

2g. Could industrial design improve the competitiveness of Australian industry? If so in what way?

- 2h. i) Where do you see graphic design in your day-to-day life?
ii) Can you think of three specific examples of graphic design you have seen recently?
iii) Why has the significance of graphic design increased in the last ten to twenty years?

3. Challenges within the design industries

- 3a. What is meant by the term 'weak design culture'?
- 3b. i) What is the main failing of design education programmes?
ii) What kind of educational approaches can address this failing?
- 3c. In which ways has government funding for design been fragmented?
- 3d. Why is a national design organization important?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. An idea for a "Think/Pair/Share" activity:
Keeping the four principles of good design in mind, can you think of a design object in your home that provides satisfaction on a number of levels? For example, a kitchen utensil that performs its task particularly well but also fits comfortably into the hand and looks good? A chair that supports good posture, is built to last, and looks attractive? An electronic device that is small enough to fit in your pocket and yet designed for easy use? Fine-tune your ideas about the design features of your object through discussion with your partner and then share these with the class.

2. An exercise to be done in small groups or pairs and then shared with the class:

Have a look through an architecture journal or magazine in your local or school library, and find a recent building that interests you. With your group, “assess” the building according to the four principles of good design outlined at the beginning of the Fact and Issue Sheet. For example, is the building made with sustainability in mind or is does it emphasize aesthetic satisfaction over and above other design principles? If the building is for public use, how is it socially relevant? Present your assessment to the class.

3. A question for class debate:

The Fact Sheet states that “design is often a commercial activity and so designers are frequently employed to serve the wishes of the rich and privileged.” And yet good design is crucial if we are to achieve a sustainable future for all. How can these conflicting notions be reconciled?

FOR RESEARCH

1. Go to the Centre for Design at RMIT University at <http://www.cfd.rmit.edu.au/>. Become familiar with the website and prepare a short report on one of these topics: sustainable building materials, life cycle assessments, or sustainable packaging.

2. Is there a landscaped garden in your city or town? Using your school or local library, the internet or a Botanical Gardens bookshop, find out more about the design of this garden. When was it designed? When was it completed? Who was the landscape architect? What were they aiming to do? How effective is the design? Was sustainability a factor in the design? How do you observe people using this public space? Do you like the garden yourself? How do you feel when you walk through it?

(NB: This question could easily be reworked to apply to any designed urban space).

3. Question for advanced students:

Use the internet to do a research project on Jan Gehl's work on the form and use of public spaces.

Address any of the following questions: Why is the use of public space important for the life of a city or town? How can design encourage people to experiment with different ways of using the city? How are the categories of necessary, optional and social activity used to make decisions about public spaces? How have Gehl's ideas been used in Perth, Adelaide or Melbourne?

Some useful starting points are:

Gehl's company in Copenhagen:

<http://www.gehlarchitects.dk/>

Information on his work is also found on the Project for Public Spaces site: <http://www.pps.org/info/placemakingtools/placemakers/jgehl>