

Unit 90: Period Props

Unit code:	F/502/5631
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit offers learners the opportunity to apply prop making materials, techniques and processes to research, find, adapt or create a period prop.

● Unit introduction

A prop is identified as an object or article that is held or used by performers in performance; a period prop is an accurate recreation of an historical object, this could be anything from a small hand held prop such as a cameo brooch, to a large oversized object such as an elaborate candelabra. Some props are bought, some are bought and adapted and others are made.

This unit will develop learners' specific understanding of the techniques, materials and approaches that a prop maker utilises to realise a convincing period prop. The period prop maker uses a range of creative and technical skills and draws on an informed understanding of suitable prop-making materials and construction methods to create the appropriate appearance for each period prop. A successful period prop maker must have productive problem solving skills and flexibility of approach.

Effective research is key to creating a realistic period prop. Through this unit learners will develop effective research skills that will advise authenticity and appropriateness. The prop maker will know how to research and resource materials and have a working knowledge of the construction and painting skills needed to create a prop. This unit will establish an understanding of where and how to resource materials and develop an understanding of some useful methods that can be used to make or adapt a prop to be a convincing period prop. The quality of the completed period prop relies on the detailed and thoroughly convincing recreation of period detail. This unit will develop learners' awareness of the character and period's detail.

This unit provides links with a range of other units for learners following both performance and technical pathways and has direct links with *Production Arts Planning*, *Props Making*, *Design for Performance*, *Scenic Construction for the Stage*, *Design Drawing Development* and *Design Materials and Process*.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the style and characteristics of a period
- 2 Know how to source and acquire period props
- 3 Be able to construct a period prop for a performance.

Unit content

1 Know the style and characteristics of a period

Research: background; period; context; themes; settings; historical periods eg Medieval, Tudor, Elizabethan, Jacobean, Baroque, Georgian, Rococo, Regency, Victorian, Edwardian, First World War, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Second World War, Fifties, Sixties, Seventies, Eighties; influences from other cultures eg American, Indian, African, European, Russian, Japanese, Chinese Eastern, Asian

Research sources: eg photographs, museums, antique shops, auctions, journals, newspapers, existing art work, films, video, internet, sketches from life

2 Know how to source and acquire period props

Hiring or buying props: eg telephone directories, advertising in local media, museums, garden centres, shops, second hand shops, charity shops, markets, scrap yards, car boot sales, amateur companies, reclamation yards, National Trust or English Heritage properties, online auction sites

Hiring procedures: hire terms and conditions; hire charges; care and maintenance of the hired prop; paperwork; budget constraints; record keeping; health and safety and/or legal requirements eg for the hire of an offensive weapon

Purchasing consideration: estimate; costing; record keeping; budget constraints

3 Be able to construct a period prop for performance

Interpret prop construction plan: able to understand and interpret prop construction plans

Materials: experiment with different materials; strength; suitability; appearance

Tools: eg hand held, power tools, glue gun, knives, scalpels, scissors

Construction techniques: special techniques eg ageing, texture, distressing, simulating different finishes

Carving/modelling: eg wood, polystyrene, foam rubber, plastic wood, cardboard, papier mâché, cloth mâché, wire and Mod Roc

Mould preparation: eg plaster, plaster filler, latex, styrene, compound expandable foam

Lamination: eg paste and paper, plaster, muslin, fibreglass

Frames, mechanisms and fixings: eg wood, dowelling, wire mesh, wire, metal, rope, paper rope, cord, string, thread, nylon line, pulleys, springs, knobs, elastic, levers, hooks, loops

Glues: eg PVA, wood glue, copydex™, epoxy resin, solvents

Health and safety: construction method; Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH); construction materials; applying decorative finishes; use of handheld tools and equipment; materials; finishes

Health and safety for the performer: avoidance of allergic reactions; ease of use; awareness of potential fire hazards of construction materials

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 use research findings to identify the main style and characteristics of a selected historical period [IE]	M1 use research findings to describe in some detail the style and characteristics of a selected historical period	D1 use research findings to critically comment on the characteristics and style of a selected historical period
P2 identify how to source and acquire a period prop [IE]	M2 describe how to source and acquire a period prop	D2 explain how to source and acquire a period prop
P3 use materials, and techniques to make a period prop. [CT]	M3 competently use prop construction methods and materials to create a convincing period prop that is mostly accurate.	D3 skilfully apply prop construction methods and materials to create a wholly accurate and fully convincing period prop.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Work for this unit will develop learners' understanding of how to use research to identify the characteristics of a period in history; learners will use the research findings to inform the design or selection of a suitable prop. Learners will also develop an understanding of prop hire companies and the procedures for hiring, maintaining and returning a period prop. Learners will develop an understanding of how the performance demands of a prop must be taken into account in the planning, hiring or creation of a period prop. Learners will explore particular period prop making techniques. Learners will also apply skills and techniques to create a period prop for a selected performance. The performance can be an actual or theoretical performance. Health and safety is a vital consideration for the prop maker and for the performer using the prop. Learners will be introduced to the health and safety considerations for the period prop maker and the performer. Learners will then be expected to apply effective health and safety considerations throughout the unit.

For learning outcome 1, learners will be introduced to research approaches that a period prop designer or maker will use. The first workshops in this unit will introduce learners to primary and secondary research approaches. At this point it would be valuable to have examples of a range of period props in performance to inspire and inform learners about the characteristics of key periods in history. Evidence for this criterion may be demonstrated in research portfolios that describe, explain and present a critical evaluation of a selected period; the portfolio will also link the period to a text. Learners will reflect on the research process. Tutor observation of the learners' research process and findings will also provide suitable evidence for assessment.

For learning outcome 2, learners will be introduced to the different prop hire sources. Learners will understand and be able to apply prop hire procedures, protocols and costs. Work for this outcome will also include investigating buying and adapting existing objects to create a period prop. Evidence for this criterion will be demonstrated in the learners understanding of the prop hire process. Learners will demonstrate an understanding of where and how to access certain period props; this will include a range of prop hiring or buying outlets. Learners can present their understanding in a theoretical prop hire assignment that seeks to resource props for a certain period performance; findings can be presented in a written report or a presentation. Learners could also produce a database of certain prop hire companies and identify the characters of each.

For learning outcome 3, learners will be introduced to some period prop making tools and techniques. This will include general prop making approaches and will be focused on the targeted final prop. Learners will be introduced to information formats such as prop designs and research materials, and will be taught how to use them to realise the prop that fulfils the design intentions. Learners will then apply the techniques to complete a prop for a production. Learners will be introduced to essential health and safety practice for the period prop maker. Learners will then demonstrate the appropriate health and safety understanding and practice in all unit assignments. Assessment will be informed by learners' demonstration of appropriate health and safety practice in all practical work. Learners will support this with ongoing written reflection on their application of correct health and safety practice.

Assessment will include the demonstration of general prop-making skills in the initial workshops and the suitability and standard of the final product, the use of peer or tutor witness statements, annotated photographs of the process and learner reflection on the process and final product.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
<p>Introduction to the unit and the structure of the programme, lecturer lead whole class.</p>
<p>Assignment 1: Long, Long Ago – P1, M1, D1</p> <p>Learners are introduced to the importance of effective research approaches. They will be put into groups and each group will research a different historical period. Learners will present a detailed portfolio of relevant research and prop design ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• introducing possible research sources• targeting and shaping research approaches to gain full detail• drawing conclusions from research findings. <p>Learners will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of health and safety in the design and selection of a period prop.</p>
<p>Assignment 2: The Cave of Wonders – P2, M2, D2, P4, M4, D4</p> <p>Learners are introduced to prop houses and possible places that a prop maker can buy/hire a prop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• prop hire procedures• prop hire protocols• buying and adapting a prop• health and safety. <p>Learners will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of health and safety in the sourcing of a period prop.</p>
<p>Assignment 3: Is That a Period Prop I See Before Me? – P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4</p> <p>This is a largely practical activity where learners should be given time and resources to realise a prop that meets the design requirements.</p> <p>Learners are taught:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• specific prop construction materials and techniques to realise the period prop design• how to interpret and read a design plan• how to apply the skills to create a prop that realises the design intentions. <p>Learners will apply the skills learnt to create a period prop.</p> <p>Learners will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of health and safety in the making of a period prop.</p>

Assessment

It is important that the assessment of this unit only focuses on the period prop making process and does not assess the design content. Learners will demonstrate the ability to research select, acquire adapt and/or make a period prop. Assessment decisions will be informed by the learners' ability to research and use their research findings to source, adapt and acquire a period prop. The importance of health and safety is implicit and must be emphasised throughout this unit; therefore description of and reflection on health and safety should feature in all work produced for assessment. Good health and safety practice can also be recorded to support assessment sessions by peer observation or witness statements.

To achieve learning outcome 1, learners will demonstrate productive and focused research skills. Learners will make personal comment on the success of their exploration of the research process and be able to utilise the research findings successfully. Evidence for assessment could include a workbook, a journal, a handout, a viva or a presentation. Tutor observation of learners' research approaches will also inform assessment.

To achieve learning outcome 2, learners will demonstrate their understanding of the procedures for hiring, maintaining and returning hired period props. Learners will demonstrate an understanding of the stock of different prop hire companies. Learners will also demonstrate an understanding of hire costs. Learners' understanding of health and safety for period prop hire will be evidenced through their reflection. Evidence for assessment will comprise learners' descriptions of prop hire companies and the prop hire procedure; this could include a database of prop hire companies. Learner reflection will include an understanding of health and safety considerations for the hire of a period prop for a production.

To achieve learning outcome 3, learners will evidence their understanding and application of the period prop making and adapting materials and techniques to create a period prop for a production. Learners will demonstrate their ability to interpret research findings and design plans. It is important that learners make personal comment on the success of the process; this could be evidenced through a workbook or a journal. The primary evidence for assessment will be the learners' creation of the final period prop and its suitability for performance. Learners' response to the exploration and the use of period prop making materials can also be recorded through the tutor's witness statement and peer observation of the practical work. Learners' understanding could also be evidenced through structured questioning in the viva voce. Learners' application of health and safety could be evidenced through tutor monitoring, formative interim assessments, observations and learners' reflection. Learners will demonstrate their understanding and application of health and safety skills. This will require learners to demonstrate their understanding in their written work and in their demonstration of health and safety skills. Application of health and safety could be evidenced through tutor monitoring, observation, peer witness statements and learners' reflection. Learners' understanding could also be evidenced through structured questioning in the viva voce.

To achieve P1 learners will show that they can plan and follow a simple research programme into a targeted historical period. The research will discover some information that has some relevance to the targeted production and period prop. The research will identify the main style and simple characteristics of the targeted period. Pass learners will be able to use the information, describe the research process and be able to utilise some of the research findings.

To achieve M1 learners will show that they can plan and follow a research programme into a historical period with some success. The research will discover some detailed information that is considered and relevant to the targeted production and period prop. The research will identify the style and characteristics of the period in some detail. Learners will be able to describe the research process confidently and be able to utilise the research findings productively. Learners work will be written notes, sketches and photographs that have some accurate detailed information. Annotations on the images will be considered and mostly accurate.

To achieve D1 learners will show that they can plan and follow a focused research programme into a historical period successfully. The research will discover detailed information that is fully analysed, considered and produces wholly relevant information. The research will evaluate critically the style and characteristics of the period in detail. Learners will be able to describe the research process fully and be able to utilise the research findings in the intelligent and productive development of the design for the period prop. Learners will communicate their fully detailed and wholly considered understanding in written notes, sketches and photographs. Annotations on the images will be wholly informed and accurate.

To achieve P2 learners will demonstrate that they can identify the procedure for hiring a period prop. Learners will show an understanding of a few prop houses and their stock. Learners will be able to describe prop hire protocols. Learners will show that they understand hire costs and health and safety considerations. Notes, diagrams and sketches will include some useful images with some simple annotations.

To achieve M2 learners will demonstrate that they understand and can describe the procedure for hiring a period prop. Learners will show an informed understanding of a range of prop houses and demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their stock. Learners will be able to describe prop hire protocols in some accurate detail. Learners will show that they understand hire cost and can apply health and safety considerations to the selection of a suitable period prop. Learners will explain their understanding in notes, diagrams and sketches that will be detailed in places. They will include some relevant images and photographs with some considered and mostly accurate annotations.

To achieve D2 learners will demonstrate that they fully understand and can explain in accurate detail the procedure for hiring a period prop. Learners will show a well informed understanding of a range of prop houses and demonstrate a fully detailed knowledge of their stock. Learners will be able to describe prop hire protocols in accurate detail. Learners will show that they understand hire cost and can confidently apply health and safety considerations to the selection of a suitable period prop. Learners will be able to analyse critically their understanding in accurate and detailed written notes, sketches and photographs. Annotations on the images will be full, informed and wholly accurate.

To achieve P3 learners must be able to show that they can choose and use period prop making materials, processes and techniques to create a period prop. Learners will be able to construct a period prop that will be useable in a production. The final period prop will communicate the basics of the designer's intentions and will show a basic understanding of health and safety considerations for the prop maker and for the performer using the prop. Pass learners will keep a brief record of their experience of the process; this may include research, plans, notes, diagrams and photographs. Learners will demonstrate a safe understanding of health and safety for the prop maker and the performer. Learners will be able to describe the application of health and safety in their accounts of the process

To achieve M3 learners will be able to use selected materials, processes and techniques with some confidence and some level of skill to create a convincing period prop that is mostly accurate and can be used in performance without further alteration. The final period prop will communicate the important details of the designer's intentions and will demonstrate an informed understanding of health and safety considerations for the prop maker and for the performer using the prop. The Merit learner will keep a record of their experience of the process, this will be detailed in places and may include, relevant research, considered plans, notes, diagrams and photographs. Learners will demonstrate that they understand the importance of health and safety for the period prop maker and the performer. Learners will demonstrate consistent and considered safe practice. Learners will use established practices with some confidence. Learners will be able to explain the importance of health and safety in their account of the process. The work may include relevant images, photographs and diagrams which have considered annotations.

To achieve D3 learners will be able to use period prop making materials, processes and techniques demonstrating skilful and controlled selection and application. The final prop will be wholly convincing and will communicate the full detail of the designer's intentions and will demonstrate a fully informed understanding of the health and safety considerations for the period prop maker and the performer. Evaluations will be fully considered, detailing their experience of the period prop making materials and processes, learner reflection will show a fully justified understanding of how the skills that they have learnt have been applied. Learners will demonstrate that they fully understand the importance of health and safety for the period prop maker and the performer. Learners will demonstrate consistent and fully considered safe practice. Learners will use established practices with confidence and will show leadership in establishing robust health and safety practice within the production team. Learners will be able to explain the importance of health and safety in their account of the process. The work may include relevant images, photographs and diagrams which have considered annotations.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
PI, MI, DI	Long, Long Ago	Learners are introduced to the importance of effective research approaches. Learners will work in groups, each group will research a different historical period, the period will also be linked to a play. Learners will produce a portfolio which details research and prop design ideas. Learners will present their findings to the rest of the group, they will also produce a handout that details their targeted period and their prop for each member of the class.	Tutor observation of the research process. The research portfolio. The handout. The presentation.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P2, M2, D2, P4, M4, D4	The Cave of Wonders	<p>Learners are given a list of the main prop houses. In small groups learners contact one of the prop houses and produce a guidance sheet for the rest of the class which details the prop house protocols and procedures.</p> <p>Learners will be given their props to source and a budget. Learners will individually complete a research assignment to discover where they can source the targeted props within their budget.</p> <p>Learners will consider the health and safety considerations for the use of the selected props.</p>	<p>Tutor observation of learner engagement in the assignment.</p> <p>Learner generated guide to the prop houses.</p> <p>Learner proposal for prop sourcing and costs.</p> <p>Health and safety for the use of the targeted props.</p>
P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Is That a Period Prop I See Before Me?	<p>Learners are initially introduced to key prop making materials and processes that a period prop maker will use to create or adapt a prop.</p> <p>Learners are given a prop plan and research materials and work to fulfil the design to complete a period prop for a production.</p> <p>Learners will demonstrate an understanding of health and safety for the period prop in their practical work and their reflective account.</p>	<p>On-going interim formative assessment of the period prop making process.</p> <p>Summative assessment of the completed period prop.</p> <p>Learner reflection on the process and the application of health and safety practices.</p>

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Technical Skills for the Performing Arts	Performing Arts Production Process	Production Arts Planning
	Design for Performance	Scenic Painting
	Crewing for Stage Performance	Scenic Construction for the Stage
	Set Construction	Design Method
		Stage Design for Performance
		Prop Making
		Design Drawing Development
		Design Materials and Process

This unit also has links with the following National Occupational Standards:

Technical Theatre

- CPD1 – Improving your skills
- CPD2a – TP Keeping up to date with technical and production developments in the live arts
- CPD4a – Contributing to technical production work for performance
- HSI – Working safely
- TP2.5a – Contribute to the interpretation of designs for sets or props
- TP2.5c – Ensure accurate interpretation of designs for sets or props
- TP2.5b – Interpreting designs for sets or props
- TP3.4b – Planning props requirements for a production
- TP5.4 – Sourcing props, materials and equipment
- TP19a – Carry out the fitting and altering of costumes and accessories.

Essential resources

The teaching space will need a dry design space in which learners can develop and plan their period prop ideas. Learners will also require a workshop space that contains prop construction materials, tools and materials. Learners will benefit from access to a computer and a library to research period details, materials and decorative finishes. The workshop will be suitably equipped in line with health and safety legislation.

Access to reference texts related to techniques and resource images would also be a valuable resource.

Access to examples of good practice that show a range of techniques and materials, whether in 2D or 3D, would be a valuable resource.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Watching and evaluating performances can inform and support learner research work. This can be achieved through theatre visits or through inviting a touring theatre company to the centre. Centres should work to develop links with any local theatre companies or receiving houses. Some practitioners may be able to come and run prop making workshops.

If possible it would be valuable to arrange a site visit to a prop house to introduce learners to the range of possibilities. Visiting a TV studio or a backstage tour of a period production would also give learners an opportunity to see the professional standard that is achieved by period prop makers.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the audio-visual industries has a section of their website dedicated to careers, www.skillset.org/careers.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Davies G – *Stage Source Book: Props* (A & C Black, 2004) ISBN 9780713665840

Govier J – *Create Your Own Stage Props* (A & C Black, 1989) ISBN 9780713630374

Hoggett C – *Stage Crafts, 2nd Edition* (A & C Black, 2000) ISBN 9780713654776

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	using research sources to identify the main style and characteristics of a selected historical period describing how to source and acquire a period prop
Creative thinkers	using materials and techniques to make a period prop
Reflective learners	reflecting on the use and development of the period prop making materials and processes
Team workers	working as a member of the production team to create a period prop
Self-managers	describing health and safety considerations for the period prop maker.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	creating a database of prop hire companies.