



Opening Up the Sky

*An Introduction to Creative Writing and
Bookmaking in Inclusive Settings*



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>LESSON ONE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU OPEN THE SKY?</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>LESSON TWO: "WHO AM I?"</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>LESSON THREE: WORKERS OF THE UNIVERSE</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>LESSON FOUR: THE WEATHER IN YOUR HEAD</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>LESSON FIVE: THE ACCIDENTAL STORY</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>LESSON SIX: PROMPTS</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>BOOKMAKING DIAGRAMS</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	<i>45</i>

FOREWORD

Whether you are writing a play, short story, or poem, the written word is one of the most powerful tools. We use it to express ourselves, communicate with others, and build relationships. With *Opening Up the Sky: An Introduction to Creative Writing and Bookmaking in Inclusive Settings*, VSA arts provides a resource for teachers that introduces the art of creative writing to students of all abilities.

This book offers lessons designed to help students unlock their imaginations and write freely and creatively. It encourages stretching the writing process beyond the obvious and into the realm of fantasies, hopes, and dreams. Even the simplest words can paint a picture of what is imagined, offering teachers a unique tool for engaging students in writing.

The lessons in *Opening Up the Sky* are appropriate for all ages. These lessons feature suggestions to ensure that students, including students with disabilities, have opportunities to express themselves and their creativity.

Please look for our other resource books in this series: *Let the Light In: An Introduction to Writing Poetry in Inclusive Settings* and *Real Stuff That Matters: An Introduction to Journal Writing in Inclusive Settings*.

Sincerely,

Soula Antoniou
President
VSA arts

INTRODUCTION

How many stories have you told today? How many have you heard? Stories bind us together as a family, a neighborhood, a school, and even as a nation. Merriam Webster may define prose as “the ordinary language people use in speaking or writing,” but there is nothing ordinary about the questions posed in this guide or the prose to which they can lead. Think of questions like “What is the weather in your head?” “Are you the polisher of stars or the painter of rainbows?” “What are you waiting for?” as arrows headed toward the imagination. If they strike their mark they will spark language that is innovative, honest, and real.

Writing is a gift. According to Lewis Hyde in *The Gift*, to be a true gift it must be passed along to the next person. There are several places within the writing process for this transfer to occur. Telling personal stories is often the first. Drawing a picture of someone we love is another way to pass the gift along. Finally, there is the writing itself. The stories can be read out loud, taped for a listening center, or transferred into books to be displayed at local libraries and corner grocery stores.

Writing is also a gift we give to ourselves. When your students write, they are naming their own world, claiming it for themselves and on their own terms. We write to know who we are.

This book is a teacher guide. It includes tips for writing along with your students. Writing and sharing what you have written is encouraged. The best guides will be your students themselves. Once you have tried a few lessons, design one that matches what your students are thinking about. If an idea or question gets their imaginations going then you are on the right track.

Tip: Several of the lessons begin with questions that lead to conversations. Having students sit in small groups or in pairs creates a less threatening place to share personal experiences.

Read literature to your students daily, stopping at passages to highlight great writing. Keep writing, daily if possible.

Since there is no “right” way to talk or write about what one sees or feels in one’s imagination, these lessons offer a way to grow in writing and expressive communication skills that can be successful for all learners.

Lesson Structure

The lessons in this book are structured and presented as classroom activities, but they will work just as well in small or individual settings. They are particularly well suited to alternative writing groups, such as after-school programs, library mini-workshops, residential home meetings, and homeschool lessons.

Following the core lesson, in the **One Step Further or Back** sections there are suggestions for expanding the lesson so that more time can be taken, or more attention given to certain aspects of the lesson. This allows teachers to consider the individual needs of the group and choose a focus and pace which will work best. In **Extensions**, you will find suggestions for a variety of ways that the writing process can be enlarged and can link to other activities or classroom subjects. In both cases, these suggestions are not prescriptive, but simply offer examples. The possibilities are endless and much of the joy of teaching these lessons will be to see where they lead the teacher and students.

The **Including All Learners** suggests adaptive approaches that illustrate a few of the many ways to make the experience accessible and satisfying for students with disabilities. These adaptive tips are by no means exhaustive but offer ways to problem solve alternative activities and teaching points that take into account students’ disabilities or developmental levels.

You will find in the lessons three kinds of key points highlighted within boxes. **Links to Learning** highlights ways that the lesson's writing activities and extensions can tie into and enhance the core curriculum. **Let's Say That Again** emphasizes educational approaches which are vital to the success of the activity. **Lesson**

Learned points to the insights gained into students' experiences, thought processes, and learning styles, which can come from the writing experience.

Bookmaking

This book is unique in that there is a second section on creating books that follows the writing lessons. This introduction to the art of bookmaking includes tips, instructions, and diagrams for simple handmade or “unique” books into which students can put their imagination writings. Each writing lesson suggests a book form which might work well for that particular exercise—but of course all combinations of books and writing are possible!

Bookmaking as an art form offers teachers a rare and invaluable tool for motivating young and emerging writers. Furthermore, it brings new appreciation to students for books and what they can mean. Of course, any kind of writing can be put into a handmade book, but imaginative writing is a particularly good match.

Mimi White has worked as poet in residence in a variety of locales since 1982. She has taught in public schools, settings for individuals with disabilities, residential facilities for seniors and for people with mental health disabilities, and community sites including churches, temples, daycare, and hospice care facilities.

Deb Stuart is a teaching artist whose discipline is children’s traditional music and folklore. She has worked with students across the United States, in Central and South America, and in Europe as a residency artist and teacher trainer. Her training has focused on the integration of music into the classroom with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of all learners through arts-based approaches. Stuart has been a roster artist for the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts for 24 years.

LESSON ONE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU OPEN THE SKY?

What Happens When You Open the Sky?

When you open the sky you see a light blue river of clouds, angels playing happily in the water some playing harps. Your mind wanders when you open the sky, wanders to a new world, a new world of moons and bright stars; a new world of lightning, thunder and excitement. Sometimes you see hearts falling from the sky. Flowers filled with beauty come drifting down. Sun filled with happiness falls on every lonely and sad face

Emily, grade 3
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

This first lesson that guides students to imaginative writing starts with a question—not an ordinary question, but one that opens the imagination to endless possibilities. When the mind is set to wandering, there is no end to what might be in store. The key to all the lessons that follow is the unlocking of the student’s heart and mind through a series of questions. There are no right answers; there is only the journey.

GOALS

To unlock students’ imaginations and encourage them to trust where that might lead; to live in the world of the question and not seek the “correct” answer

HOW TO BEGIN

To create the mood for writing about the sky, take the children on a brief walk around the school or neighborhood. Ask them to be silent. Before going inside, find a quiet space—a grassy lawn, a park bench—and invite the students to look at the sky for at least five minutes without talking or moving. When you are back in the classroom, begin the activity as soon as possible when the image of the sky is fresh.

INSTRUCTIONS

Present these questions orally, although when it's time for the writing to begin it might be helpful to write them on the board or chart paper. The first questions lead to a discussion of what the students saw, heard, or felt. You might like to ask these questions as the students are taking their walk. You might prefer to wait until they are settled back in the classroom.

When it is time to write, offer the students a variety of paper (lined, unlined, large, small, white, colored) and a variety of pens and pencils. This allows the student to imagine more fully. The first writing is a draft and can be revised later for books and other projects.

- **What colors did you see when you looked at the sky? Light blue? Yellow? Gray? Think of shades, changes in colors.**
- **What did you see in the sky? Birds? An airplane? Leaves? Clouds? What if these things had voices? What would they sound like? What would they say? How would a cloud's voice differ from a leaf's? What sounds might you imagine coming from the sky?**
- **When you were very still, what were you feeling? Quiet? Dizzy? Sad? Was your mind wandering, remembering something from yesterday or when you were very young?**

After discussing the above questions, give the following instructions for writing:

- **Using your imagination, answer the following question: What happens when you open the sky? Let anything come to mind. Imagine how you would describe how rain might fall as rain does fall from the sky, but also try to let your creativity run wild. Might your grandmother's white hair fall from the sky, or pearls, as the sky was so very white? Maybe all your childhood memories came down on you. And don't forget to think about *you*. You are the one opening the sky. How do**

you do that? What sounds can be heard as the sky is opening? Do you like opening the sky?

- Now choose any size paper you wish and write without stopping or speaking. Try to keep your thoughts moving. Do not worry about spelling or penmanship, although it would be helpful to be able to read what you have written. See how far you can take this question.

Links to Learning

The technique of nonstop writing can be an excellent one for helping students with writer's block. Getting ideas down on paper and returning at a later time for editing and revising will free the writer to concentrate on responding expressively.

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

Take time to explore skies. Begin with pictures from magazines. There might be some wonderful photographs on the Internet. Thomas Locker's watercolor illustrations in *Sky Tree* and *Cloud Dance* invite children into the skies of several seasons and many kinds of weather.

Students might enjoy painting their own skies. This could lead to a discussion of clouds that relates to curriculum on weather. Take the walk a week or two later. The students will observe more keenly what they have been viewing and painting on paper.

The questions might be answered as an oral activity or taped and kept in a listening area. If the students enjoy the visual activities, ask them to draw a painting that answers the question **What happens when you open the sky?**

EXTENSIONS

This question might be varied. **What happens when you open the moon? What happens when you open a leaf? What happens when you open your shoe?** Because the students have been

invited to freely imagine they will be able to write more easily and have fun. Never overlook fun as a goal in writing.

Writing the final draft on a piece of sky or the moon and hanging them around the room would be a fine way of sharing the students' work.

For older students, try: **What fills your mind? What happens when you open your brain?** It's amazing what they know about themselves, think about, and what they reveal with this question. The question is meant to jolt them a bit, to go somewhere they have never been and to be bold and free in letting whatever comes, come.

Let's Say That Again

"The question is meant to jolt..." the writers so that they move into new realms and are open to unexplored ideas. This open-ended questioning can often be the basis for moving students forward and out of ordinary patterns.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

For a student with low vision, make sure that the outdoor experience and use of pictures of the sky are accessible. The child's vision consultant can help with this. For a student who is totally blind, alternative ways to ask the question can be presented: **What happens when the air around you sweeps back?**

Other ways to ask the questions might be: **What happens when you enter the sound of a wave or the sound of the wind? Or, for students who are hard of hearing, What happens when you enter the feel of a wave or the wind? What happens when you enter an argument? What happens to your voice, your ears, your eyes?**

Students with language-based learning disabilities will benefit from the chance to take time on the walk, and then one-on-one in the classroom, to answer the questions orally and perhaps to record their thoughts digitally or on tape. The writing portion can then be a choosing of their favorite response accompanied by an illustration.

If the sky is too abstract for some students, too far away, maybe questions about things nearby would be more appropriate: **What happens when you open the mirror?** (Look in a mirror, first up close, and then from far away. Try using two mirrors so the students can see their backs.)

For nonverbal students who do not have writing skills, a variety of materials and tactile objects that they can arrange on a big blue piece of paper (their “sky”) can provide a way to construct the scene they imagine. Remember to have a good assortment so that they have lots of choices. A partner or aide can then write down the student’s words about the arrangement.

If one or more students have emotional disabilities, they may need support and structure to keep the imagining experience positive and appropriate. Lead in questions such as **What are some wonderful things you’d like to see? Can you picture a favorite place or activity? What if the sky opened and something special came to you?**

WORDS INTO BOOKS

This lesson would work well for making a simple scroll book—a long skinny piece of paper, perhaps with clouds sponged on it, wrapped on a polished stick.

In the student example below, notice how the student changed the pronoun when she wrote the poem—a fine adaptation.

What Happens When I Open the Sky

When I open the sky a puffy cloud drifts out and take you to places you have never been before. When the sky first spreads apart it feels like you are an angel. When the puffy cloud brings me back I sew the sky back together.

Ciara, grade 3
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

LESSON TWO: WHO AM I?

This lesson and the following one ask students to pretend they are animals and workers of the universe. By imagining themselves as something else, children often find a way into themselves, a hidden part, perhaps a more powerful self.

Animal Spirit

There is a black swan in me, a neck as long as a tree swishing through the wind.

Amy, grade 5

There is a reason why many of us have pets and why children love their stuffed animals: on a very basic level, we are connected to the animal world. After all, we are animals. This lesson invites students to think about what animals they are most like, which animals they feel a kinship with.

GOALS

To discover a hidden part of the self; to imagine the world from an animal's point of view and to develop empathy for that animal; to write in the voice of another animal; to be thoughtful about verb choice

HOW TO BEGIN

Begin by having a brief discussion about pets, who owns them, and why. Next, ask if anyone has heard of totem poles. Carved by native peoples of the Pacific Northwest in both Canada and the United States, these structures were used to tell stories and protect the different tribe nations. Some of the totem poles that have survived over the years are more than 30 feet high. They are often decorated with hand-carved birds, snakes, and fish. To read the stories that they tell, one must start at the bottom of the pole and work up to the top.

This lesson works well as an introduction or as a final activity for a classroom unit on animals. It is helpful to know something about the

animal the student chooses, although too much information can tip this exercise toward scientific writing. Look for a balance between information and the use of the imagination. Students might enjoy looking through an issue of *Zoo* magazine, which publishes large, colorful photographs of animals. Encyclopedias are another good source. Look at the pictures after the listening activity. The lesson works best when the student has had time to think about which animal he or she identifies with. The following questions help guide the student in finding that right animal.

Let's Say That Again

"...Look for a balance between information and the use of the imagination." In linking these writing exercises to core curriculum, striking this balance will be key to reinforcing other learning and still giving the student the opportunity for creative composition.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask the students to be very still and very quiet as they are going to listen to a series of questions. They are to think, but not answer out loud. It may help them to visualize if they shut their eyes.

- **If you were an animal, would you be very large or very small? Would you live in the sky or the sea, a river, a rain forest? Maybe you live in the jungle or in a hole in the ground. Do you have wings and feathers, scales, and a skinny tongue? Are you covered with a thick coat of fur or stripes? Do you have horns or tusks or stingers or claws? What color are you? Do you sleep at night? How do you move? Do you glide, slither or soar? What sounds do you make as you move or when danger approaches? What do you fear? Where do you sleep? What do you dream about? Who are your friends?**
- **Start your writing with the opening sentence: "There is a _____ in me."** The blank can be filled in by the name of the animal or an animal's feature, such as, "There are huge claws in me." Encourage the students to write as if they are the animal,

using “my” rather than “its” or “his” or “her.” For example: “My wings block out the sun.”

Either before or after the first exercise, take a few moments to talk with the students about verbs. Point out how the more specific the verb, the fuller the portrait of the animal. “Go” or “move” tell very little about who they might be. Also point out the similes in the student examples. The unusual comparisons enliven prose writing because they add detail and surprise.

- Ask students, “**Does your animal soar or glide, stomp or roar, gallop or slither? Think about words that tell how they move and do things.**”

There is a butterfly in me. My wings are like rainbows opening and closing...

Kim, grade 4

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

It might be fun to add creative movement with this lesson, either before or after the writing. If students act out their animals prior to writing, they may have more empathy for their animals and more fully imagine being those animals. Creating masks and small bits of costume, such as beaks, feather capes, or big floppy ears, will add drama to the movement.

If students enjoyed learning about totem poles they could begin their exploration of animals by creating one of their own. This is a perfect time to collaborate with your art teacher or invite in a visual artist from your community.

EXTENSIONS

These activities are fine beginnings for stories. You might ask the students, who are now animals, “**Where do you go? What problem do you need to solve? Has anything happened to you? Are you on a journey?**” Once these animals have come to life, the students

can take them further and create little stories or scenes about their animals.

Read aloud some stories about animals, such as *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White, where the animals talk and have real problems to solve. Reading this book will provide the opportunity to talk about larger themes, such as friendship and loyalty, which White writes about beautifully here.

Links to Learning

Pair this writing activity with a science unit on animals and their habits. Illustrating where their animals live and what they do each day will enrich both the writing activity and add dimension to students' science studies research.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

This lesson works very well as an oral exercise for students with developmental or learning disabilities. Giving the answers to the questions to an aide, older student, or volunteer, the story can be transcribed or recorded digitally or on tape. The teacher can then develop further vocabulary or written work that is appropriate for the student.

Some students may need more time than others with the preparation and more time to hear each individual question. For non-readers, picture cues that accompany the questions when they are written out will be helpful.

Using stuffed animals, particularly realistic ones, for tactile exploration is another effective way that students with disabilities can begin to experience their animals. This is particularly true for students with low vision.

Narrative: *Marjorie, a young girl with osteogenesis imperfecta, had been moved from an unsafe home environment to a group home. Although safer in her new living situation, she was very sad and upset at first because she had to leave her family, particularly her siblings. However, she wouldn't talk about how*

she was feeling and kept very bottled up. In taking part in this exercise, she wrote, "If I could be an animal I would be a rabbit because rabbits are soft and they are cute. Rabbits are afraid of people because they do not know if people are going to hurt them, but I do not think they should be afraid because they are cute and people will protect them and be nice to them." This was the first real insight several adults involved with her had into how she saw herself and those around her, and indicated that, although fearful, she was coming to trust their efforts to keep her safe and healthy.

WORDS INTO BOOKS

Students can make square or triangle pop-out books with illustrations of their animals doing different things mentioned in the stories. The various little corners of a pop-out book can either hold or say some things about their animals' diets.

Lesson Learned

Giving young people a new way to express how they see themselves can open lines of communication and understanding that would never be available with direct questions or factual narrative. There is permission given that makes revealing feelings a safe thing to do.

LESSON THREE: WORKERS OF THE UNIVERSE

The progression in this lesson is from the real **“What are your chores?”** to the imagined **“Who would like to be the polisher of stars?”**

GOALS

To further explore who we are in an indirect and playful way; to explore elements of myths; to draw a surreal picture and make the connection between the image on the page and the words in the story; to choose adjectives with care

HOW TO BEGIN

Start by asking, **“Who has a job or chores?”** Let every student speak and encourage those who do not participate. A question that brings them all into the discussion is, **“Who makes their bed?”** After a brief sharing of real jobs, move into the imagined realm by asking a series of more fanciful questions. **“What job would you like to have in the universe, helping to make sure it functions as it should? Who wants to polish the stars? Keep the earth spinning? Make hurricanes? Puff up the clouds?”** By asking these questions you will stimulate others. Write the jobs on the board: Star Polisher, Sweeper of Clouds, Painter of Rainbows. Broaden the students’ thinking to include as many jobs as possible. Then choose a job you’d like and draw your worker on the blackboard or a large piece of paper. Depart from the ordinary shape of a body. For features draw from the job your person performs. For example, the body could be a raindrop or a funnel cloud or a flower. The hair could be flames or leaves or wind swirling. Add detail such as veins in the leaves or patterned feathers. These people/creatures will look surreal, “more than real.” It’s fun to add pockets and capes or crowns. These features will provide texture for the writing. Then pass out drawing paper. Before the students start, erase your picture or place it near the back of the room. They will feel freer to create their own creatures.

INSTRUCTIONS

Draw your creature/person using detail.

Experiment and be playful. Twigs for arms and moons for eyes might be just right.

Use the whole piece of paper. Think big.

Draw a background that shows where your person lives, maybe in the sky or in a garden.

When the students are ready, ask them to share their pictures and tell briefly who they are, what they look like, and what they do. Ask them to title their pictures, which will focus their writing. The Villain of Violent Weather and the Dude Who Pulls the Sun Across the Sky are a few gems from seventh-grade students.

Now write about your picture. Some questions that might stimulate the writing are: **Who are you, what do you do, what do you look like, what are your hair and your eyes made of, how do you move, how do you do your job, where do you go when your job is done?** Ask the students to describe in detail. “My hair is fire” is not as rich as “My hair is orange flames leaping in the sky.” Maybe their arms are crooked twigs or their eyes are brilliant stars. The right adjectives add depth. Keep drawing them back to the picture that is usually intricate and layered with color, shape, and design. As in the animal poem, it’s easiest to start with naming who you are, as in this example from Nadia.

The Rainmaker

I am the rainmaker. I make them from teardrops
and purple and pink pieces of paper and someday
I will fall down with the rain and I will be very sad

Nadia, grade 2

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

Some students feel more comfortable with what is real. In that case, spend more time talking about the chores they do, how they feel helping at home, what other jobs they might like. They could draw a picture of themselves at work and write about how they feel, what

they might be thinking as they work. Other students learn best through drawing. Stay with the drawing, talk about it, and record the student's responses. Students often have the whole story in their heads by the time the picture is completed. Again, acting out their creatures with masks and added bits of costume also brings the person to life.

Let's Say That Again

"Some students feel more comfortable with what is real." In all the lessons in the book it is good to be sensitive to students who need to start with the concrete before moving to the imaginary.

EXTENSIONS

These little stories resemble myths. Myths arise out of curiosity and a need to understand something that cannot be easily explained. They are often concerned with deities and explain some practice, rite, or phenomenon of nature. After the lesson you might like to read some myths (see bibliography). Bringing in literature will help the students understand some of the basic elements of myth and aid them in writing longer stories on their next try.

A few students might like to work together on a myth. Others may wish to draw murals or create costumes for these myths, or design papier-mâché creatures that can be displayed with their stories.

Those of you with technical expertise might work with the students to design a slide show or a presentation on myths suitable for the computer. This could be shared with other classes or at a special school function.

A trip to a local planetarium is also a great follow-up activity as the stories of the Greek gods are often referred to when illustrating the constellations. This makes a natural tie-in to science studies that include astronomy.

Links to Learning

This writing lesson would pair wonderfully with an early elementary unit on community helpers or in a school-to-work setting with older students with disabilities.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

Taking time to talk about jobs and work will make moving on to imaginary jobs easier for students with developmental delays. All youngsters have chores of some sort, both at home and in the classroom. Next, some time could be given to talking about workers in the community and about what jobs various family members do. There are many good books for young people of all ages about professions and jobs, and these could be read and discussed. Making lists with picture cues for non-readers would be a good activity.

Let's Say That Again

For students with visual disabilities, be sure to have plenty of tactile materials on hand for the initial picture. Because this “worker” is imaginary, this is an excellent art project as it is meant to be wild and imaginative. Having the teacher’s example done in collage with plenty of texture allows students with visual disabilities to experience it, and is fun for all the children. Collage encourages more imaginative and abstract creations for all students.

WORDS INTO BOOKS

The myths might be expanded in a series of handmade books. Students could pair up as a writer and an illustrator and the whole class could contribute to a set of small accordion books (or any other form)—or students could write and illustrate their own books. Then the books could be gathered together in a nicely decorated folder, tied up with ribbon or twine, or put into a homemade slipcase for inclusion in the classroom library corner.

LESSON FOUR: THE WEATHER IN YOUR HEAD

This lesson draws a connection between science and the student's imagination. The territory between writing and science is very rich. If you are interested in exploring this more fully you might enjoy reading *The Alphabet of the Trees: A Guide to Nature Writing* or *Spectacular Science: A Book of Poems*. (See bibliography)

GOALS

To encourage students to express their feelings through the metaphor of weather; to catch a glimpse of what's going on inside their heads

HOW TO BEGIN

Brainstorm different kinds of weather: hurricanes, blizzards, thunderstorms, hail, sleet, snow, sun, and wind. List these words on the board or chart paper, then brainstorm different feelings associated with these types of weather and write them in a separate list.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Ask the students how they are feeling and to select a weather that could demonstrate how they feel. Then ask them to explore this weather more fully.
- **What does the wind sound like? How does the rain fall? What does the snow cover? When the lightning strikes, what can you see?**
- Simple beginnings could be, **“The weather in my head is...”** or **“When I am angry...”** or **“When I am sad...”** and let the weather come.
- Tell the students to begin their writing anyway they'd like; the key is to see weather in a new way and to use it as a metaphor to explore feelings, as an adult learner did in this sample of writing:

The weather inside my head is stormy and loud, it dances around and is heavy and dark. There is confusion and sadness, then drops fall and the tears come.

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

Spend a few weeks on weather. Keep a daily chart of weather conditions, clip the local weather report from the newspaper, watch the skies, and identify the clouds as they move by. Develop weather vocabulary lists. Also track the emotional weather each day. Keep a list of how the students are feeling during the weeks they are watching the skies and reading weather reports. Develop the habit of talking about science and feelings, mixing the two vocabularies.

EXTENSIONS

Make a silhouette of each student and ask them to draw the weather inside their heads. Display these in the classroom alongside the daily weather reports.

Invite a local meteorologist to talk about weather and ask some students to share their local “weather reports” on what’s going on inside their heads. It might be fun to ask the visitor to try writing one of his or her own “weather reports.”

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

For students with learning disabilities, including those who are not writers or who are nonverbal, using a wide variety of pictures from nature magazines and books could be a concrete way to enter this lesson. The students can then go on to either dictate their stories or to arrange pictures to express the weather they are feeling.

Acting out facial expressions or body movements for the feelings associated with different weathers is a very interactive way for all students to get involved in this lesson.

For classes with one or more students who are Deaf, learning the ASL signs for different emotions would be a good inclusive activity.

LESSON FIVE: THE ACCIDENTAL STORY

This lesson works well at the beginning of a writing unit or with a group that will be together for a limited amount of time. Because it relies upon cooperation and requires very little writing from each person, the accidental story eases the writer into writing. This lesson is adapted from Barbara Drake's lesson "A Manipulated Six-Line Poem."

GOALS

To create group cohesion; to work cooperatively; to see how accidental language ignites the imagination; to learn how the mind makes connections with odd bits of language

HOW TO BEGIN

Tell the students to follow the directions and think only about the sentence they are writing, nothing else. Pass out a piece of paper to each person.

INSTRUCTIONS

After writing the assigned sentence, the student passes the paper to the right. The next sentence is added, the paper is passed, and so on until seven sentences have been written. The seven assigned sentences are listed below, but the types of sentences are endless. Try making up your own.

- **Write a sentence that tells something about the sky. Fold the paper down so it covers that sentence and pass it to your right.** (Do this each time.)
- **Write a sentence about a town.**
- **Say something about a season or the weather.**
- **Ask a question that does not have a simple yes or no answer.**

- **Write a sentence where a thought is revealed.**
- **Finish a sentence beginning with “At night...”**
- **Now unfold the paper that is in front of you. Read it over, silently, then out loud.**
- **Add anything or delete anything you wish, but keep it about the length of seven sentences. Write a title on the top line.**

Here’s an example created from the sentences that came from students during a session:

Night Talk

The sky was thick with clouds. The seaside town looked abandoned. Soon snow began to fall. Is the weather something that changes us or do we change the weather, the sky, the wind? I was thinking about you, how sad you had been. At night, the owls hooted softly and then I slept.

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

Instead of writing the accidental story on one piece of paper, try writing the sentences on strips of paper and placing them in a bowl. Let teams of two choose seven sentences and try placing them in an order that makes sense. Adding and deleting are fine.

For the younger student this makes a great group activity. Ask the students to take turns, dictating lines to you as you write them on large strips of paper. When the sentences are complete, place them on the floor, read each out loud, and see what story the children might create by moving the sentences around until the story sounds just right. Add or subtract text, then cut and paste the story on a large white sheet and illustrate it.

EXTENSIONS

Read these accidental stories out loud and look for places where they surprise, where they make sense. Working in pairs, ask students to

combine their stories, seeing where they might fit, what can be changed or deleted, and seeing how their stories might grow. Talk about how the mind jumped in and made connections. Try to keep the story going before the final line, “At night,” is added.

Have a discussion based on these questions: **How can a story come out of an accidental or manipulated arrangement of words? What is a story?** There is no one answer to these questions, but the activity will get the students thinking and talking. Their next story might take a few more twists and turns. They may leave room for the accidental, the surprise.

Let’s Say That Again

“There is no one answer to these questions...” The key to a successful implementation of so many of these writing activities is to keep the questions open-ended and simply open up the students’ minds to new ways of thinking about things.

Here’s a longer extension:

The Found Story: This exercise relates to the accidental story as the words come from a source other than the writer. Gather old newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and catalogs, and rip them into pages or lengths of manageable size. Working in pairs or groups of four, ask students to underline, mark, or copy sentences from a variety of sections. When the students have a handful of sentences, ask them to arrange their words or phrases in an order that tells a story. This is another avenue for discussing the elements of a story.

Most students have a very good idea what a story is, and discovering that they know this even before they write will boost their confidence. If you’d like them to have a theme for their writing, ask them to search for words or phrases that describe their parents, how they feel about themselves, or any other organizing principle. This will direct the choosing, but still rely on found language for most of the text.

Creating the Story: Guides for Writers by Rebecca Rule and Susan Wheeler, listed in the Resource section, is an excellent source of story prompts and a fine resource for follow-up lessons.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

This is an excellent lesson for students with learning disabilities. The written sentences can be short and attention to spelling and grammar can be done at a later stage, so writing fluently may be less daunting for them in this exercise. For students with limited writing skills, a scribe or partner could be used to put down their thoughts. Remember to offer this option to all students if it is necessary for some.

Students with developmental disabilities who cannot read and write can dictate their ideas and also use picture cards and illustrations as a contribution to the exercise. For students who are nonverbal, arranging sentences (if they are readers) or picture cards (if they are not) will be a good sequencing activity for telling the story.

For students with low vision, the exercise will work well if they write sentences in large print on pieces of paper that can be spread out and arranged. Furthermore, since the whole class can work with these, the student is fully included without having to be given “special” sentences or attention.

For a student with visual disabilities, the exercise could be extended to include overheard language. With the aid of a scribe, ask the student to “gather” spoken language throughout the day and use this as the genesis for the story. The overheard language can be recorded during day one. On the second day it can be played back and, with the help of a scribe, rearranged to tell the story back into the recorder and placed in the listening center or library corner where the other stories may have been placed for reading.

WORDS INTO BOOKS

A staple book, in which the final sentences are pasted in collage form, could work well as a culmination for this exercise. After the student has chosen the sentences, arranged them, and edited them, she or he can plan the number of pages needed so that a sentence can be glued to each page. Adding collage artwork could complement the process. Designing the book, planning on the number of pages, deciding on illustrations, and choosing papers and a cover to match the story will give importance to the finished product and illustrate how something “accidental” can become a real story worthy of publishing.

LESSON SIX: PROMPTS

In this last chapter, a series of lessons are presented that all use the same writing technique. Some lessons differ in length, while others have diverse extensions and adaptations similar to lessons one through five. All the adaptations for students with learning differences offer ways to incorporate handmade books into play as you explore this lesson. Some lessons are quick exercises. All are based on a particular “prompt”—that is, a short phrase that is open-ended and jump starts the writing process.

A prompt assists a person who is speaking by suggesting that something more is said. In this group of lessons, the prompt is an opening for writing. Sometimes an opening sentence or phrase can be enough to get a story rolling. The prompts in the following lesson were designed for specific age groups, but several work on many levels. Some were inspired from poems, while others were made up on the spot as the group seemed to dictate. Try making up your own after you have used a few of these. The right words often unlock a whole story.

First Prompt: “I’ve been waiting for…”

This phrase was borrowed from the poem “I Am Waiting” by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. His poem is a mix of the ordinary, such as waiting for spring, juxtaposed with the political—waiting for someone to “really discover America.” It’s not necessary for you to read the poem to the students, but do tell the students that it’s a list of things the poet has been waiting for, in any order, with the collision of small details and big ideas giving the poem its energy. This also works well as a piece of prose that has the rhythm of poetry, since the phrase “I am waiting” is repeated for cohesion and emphasis.

Goals

To let the students be heard; to find your voice and speak it; to rant and rave. As one high schooler told me, “If you don’t speak, you’ll never be heard.”

Instructions

- Ask the students, **“What are you waiting for?”**
- **Write as much as you’d like, including anything that comes to mind.**
- **You can repeat the phrase; you can mix up little things like “waiting for spring” with big things like “waiting for your dad to come back home.”**
- **You will share this only if you wish to.**

Tara, a high school student, wrote the following. Notice the sense she has of her place in the work world and in her private world:

I am waiting for the homeless to find warmth in winter. I am waiting for my boss at work to start doing some work. I am waiting for my boyfriend to have a little more patience.

EXTENSIONS

These sentences can lead to a larger autobiographical piece. They also read well out loud and could be used in a play or drama. The spoken voice carries much of the power. You could also change the verb tense from “I am waiting” to “I was waiting” or “I will be waiting for” to push the memory back in time or forward to a different urgency.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

Students with emotional disabilities will often respond to this prompt with expressions or yearnings that can run very deep. Creating a safe environment and allowing them to write pieces that even the teacher does not read can get these students involved in ways other writing does not. It may also be true that, as in the example below, a student is willing to reveal feelings, thoughts, and attitudes that will be very personal, and issues that the teacher and peers have not realized. Again, keeping the environment safe will be very important.

***Narrative:** Eric, a student at an alternative high school, wrote about being fat. He shared in his piece how it felt and how he was waiting for people to know him for who he was and not for his body. When he read his piece out loud the whole room grew still.*

Lesson Learned

In the writing process we provide a way for students to give messages that are of deep importance, to themselves and to others. Writing and sharing offered this young man a chance to tell his peers something he could never convey in everyday conversation. The social implications for these opportunities can be profound.

Second Prompt: “I’d like to tell you...”

Here's a very short but effective writing exercise. Students have so much to say—to tell their parents and their friends. This phrase seems to capture that someone needs to relate in a very immediate and intimate way.

GOALS

To write as if you were speaking directly to another person; to tell something that needs to be shared; to be honest, yet thoughtful and precise

INSTRUCTIONS

- Write, “**I’d like to tell you...**” on the board and ask the students to think of a person they would like to imagine telling this to.
- **Write fast and don’t edit.**

Jacki wrote two pages. This is how she began:

I’d like to tell you you make me want to scream. I’d like to tell you you challenge my mind, philosophy, religion and behavior.

And Sarah, another high school student, wrote:

I’d like to tell you I need you even though I don’t always show it. Even though your teeth bother me and sometimes the way you speak.

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

After this lesson has been done, there are many ways it can be used to increase time spent writing.

To get students simply writing more, you can capitalize on the “note writing to friends” phenomenon by designating times when you *encourage* notes being passed. For instance, if there is a silent

reading period, you can tell students that they may take five minutes of it to write and pass a note to a friend if they like.

You could also occasionally take a five-minute break for everybody to write a short note. They can then have the option to give it to a friend, write a personal note, or write something to you.

For younger students, try a classroom box into which students can drop notes with “appreciations”—things they’d like to anonymously tell a classmate whom they admire, or for which they want to say thank you. Every now and then, the teacher can read the appreciations that have collected in the box.

Links to Learning

These are good examples of ways to encourage writing by students with limited writing skills. Simply writing a name and few words can create a powerful appreciation.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

This lesson presents an excellent opportunity for students with speech and language disabilities to work with their therapists to express themselves. As the entire class will be doing this, it could be especially motivating for these students.

Third Prompt: “With my hands...”

Fiction writer Eudora Welty wrote that remembering is done through the body. This prompt focuses on the hands as a place where memory resides. This lesson was developed as a group exercise in settings where there are elders with limited verbal ability, and uses a scribe to do the writing. It could, however, be adapted for other situations.

GOALS

To look closely at our hands; to share with a group what our hands can do or what they have done in the past; to retrieve the joy of working with our hands

INSTRUCTIONS

- Have the group sit in a circle.
- Say, **“Tell me what you do or what you have done with your hands.”**
- Let students speak out loud.
- Wait patiently for the quiet ones to speak. Hearing the others may prod them to share.
- Write the sentences as they speak.
- Read back to them what they have shared with the group.
- More memories might be triggered by the reading, so you may want to ask if there are other ideas to add those to the list.

Narrative: *I was working in a VA hospital with a variety of people. Some could write, some could walk, and others could do neither. I decided that, at one point, they could all do something with their hands or had a memory of what their hands could once do. I asked them to look at their hands, to touch each others' hands, to think about what their hands had held, had accomplished. Memory resided in those hands. I wrote as they told me what they could do, what they had done, what they and their hands remembered. The most eloquent statements were often the simplest: “I can wave goodbye with my hands.” This lesson started as the others had. I said, “Tell me what you do or what you had done with your hands.” I just let them speak out loud. When a few had not yet spoken, I waited patiently. Hearing the others prodded the quieter ones to speak up. Sharing was quite moving. I read back to them what they had told me and I could see that they were touched, were remembering again their lives through their hands.*

ONE STEP FURTHER OR BACK

This lesson can be adapted for one person. Have the student tell you about her or his hand, relating a story about each digit. You can transcribe the stories.

Lesson Learned

Being open to new ways of presenting or continuing a lesson based on cues or suggestions from participants will often lead to successful and innovative outcomes.

Fourth Prompt: “Growing up means...”

The poet Stanley Kunitz said that memory was every person’s poet-in-residence (Janeczko 1991: 75). Memory is also the best editor; look at how much we have forgotten. Not all memories are pleasant though, and this prompt may retrieve painful experiences. Be supportive and careful when asking students to share.

GOALS

To use memory as a source for writing; to look at place or setting as an element in writing; to remember what we had forgotten

INSTRUCTIONS

This lesson starts with a brief discussion of place. As in earlier lessons, a series of questions helps unlock the memories that will inspire the stories. Let the students respond out loud or to the person sitting next to them.

- **Where did you grow up? Name the towns, the streets—all of them. Try to focus on the one place where you have the most vivid memories.**
- **Who were your best friends? Your enemies?**
- **Which teacher was the meanest? The nicest?**
- **What were you afraid of?** (A good one to tell a partner)
- **Name your pets. What crazy things did you do to your pets, such as dress them up in dolls’ clothes?**
- **Name a place you went to when you needed to be alone. Why did you go there?**
- **Can you share a sad memory? Can you share a happy memory?** (Another good one for a partner)

- **What did your neighborhood look like?**
- **Using a phrase such as “growing up means” or “growing up in (name of town),” write as many memories as you can using specific language, naming names, describing places. Details will bring the memories back. It’s fine to repeat the phrase if you run out of steam.**
- **Write fast and don’t worry about the order the memories are written. You can revise later.**

A philosophical piece of writing from a high school student:

Growing up means not being sure what you want to do. What is right and what is wrong are covered up like grass in winter.

Here are a few sentences from a middle school student:

Growing up in Boca meant being tough and trying to catch armadillos bare handed with the boys. Growing up in Boca meant never understanding why my neighbors called their attack dog “Happy.” It meant crying and crying when Bernice, our neighbor, died from Alzheimer’s.

EXTENSIONS

A group of teachers in a writing workshop chose to focus on one aspect of childhood. Instead of listing all the memories, they expanded upon just one, as this teacher does in the excerpt about Mr. Bamford. Mr. Bamford hauled his rag cart through the town, under the hot sun, shirtless and tired, and at night his daughter sat on the front stoop and peeled his burned back. The story begins:

He is the substance of childhood horror, old Mr. Bamford, crunched on the bottom stoop, below the one-hinged door, below the curling chips of aged paint on the rickety porch he crunched, knees to chin, an American gargoyle...

A student at the University of New Hampshire wrote a piece titled “Black Widows at Six.” It opens, “Jackie and I usually found them on the shaded side of the house and they were always in pairs.” Here the language is simpler, the memory placed before us with the use of names and setting. To shorten the memory might be fun. One sentence, one memory sealed in a little book. A secret in an envelope is a great place to capture a memory.

MOTIVATING A WRITER: BRADFORD’S STORY

Bradford was a student with severe dyslexia whose reading and writing skills came slowly and with great effort during his first four years of school. During this time, however, he was encouraged to dictate stories and to use his considerable artistic skills to illustrate them.

As his literacy grew, in fourth grade he became interested in writing a book based on his fantasy of owning a horse. Writing at first in a stream of consciousness style to unlock the ideas, he generated a full story line. Subsequent editing focused on dividing the story into chapters, looking at any pieces of the story that were not there (although they were in his head!). Next, he was helped to tackle grammar, verb tenses, punctuation, and spelling. Finally he and his tutor read it for flow and the quality of its descriptive adjectives and adverbs. Bradford took the story through *many* revisions without a murmur. Finally, he wrote a dedication and a foreword.

He took the publishing very seriously. He chose a name for his own publishing company and created his own Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication number with all the proper designations. His father agreed to be listed as publisher’s agent.

The final step was to illustrate the story, choose special paper, a cover, and a binding. With assistance he assembled a limited edition of 20 copies, and hand signed them with individual notes to all family members plus a copy for the local library.

Lesson Learned

If we meet our students where they are, we can carry them far. Choosing a topic which is of passionate interest to the student will make the discipline of acquiring writing skills far more engaging and satisfying.

Fifth Prompt: “In my dream...”

Some might argue that the dream world is richer than memory when searching for writing material. Dreams often come from a wilder or untamed side of our minds. Be aware that some images are too scary to share and respect a student who may not wish to tell a dream to the group.

GOALS

To mine dreams for powerful images; to accept all the images, even the strangest ones, the ones that might frighten us

INSTRUCTIONS

- Sit in a circle.
- Ask each student to remember one image from a dream.
- Then ask them to tell this dream image beginning with the phrase “In my dream...”
- Record their responses digitally or on tape, then play the recording back when they have all had a turn to speak.
- Invite students to cut out a large star from yellow construction paper. As they finish cutting out their stars, transcribe each student’s sentence onto his or her star and ask them to decorate their stars with the image or images that they associate with their sentence.
- Hang the stars around the room.

EXTENSIONS

As in the memory piece, the stories can expand from one sentence to a whole dream. It's also possible to write *as if* the writing were a dream. Talk more about the qualities of dreams, how images are transformed, a car becomes a sofa, a house turns into a lake. We can also fly and drive and swim in the sky. Jamaica Kincaid, a writer from the West Indies, writes as if the speakers in her stories are dreaming. If you are working with middle or high school students, her book, *At the Bottom of the River*, is worth reading and sharing. This writing is very fast-paced, almost like stream of consciousness.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

Again, in this lesson the teacher will have to be very sensitive to any students with emotional disabilities or from difficult living situations. To begin with, tell the students they can pretend to have had a dream about doing something wonderful and special. Providing safe structures might include having the first spoken contributions simply words or phrases that describe events in dreams, either real or imaginary, which are fantastic. Examples might be: "Speak a word or two that describe how it feels if you have a dream about flying," or "Use a few words to describe the colors you might see in a favorite dream." And this might simply be a lesson best not done in some settings.

For students with cognitive disabilities who are nonverbal and do not write, artwork that expresses a real or imaginary dream could be a tool for participation. In that case, all students in the class could be given the opportunity to expand this activity to include a drawing, painting, or collage.

Sixth Prompt: "-ing..."

One word can tell a story. A string of words might tell the story of a day.

GOALS

To simplify storytelling; to organize a story around the idea of work; to remind ourselves what we do in a day

INSTRUCTIONS

Start with a brief discussion about what the students do, beginning in the morning and continuing until they go to sleep. Then give these few prompts.

- **Write a list of all the things you do only using “-ing” words, such as “eating,” “cooking,” and “running.”**
- **Include inside words (sleeping) and outside words (driving), words that tell what’s in your head (worrying). Be as inclusive as possible.**
- **Write as fast as you can. Later you can reorder your list so that it reflects the order of your day.**

Narrative: *I was working with a group of mothers who did not know each other, but whose children shared the same daycare. When they had completed their “-ing” lists and had shared them, one mother remarked that by telling what she had done all day she felt a sense of accomplishment and also experienced a sense of community with the other women. Several other mothers were “mopping, singing, and driving” their way through the day. Natalie wrote, “sleeping, waking, dreaming, eating, cooking, rushing, driving yelling, working, looking, seeing, finding, having, playing, walking, wishing, kissing, hugging, helping.” It’s easy to find words that strike a chord. All writing creates community and this lesson does it simply with ease and honesty.*

Let’s Say That Again

“All writing creates community...”

EXTENSION

There are any number of phrases that can open up a story. You can find them in poems, on the radio, in children literature and bits of conversation, and you can make them up. A way to extend this lesson would be have students themselves use magazines and newspapers for phrases that they think would make a good story beginning and then build their writing on a phrase they have found.

INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS

For students with significant speech and language delays or deficits, an aide, parent, or teacher working with them could use one of their words or sentences that they can speak confidently and use often. It would be very meaningful to build a story that starts with or incorporates the students’ own words and, particularly, to use them as a repetitive theme. Afterward, the student could illustrate the story to make it his or her own.

LINKING WRITING TO ART

Handmade books are exquisitely versatile, with infinite possibilities for both form and function. Books can be created as a result of inspiration solely for the purpose of art, as motivation for reluctant or beginning writers, as a primary tool for the revision of writing, as an enrichment tool for teaching core curriculum, or as an adaptive tool for a variety of learning styles. The practice of “publishing” students’ own writing is a valuable classroom activity. These lessons on bookmaking link this technique with the art form of “artist-made” or “unique” books.

The materials used to make books range from found papers and glue sticks to highly sophisticated handmade papers and fabrics. Likewise, book forms can be a single fold or complex pieces with pockets, pop-ups, or books within books. Best of all, handmade books are great fun to construct, carry, and occasionally contain whatever content and information the artist/author chooses. Detailed information about materials has been included in each book lesson. There is also an extensive bibliography of bookmaking resources listed at the end of this handbook.

Opening Up the Sky features the highly practical accordion fold with a number of variations, including the Inadvertent Book, simple but intriguing pop-ups, and the straightforward “staple” book. These book forms were chosen not only for their simplicity, but also for the fact that they lead very quickly to more complex and layered book forms. These are books that do not immediately require sophisticated binding techniques.

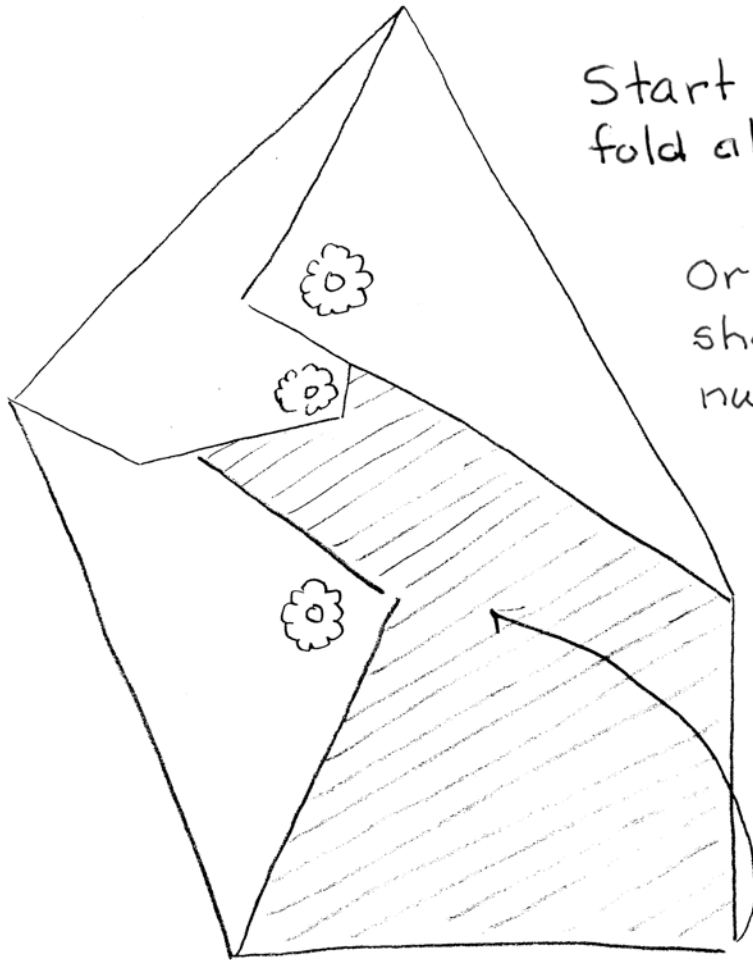
We believe that pairing writing from imagination with this simple but irresistible art form gives teachers and learners a wonderful tool that enriches the expressive process, provides motivation for working on writing to perfect it for “publishing,” and fosters an expanded appreciation for all books.

BOOKMAKING DIAGRAMS

Here are a few drawings and instructions for making some simple books. These will be familiar to some and new to others. You can find many other resources with ideas and directions for making your own books listed in the bibliography. Because there are no set rules that go along with these exercises, anything you create will be unique! Throughout this process you will find your own ways to change and adapt the books given here.

RANDOM FOLDS

Here are two examples of paper folds that require no matching edges and do not have a prescribed "right" way to make them.



Start with a square and fold all four corners

Or start with a random shape and vary the number of folds

fold corner to wherever!

Tip: Use the same tiding techniques as with accordion (middle fold then sides to center)

Tip: Decorating or coloring one side of paper first makes the folding easier. You then match "color to color/white to white" - even as you turn a corner.

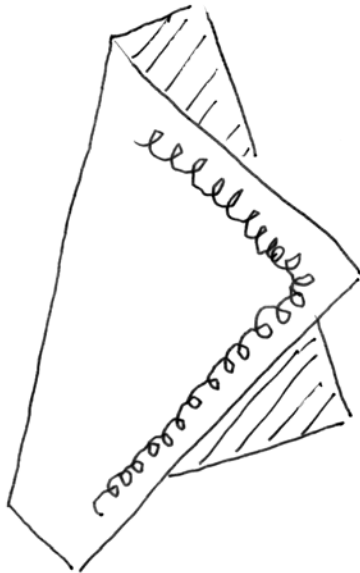
The idea for this book came from John, a student with cognitive disabilities. John decided to adapt the folding himself and created a book that was unique and charming.

Lesson Learned:

Remember that students will often provide the best solutions and adaptations!

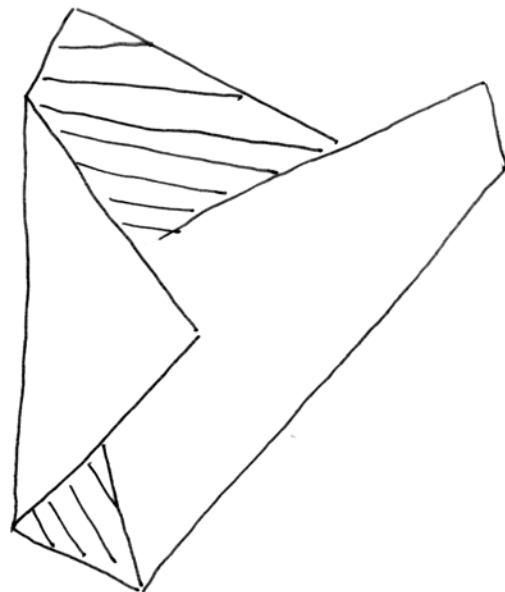
The first example has four folds. It is important to remember that just one fold of a single piece of paper can constitute a book, as shown in the second illustration.

Many handmade book forms call for careful and exact folding. It is important to let students know right from the start that this is only one way to make a book. The best way to encourage innovations, discourage frustration, and get everybody feeling satisfied is to do at least one or two books that are folded "free-form." This will be particularly true if the group includes students with motor or cognitive disabilities.



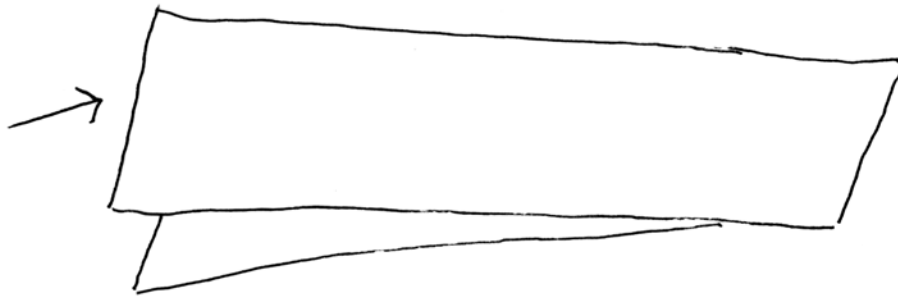
Even one random fold makes a square more special.

Of course, any number of folds can work.

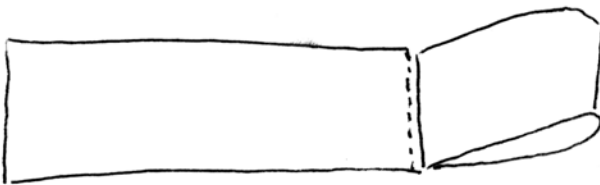


TRADITIONAL ACCORDION FOLD

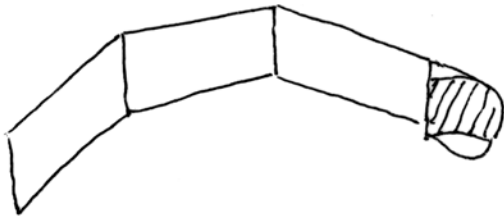
Here is an illustration of the way to fold an accordion book.



Fold carefully
in half



Fold each end into
the middle
(4 sections)



Fold each section once again
(8 sections)



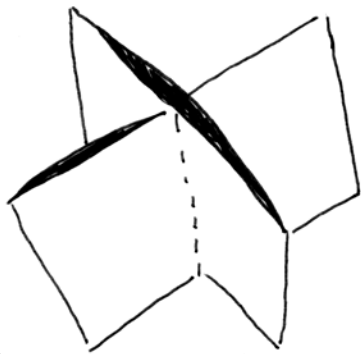
Use the creases folding back and
forth to form accordion book

(Note - some folds will be reversed to do this)

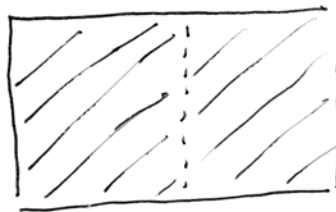
There is a simple trick to teaching or making an accordion book with pages that are the same size. Make the center fold first. Second, fold each of the two sides in half. Next, fold each of the two sides in half. By folding your paper in this manner you will not be starting the folds from the end and going back and forth. Ultimately, the pages will be much more even in size.

Accordion books folded in this way will always have an even number of pages in multiples of four: four, eight, sixteen, etc. You can make books with different numbers of pages simply by cutting off panels that are not needed. To make a longer book, simply glue panels together.

SOME WAYS TO USE ACCORDION BOOKS



Bring two ends together and glue to form a "never ending" book



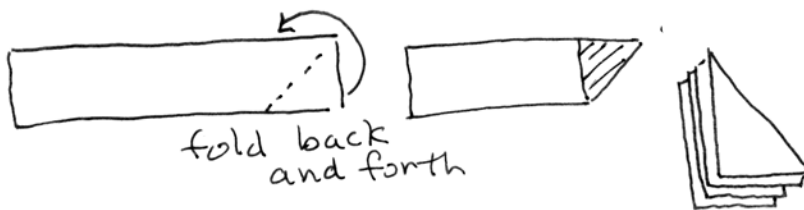
cover

Use a piece of heavier paper or card stock twice the size of the ends of the accordion - glue each to make a "flutter book."



Other Accordions

Make folds triangular instead of rectangular

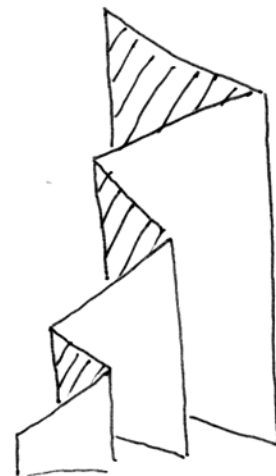


This won't be exact but is harmin

Cut paper with a slant top for an interesting effect.

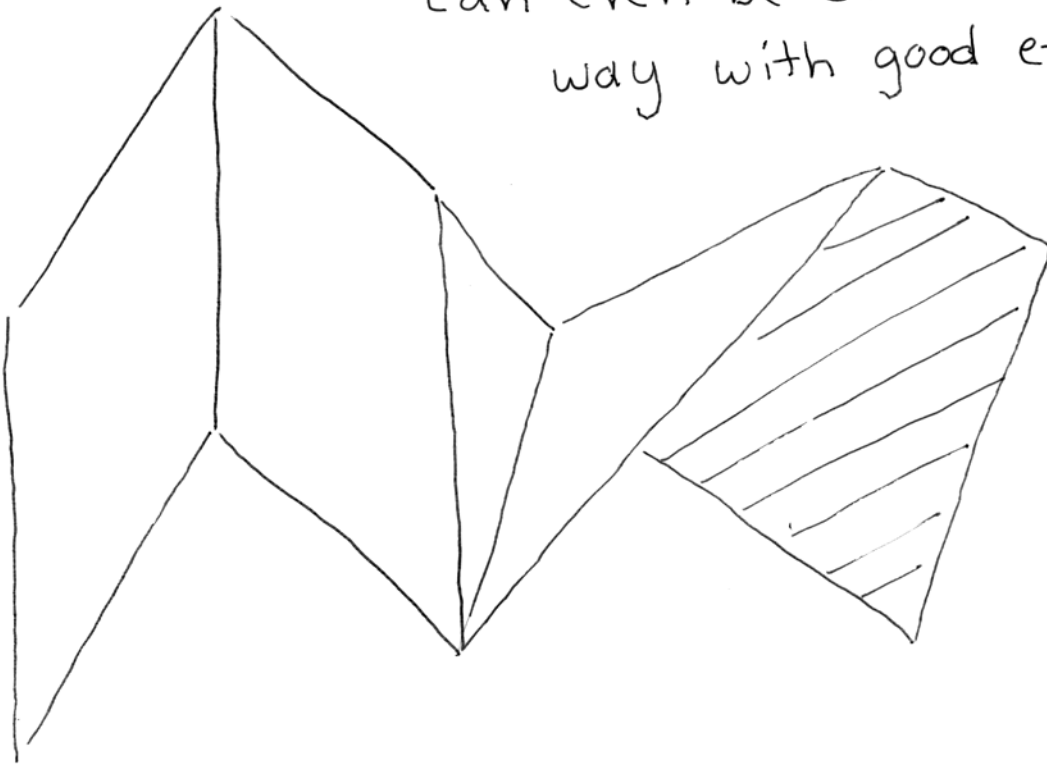


Note: Drawing a colored border on the slanted edge makes this form even more dramatic.



Even the basic accordion book, which is usually taught as a series of folds with matching edges, can be made in a less fussy, more random way. Here's how it might look.

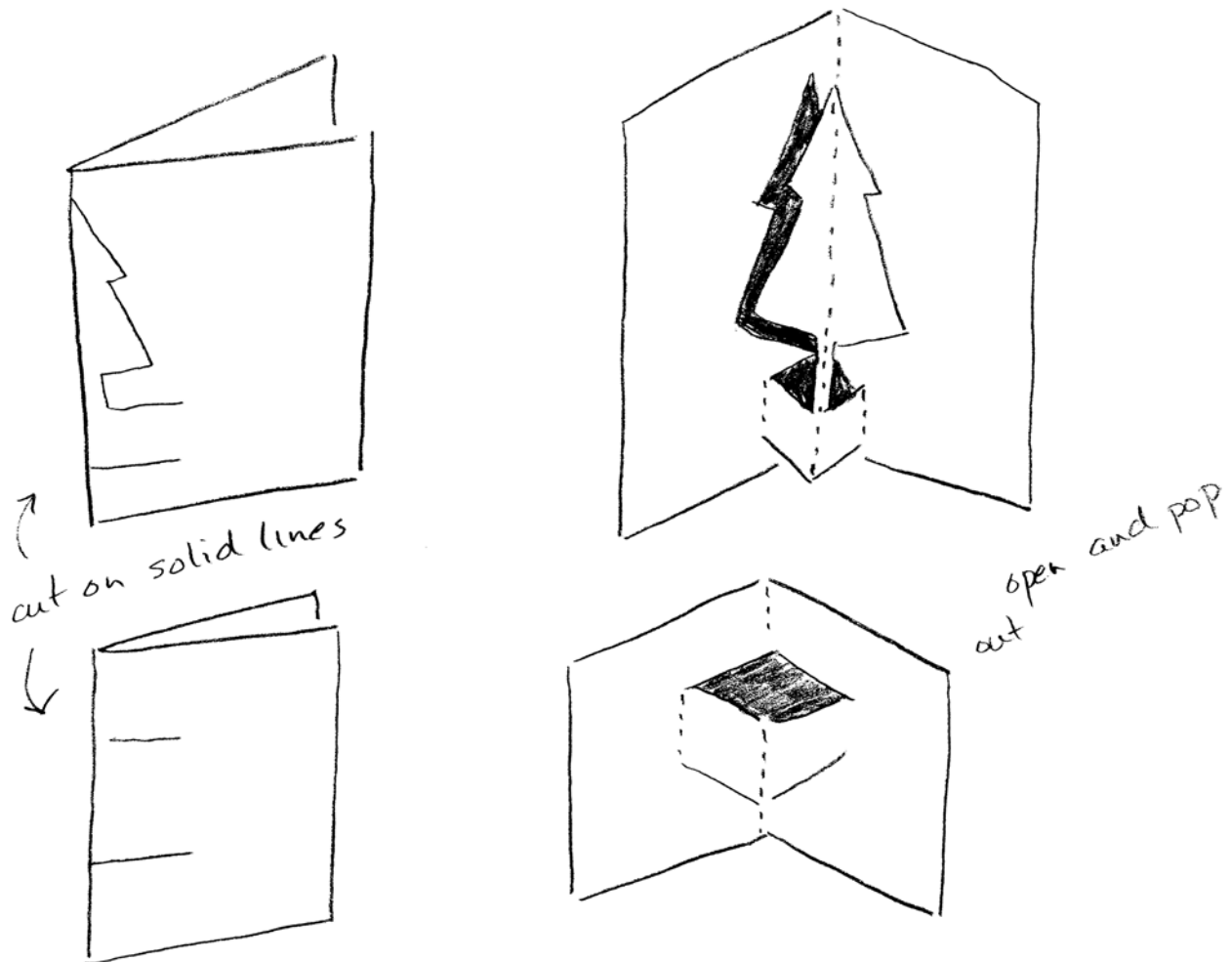
An accordion book
can even be done in a random
way with good effect.



Use this as a way to teach folding
"back and forth" without the anxiety
of matching edges.

CUT POP UP BOOK

Books with pages that “pop” are delightful and are favorites of children and adults! Here is an illustration for making a simple type of pop-up book. You’ll find many variations in the resource books, particularly *The Pop-Up Book* by Paul Jackson.



These work well if the pop-out page is mounted on contrasting paper of the same size as a cover or as an interior page in a book so there is a backing.

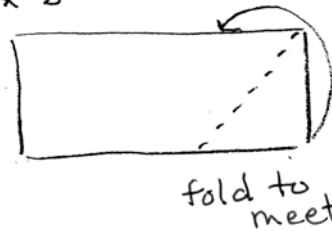
When working with young students or those with disabilities, a teacher can make the pop-out form and then the student can cut or tear a simple shape that is then glued to the inner cut. The picture or shape will then “pop” out when the page is opened. Here is an illustration of this.

FOLDED POP-OUT BOOKS

I chose this name for these books because you "pop" them open, rather than just turning back a page. They are particularly fun for hidden pictures or words. One youngster called them "secret surprise books." They can be made with any size piece of paper cut into a perfect square, but they are most effective as really small books.

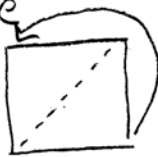
Start with a perfect square - as small as 3x3 - but not more than 8x8

Tip: How to make a perfect square

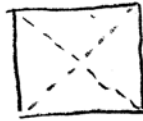


HERE IS A TRIANGLE VERSION OF THIS BOOK:

Triangle



fold corner to corner then open

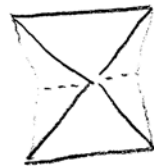


fold other corner to corner and then open



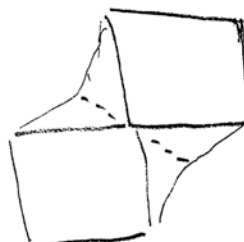
turn paper over and fold in half

Now here's the tricky part - turn back over, put your finger in the center and "collapse" the sides in to form a little triangle book.



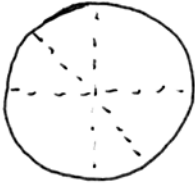
HERE IS A SQUARE VERSION OF THIS BOOK:

Square - Same moves but fold in half one way, then the other way. Turn over make triangle fold and "collapse" into a little square book.



When closed these book have hidden spaces and secret places!

The same technique can be used for a circle!

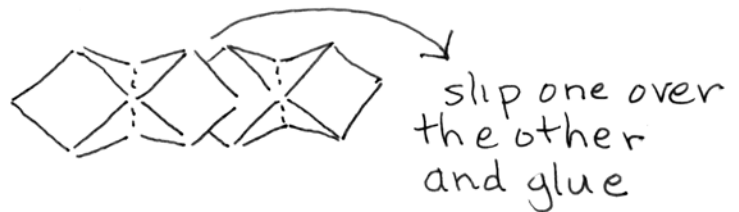


2-4 circles or triangles can be glued together back to back for lots of little spaces.

Extension: A really nifty thing about these books is that they can be joined together. Glue two or three triangle books back-to-back and you get lots of secret spaces.

Even better, the square version can be glued together forever using this method. This will be particularly spectacular if you use a rainbow of colors.

An infinite number of squares can be joined for a long telescoping book.



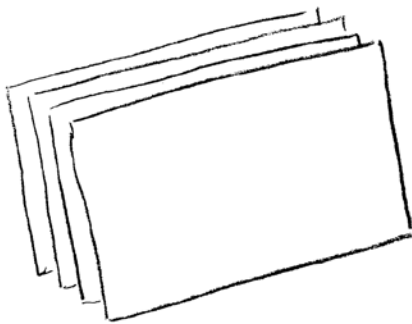
Adaptive Tip: This takes very careful folding so provide an ample amount of time and plan on having to provide individual attention to young children or students with disabilities, or encourage students to choose either the symmetrical model or a more random folding of the corners. If a student needs help with folding, be sure that whoever is assisting hand-over-hand allows as much independent motion as possible.

LAYERED STAPLE-BOUND BOOK

This first simple technique gives a very polished look to a book that is essentially pieces of paper stapled together. In this case, the top piece of paper flips back over the staples and makes a smooth binding and backing.

Here is an illustration of this binding:

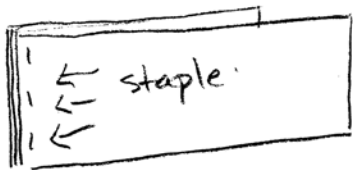
Staple Binding



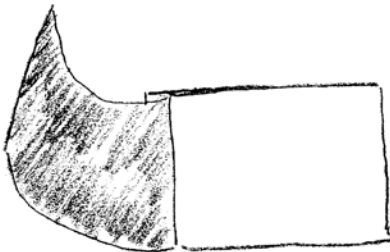
Here are some ways to "bind" a stack of paper

The number of pages is limited by the size of staples used.

Stack matching pages carefully



Take paper for a cover page (a contrasting color and preferably with more weight) - the same height but 3" longer



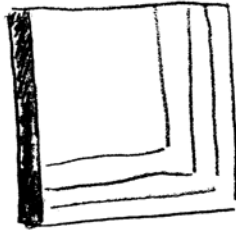
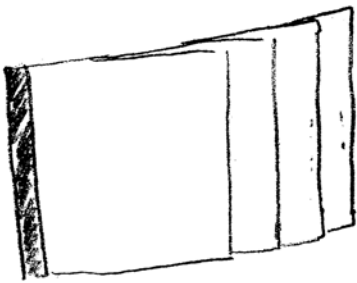
Lay it face down lining up left corners. Put in 2-4 staples
Tip: Flatten the staples with a hammer after they're in.)



Fold the cover page back over the staples and pull it behind the stack. Your staples will be nicely covered and your book will have a back.

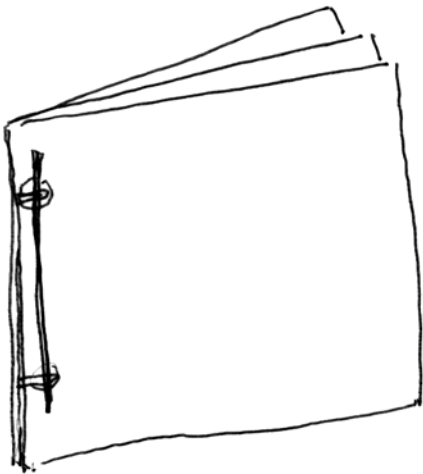
Pages can simply be formed from a small stack of paper, or the pages can be arranged more creatively. Here are some examples:

Pages of different sizes make this book even more fun.



Make pages different colors or paper textures. Use high quality "scrap" donations from local printers.

Another very easy binding is a punch hole.



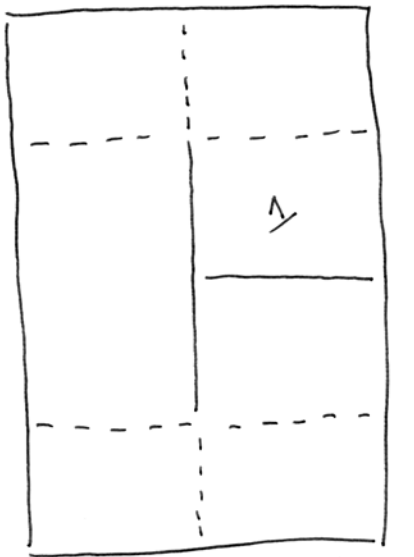
Punch two holes through all sheets.

Find a stick of some sort (twig, popsicle stick, dowel... even a pencil) which is just a bit longer than the space between the holes.

Put an elastic along the back. Thread the ends through the hole and loop them around the stick to hold it in place. Instant interesting binding! (You can use ribbon or string and tie, but elastics are particularly stable.)

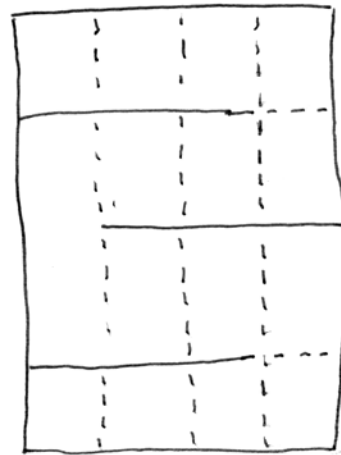
MAZE OR INADVERTENT BOOKS

These books are folded accordion-style but, because they are cut in interesting ways, they open in a much more random fashion. These books work best if they are done with larger sheets of paper (they are very difficult with anything smaller than 11" x 14"). Using this folding technique on paper that has artwork and lots of writing on one side. The writing and drawing can be done before the folding and cutting, because when the book is cut and folded the words and pictures appear in surprising places. Here are two examples:



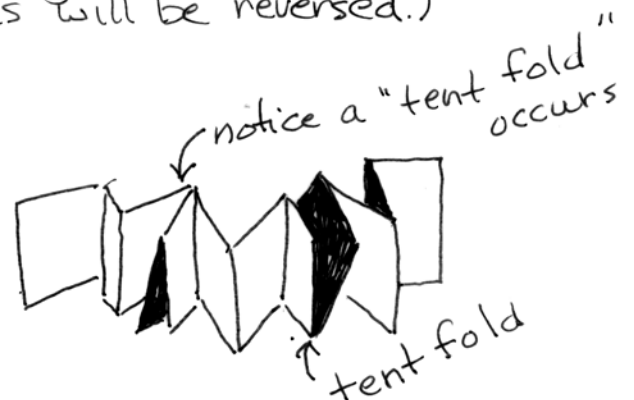
Simple "T" fold
8 sections

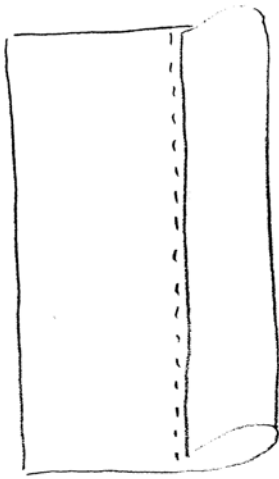
Fold a large rectangle carefully as shown by dotted lines. Open and cut as shown by solid lines.



more complex maze
6 sections

Once the cuts are made, start at corner #1 and fold accordion style, alternating folds. (Remember some of the creases will be reversed.)





Tip:
Use the
same
folding
techniques
as with
accordian
(middle fold,
sides to center,
etc.)

Tip: Decorating or coloring
one side of paper first
makes the folding easier
You then match "color to
color / white to white" -
even as you turn a corner

Adaptive Tip: This book is very hard to fold perfectly, even for a skilled adult. Either allow the book to be casual and not expect perfection, or take a great deal of time for completion and give individual assistance. The book will look fine if its folds are not perfect—it's the fun of the random ways to the folds come out that makes this book worth doing.

Caution: Some students simply cannot bear to fold and cut artwork or writing once it is done. In this case, the inadvertent book can be made from a plain piece of paper and the student can enjoy finding ways to write on and decorate the numerous folds and turns the pages take. (Folding will be easier, however, if there is at least some color or texture added to one side of the paper—just quick sketching with crayons will do the trick.)

OTHER SIMPLE IDEAS

A scroll is one of the earliest forms of a book and ideal for students to create. The long, thin page is simply rolled and tied. It can be rolled around a stick, pencil, or some similar object, either fastened or unfastened. Choosing ribbons, embroidery threads, or other ties will add color and interest.

Putting books into containers lends importance to even a simple piece of paper. Envelopes, matchboxes, film containers, folders, or a myriad of other possibilities can hold a book.

Books seem so much more important when they have covers. In fact, students sometimes don't feel their project is a book until this happens. Every one of the books illustrated can have a simple cover. Just cut a second piece of paper, or one of stiffer paper (or use your collected greeting cards), to the same size as the first page and glue it on. Or the cover can be slightly larger. If you want to get really fancy, try other materials for covers—corrugated cardboard, a thin piece of wood, poster board, or scraps of mat board from your local picture framing shop.

For future cover ideas, see any of the books listed in the bibliography.

BOOKMAKING SUPPLIES

The following list gives suggestions for basic materials and tools. Teachers are encouraged to use a wide variety of decorative techniques and free and found papers. With the current craze for scrapbooking, there are many materials to buy, but ultimately making books out of recycled and homemade materials is much more satisfying and creates books that are charming and utterly unique.

Papers:

In addition to white and colored papers in standard sizes, an appeal to a local printer will yield an amazing assortment of textures, shapes, sizes, and colors. An appeal to families or the community will often bring forth origami, old stationary, high-quality greeting cards, and so on. A milk crate with folders will help keep the various papers neatly organized. Collect card stock (shirt cardboard, old file folders, report covers, etc.) for making covers.

Glue:

Glue sticks are the absolute easiest way to attach paper to paper.

Magazine Pages:

Some teachers who do a lot of bookmaking keep zip-lock bags of pages from high quality magazines. Three categories of magazine pages might be: colors (magazine colors are shiny and very saturated, often quite unlike any but the most expensive colored paper); textures (look for pictures that have unusual patterns after they are cut up); letters and numbers (colorful and large print for titles or word collage). Notice that representational pictures are NOT listed. Students will often substitute these for their own work. These pages can be used for torn collage or for decoration. They are ready to be treated like markers or paint to add color, borders, or patterns.

Tools:

Scissors, rulers, popsicle sticks (which are used to flatten creases, in place of expensive bone folders), a variety of markers, crayons, colored pencils, and pens.

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(Children's literature Web guide with wonderful links to Internet resources about books for children and young adults.)

Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia.
<http://www.moa.ubc.ca/>

(This site connects directly to the museum that is known for its totem pole collection and other artifacts from the Pacific Northwest nations.)



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