

Book arts are all the rage in the world of grownup art making, but how can this medium be made available to early elementary students? Following are some great concepts and strategies to try.

FIRST TIP: use board books! A great many of them lack the literary “chops” to be saved for academic reasons. What they *do* have, by design, is the perfect substrate for young children. While shaped books can inspire creative ideas, we used uniformly shaped books for these projects.

With a little “advertising” (asking people to give their castoffs to you), you’ll have a nice collection to work with in no time. Don’t bother selecting books for their original topic, however, as they will soon be sanded and covered.

Why sanded? Board books are high gloss by design because infants and toddlers use them and the books must be frequently cleaned. A light sanding of the glossy pages helps them accept glue. Students enjoy participating in the sanding, but circulate through the room to assist those who need it.

Board books can be glued completely shut, becoming a substrate and frame in one. Young students can add beautiful elements simply by gluing. Older students can carve, drill and cut elements in the book.

Books can also be sectioned off into

Altered Books for K-2

by Kimberly J.B. Smith

one, two, three or more pages per student. There are infinite ways to use these discarded books.

IN KINDERGARTEN, the students can practice their ABCs and 1-2-3s in an altered book, while creating a unique self-portrait on the cover. Use blank price tags, stamps for numbers and letters, and a collection of paper embellished by the students.

A week of preparation involves the creation of sheets of sgraffito to be cut and used over the original book. These sheets can be placed in a “class collection” to be shared. This way, there can be light/dark contrast between the background colors and the squares on which the numbers and letters are stamped. The cover art is a self-portrait

using miniature school photos and a paper doll–like tracer for embellishment with a costume. The interior reveals the alphabet and the numbers are on the back.

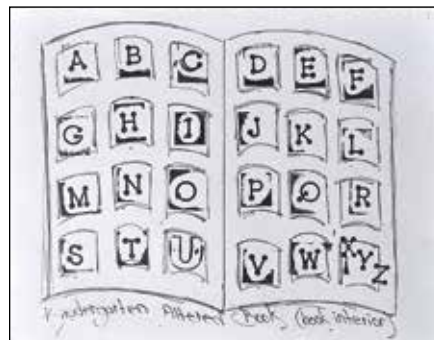
FIRST GRADERS can create an Henri Rousseau–inspired image that touts foreground, middle ground and background. Add a review of animals in Rousseau’s paintings (we chose tigers because our school mascot is one). Once again, preparation of sgraffito sheets for use in a light blue sky, background in green and purple mountains (as sung in the song, *America the Beautiful*). Add details of Rousseau’s style, such as a red sun and stylized flower.

SECOND GRADERS can use a Russian folktale (*The Golden Fish*) and Japanese fish printing (“*Gyotaku*”) with collage to create an artwork incorporating printmaking and literature. A simple pop-up inside is wildly exciting for youngsters!

Discarded dictionary pages cover the original book pages, serve as a unifying background, and create the possibility of word play.

Students take turns printing fish (the rubber kind) in gold ink to adorn the book as they choose. Each student created two final fish prints.

An adaptation (by me) of the *Golden Fish* tale is separated into three sections for the students to put on three pages. Further use of the story can include creating sentences—often funny—within each section of the story. One piece of decorative paper is added as embellishment (cut into a repeated shape and placed on all pages) with a unify-



Some letters for the childrens’ reference.



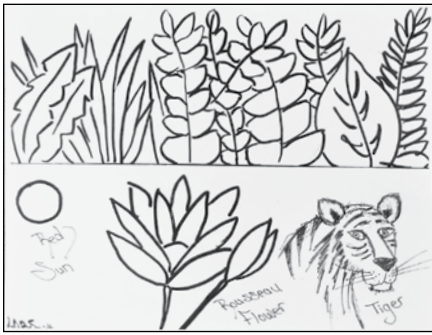
Ryder

Kindergarten

The younger set incorporated their ABCs and 1-2-3s into their altered books, and created unique self-portraits for the covers.



Calli



First-graders could refer to this handout if they needed a bit of help.

ing background color in watercolor to complete the piece.

All of these projects are presented at a level that is age appropriate with countless extension possibilities for students who are able. This book-altering format can be used in an infinite number of ways!

This project presents students with an essential question, “How can we recycle and create outstanding works of art?” And, students come away from the experience with the enduring understanding that making art does not have to be costly and recycling materials can provide the opportunity for unique inspiration and art. ■

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Sophie



Ben attached a paper stick to his tiger so he could make it move.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Primary-level students will ...

- learn how reusing, reducing and recycling to create artworks can save resources and offer unique aesthetic possibilities.

NATIONAL ART STANDARDS

- CREATE (Kindergarten): Engage in exploration and imaginative play with materials.
- CREATE (Grade 1): Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art.
- PRESENT (Grade 2): Categorize artwork based on a theme or concept for an exhibit.

First Graders

These young artists created a Rousseau-inspired image that featured foreground, middle ground and background.



Shalee

MATERIALS

All Grades

- Board books (two pages per student)
- Sandpaper
- White glue, diluted glue to apply sheets over board pages, large paintbrushes to apply glue
- Prepared sgraffito papers for K–1

Kindergarten

- 12" x 18" manila paper, sgraffito tools
- Tempera paint in light and dark hues
- Blank oaktag squares, body tracers, white glue, scissors, price tags, alphabet stamps
- Decorative papers
- Student photos or self-portrait sketches

Grade 1

- Two sheets of 12" x 18" manila paper (one for light blue sgraffito (cover and sky), half a sheet for green sgraffito, and half for purple sgraffito—per student)
- Pencils, sgraffito tools, black permanent markers
- Reproductions of Rousseau's art, handout with foreground plants, red sun, Rousseau flower, tiger
- White construction paper (for foreground sketch, red sun and flower)
- Media to color foreground, sun and flower
- White glue, scissors

Grade 2

- Dictionary pages (four per student)
- Adaptation of Russian folktale
- Pencils, black permanent markers
- Gyotaku fish, gold printing ink, large paintbrush, white printing paper
- Copyright-free fish images
- 3" x 9" oaktag for pop-up wave
- Watercolor paints
- Decorative papers, scissors, white glue.



Lorelai

Harper

Grade 2

The Golden Fish, a Russian folktale, and Japanese fish printing (“Gyotaku”) were featured in the second-graders’ books.



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