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My Little Pocket Book: A Handmade Adventure

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My Little Pocket Book: A Handmade Adventure STEAM Lesson

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My Little Pocket Book: A Handmade Adventure

Handmade books date back to ancient Egypt, where papyrus scrolls were created by hand.

Later, in ancient Rome and Greece, the **codex** replaced the scroll, marking the beginning of the book format we use today. The idea of **portable books** emerged with the rise of literacy and travel. Small-sized books—sometimes called **vade mecum** (Latin for “go with me”)—were created to be easily carried in a pocket or pouch. They often contained poetry, prayers, or practical guides.

This bookbinding project is designed for elementary students (but can be adapt to Middle and high school too) who will explore the art of making their own handmade books. Throughout the project, students learn what bookbinding is and how to measure, cut, fold, and bind pages using various techniques, while also designing creative covers that reflect their personal stories. The project aims to foster creativity, enhance fine motor skills, and integrate math, art, technology, science, engineer and language arts, demonstrating why hands-on learning is so effective. Students participate in group activities over several weeks, culminating in a class exhibition where they proudly share their completed books. This hands-on activity enhances creativity, fine motor skills, and interdisciplinary learning while fostering a love for books and storytelling.

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Goals and Objectives:

1. Integrate STEAM Disciplines Through Creative Bookmaking

- Encourage students to apply scientific thinking (material exploration), engineering skills (structural design), technology (digital content creation), artistic expression, and math (measurement and geometry) while making their own pocket-sized handmade books.

2. Foster Fine Motor Skills and Craftsmanship

- Develop students' hands-on abilities through folding, cutting, gluing, and assembling materials, emphasizing precision, attention to detail, and craftsmanship.

3. Promote Visual Storytelling and Literacy

- Guide students in combining images and written text to tell personal or imaginative stories, encouraging language development and visual literacy.

4. Introduce Historical and Cultural Contexts

- Teach students about the history and evolution of handmade books and pocketbooks, helping them connect to global traditions and understand the cultural relevance of books as artistic and informational objects.

5. Encourage Digital and Multimedia Integration

- Help students bridge traditional and modern practices by incorporating simple digital tools (e.g., QR codes, digital drawings or recordings) to enhance their handmade creations.

Florida State Standards:

[VA.2.C.1.1](#)

Use the art-making process to communicate personal interests and self-expression.

[VA.2.C.1.2](#)

Reflect on and discuss various possible meanings in works of art.

[VA.2.S.1.1](#)

Experiment with tools and techniques as part of art-making processes.

[SC.2.P.8.1](#) Observe and measure objects in terms of their properties,

[MA.2.M.1.2](#)

Measure the lengths of two objects using the same unit and determine the difference between their measurements.

[MA.2.M.1.3](#)

Solve one- and two-step real-world measurement problems involving addition and subtraction of lengths given in the same units.

[ELA.2.C.1.2](#)

Write personal or fictional narratives using a logical sequence of events, transitions, and an ending.

[SC.2.TI.1.1](#)

Recognize that people use computing technology in the workplace or school to perform many important tasks and functions.

Course Outline and Overview:

Grade Level:

Elementary (Grades 2–5)

Duration:

8 weeks (1 class per week – 45 to 60 minutes)

Overview:

This hands-on STEAM-based project introduces students to the world of handmade books, focusing on pocket-sized book formats such as booklets, pop-up books, accordion, flag, and sewn books. Students explore historical context, artistic techniques, engineering concepts, and digital integration. The course encourages personal storytelling, design thinking, and interdisciplinary learning through the engaging process of making a unique, creative artifact: their own pocketbook.

Lesson Plan

Objective:

Introduce students to the art of handmade books and their cultural, historical, and creative significance.

Activities:

1. Introduction to Handmade Books

- Discuss what a handmade book is and why artists, writers, and cultures have created them throughout time.
- Highlight the book as both a container of knowledge and a work of art.

2. Explore Book Formats

- Show and compare different types of books:
 - Scrolls
 - Accordion folds
 - Codex (classic book form)
 - Contemporary artist books and zines
- Talk about how form relates to function and storytelling.

3. Visual Research

- Examine books and images (digital and physical).
- Watch short videos showing bookmaking processes or artist book examples.
- Invite students to sketch or note interesting formats, textures, or ideas they'd like to try.

Discussion Prompt:

What makes a book more than just a place for words? What stories can be told through form, fold, and material?

Learning Connections:

- **Social Studies:** Books across cultures and time
- **Art History:** Book as an art object
- **ELA:** Understanding narrative forms beyond text



Week 2: Planning & Sketching

Design brainstorming and sketching story ideas.

Learn basic folding techniques and explore materials for Pocket Books:

Materials Needed

- Square sheets of paper (same size)
- Glue stick or double-sided tape
- Bone folder or ruler (optional, for crisp folders)

- Start with a square sheet of paper.
- Create the Base Folds:
- Fold diagonally from corner to corner to make a triangle. Unfold. (*Fig A*)
- Fold vertically in half. Unfold. Then fold horizontally in half. Unfold. (*Fig B & C*)
- You should now see folded lines forming a star or "X" and "+" on your paper.

Create the Pocket Folds:

With the paper turned like a diamond (corner up):

- Fold the two side corners into the center (along the creases). These become the pocket flaps. (*Fig D*)

Attaching Pages:

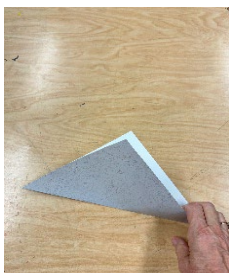
3. Use the two solid triangles (the ones that remain unfolded) as attachment points. (*Fig F*)

- Apply glue or tape only to those two triangles.
- Attach them to the back of the next folded triangle page.

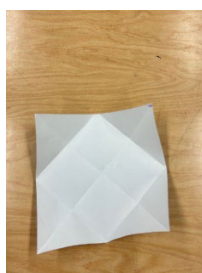
Tip: Decorate or color each page *before* gluing them together. It's easier to work on flat pages than on a folded book.



A



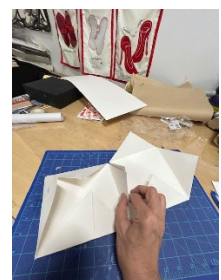
B



C



D



F

Week 3: Creating the Background

Objective:

Students will use watercolor to paint the background of each pocket page.

1. Keep the triangle folded (so the pocket shape stays closed).

This will protect the inner pocket while painting the outside. (See Fig G & H)

2. Use watercolor paints to create the background.

Students can choose colors and designs that match their book's theme — abstract patterns, landscapes, skies, textures, etc.

3. Let it dry completely before gluing or adding characters or inserts.

Tips:

- Encourage students to use color washes, blending, or salt techniques for texture.
- Remind them to be gentle with water so the paper doesn't tear or wrinkle too much.

Creative Thinking Prompt:

"What kind of world are you building for your characters? What colors and shapes will make your reader feel something?"



G



H

Week 4: Creating the characters: Math Integration

Make sure your characters fit nicely inside the pocket.

Not too small — or they'll get lost.

Not too big — or they'll stick out past the pages.

Tip: Place your pocket on a blank paper and lightly trace the inside edge. Then draw your character to fit within that space with a little margin around it.

Students can create as many as they want.



Week 5: Creating the Cover and back cover

Use cardboard or thick cardstock to make a sturdy cover and back cover for your pocket book. This helps your book last longer and look more finished.

Math Moment:

Before cutting, think about the final size of your folded pages.

- Measure your folded page.
- Then, cut the cover slightly larger (about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wider and taller) to protect the pages.

This is a good time to discuss precision in measuring, margins, and how folds affect size.

 **Tip:** If your page folds in half, the cover should match the **folded size**, not the full unfolded sheet.

Week 6: Digital Content Creation

Objective:

Students will enhance their handmade pocket books by integrating **digital elements**, combining traditional art with modern storytelling.

Activities:

1. Design a Digital Cover

- Use simple digital tools (like Canva, Google Slides, or drawing apps) to create a custom book cover.
- Include the **title**, **author name**, and a visual element that represents their story.
- Print and glue it onto the front cover of the handmade book if desired.

2. Create QR Codes

- Record short **audio stories**, sound effects, or video clips (e.g., a reading of their book, character monologue, or behind-the-scenes explanation).
- Use free websites (like QR Code Generator) to create **QR codes** that link to the files.
- Print and paste the QR codes inside or on the back of the book.

3. Fuse Analog & Digital

- Discuss how combining hands-on creation with digital tools can create a **richer, multi-sensory experience**.
- Invite students to reflect: *“What does technology add to your story that paper alone can’t?”*

Resource List

Internet:

<https://www.handmadebooksandjournals.com/>

[https://www.talasonline.com/bookbinding-](https://www.talasonline.com/bookbinding-supplies?srsId=AfmBOoqOo17HHW_fHrgBjJ0glE9M7JKnYhmGd8Bur4BNbUiqkpnMaNXG)

[supplies?srsId=AfmBOoqOo17HHW_fHrgBjJ0glE9M7JKnYhmGd8Bur4BNbUiqkpnMaNXG](https://www.talasonline.com/bookbinding-supplies?srsId=AfmBOoqOo17HHW_fHrgBjJ0glE9M7JKnYhmGd8Bur4BNbUiqkpnMaNXG)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQfxTUwKpF0>

Books:

[Making Handmade Books: 100+ Bindings, Structures & Forms](#)

The Art & Craft of Handmade Books By [Shereen LaPlantz](#)

The Essential Guide to Making Handmade Books: Gabrielle Fox By [Gabrielle Fox](#)

Expressive Handmade Books By [Alisa Golden](#)

Making Handmade Books by Alisa Golden

The Penland Book of Handmade Books: Master Classes in Bookmaking Techniques by Jane LaFerla, Veronika Alice Gunter

Handmade Books at Home: A Beginner's Guide to Binding Journals, Sketchbooks, Photo Albums and More by Chanel Ly

Free design platforms (Canva, Google Slides, etc.)

QR code generator (e.g., <https://www.qr-code-generator.com/>)

Material List

1. **Paper for the pages shaped square:** 2 paper or more per student.

Watercolor Paper, Pkg of 50 White 6" x 9" \$ 8.80

2. **White Cardstock for the cover:** Cardstock Paper (2 per student) package of 50, **\$20.80**

3. **Bone Folder (optional): \$5.87** unit (at least 1 for 4 students)

4. **Paper Clips** (one per student): Binder Clips, Box of 12 medium **\$3.28**

5. **Watercolor:** (at least 1 for 4 students) Class Pack, Set of 36 **\$107.00**

6. **Paint Brush** (one per student) package of 60 **\$55.00**

7. **Stick glue:** All Purpose Washable Clear Glue Sticks, Pkg of 30 \$ **14.39**

8. **Watercolor Pencil** (1 per 4 students) Watercolor Pencil Set of 10 \$ **6.29**

9. **Scissors** (one per students) package of 12 \$ **27.48**