

Art Making: Artists' Books as Personal Timelines

Target grade range: 3-5

DPCS Curricular Unit: Make a Wish

DPCS Curricular Arc: Identity/Becoming

DPCS Curricular Theme: Growth in nature and personal grow

Final Project: School wish tree and a personal vessel that serves as a physical representation of who they are and their future aspirations.

Vocabulary (primary sources: Art, Books, and Creativity curriculum [<https://nmwa.org>] and <https://learnersdictionary.com/>)

- **Artist's book:** An art form that uses elements of traditional book structures such as covers, binding, and pages in combination with the elements of art. It is a three-dimensional work meant to be viewed from multiple sides.
- **Binding:** The cover of a book that holds the pages together and protects them.
- **Book block:** A group of pages not yet bound with the cover; a book without the cover.
- **Book form:** The shape and structure of a book.
- **Collage:** An artwork made by attaching pieces of different materials to a flat surface, or the process of attaching pieces of different materials to a flat surface.
- **Elements of Art:** Color, line, shape, form, space, value, and texture. Artists use these tools to create all visual art—representational, abstract, and non-representational.
- **Emphasis:** Special attention or importance given to a particular element of an artwork.
- **Font:** A set of letters, numbers, and punctuation marks that are all one size and style.
- **Found objects:** Objects repurposed and used in artwork. These objects can be three-dimensional or two-dimensional (like photographs or text from a magazine).
- **Observation:** A process of gathering information through the senses—hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch—and then analyzing the information.
- **Spine:** The edge of a book where all the pages attach.
- **Timeline:** A graphic representation of key events within a particular historical period arranged chronologically. Timelines often include illustrations accompanied by written commentary.

Materials/Tools

- Video: Book Making with the National Museum of Women in the Arts: Single-Sheet Books (8:25)
 - Link to video on PlayPosit:
https://api.playposit.com/player_v2/?type=share&bulb_id=944152
 - Link to video on YouTube (includes closed captioning):
<https://youtu.be/pzyfvoVFbYw>
 - If you have trouble accessing this video, email education@nmwa.org for assistance.
- Sketchbook
- Two or three blank sheets of paper (8 1/2 x 11 inches)
 - Notebook paper and white or colored copy paper all work fine, though you can use almost any paper you have.
- Two pieces of cardboard or other sturdy paper (2 3/8 x 3 inches)
 - Anything that is stiffer than the paper you are using will work. Things like poster board, cardstock, cereal or other food boxes, mailing envelopes, file folders, etc. are some possibilities.
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue/glue stick or tape
- Visual Guide for adding covers and chapters to your book (see below)
- Images of artists' books (see below)
- Ruler (optional)
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers (optional)
- Magazines, newspapers, stickers, etc. for collaging (optional)

Introduction

An artist's book is an art form that uses elements of traditional book structures such as covers, binding, and pages in combination with the elements of art. Artists' books convey meaning through their use of form, materials, images, and text.

Some things to notice about artists' books:

- Artists can use a variety of materials to create artists' books, which can also be almost any size and shape.
- They are three-dimensional works, like a sculpture, which we are supposed to view from multiple sides.
- An artist's book can have both words and images, but might have only words or only images.
- Artists sometimes use unusual materials and structures when creating artists' books.
- The materials and form of a book are part of its message.

Observe and Write

1. Look closely at these artworks (see below):
 - Emily Martin, *Eight Slices of Pie*, 2002
 - Allison Cooke Brown, *Teatimes*, 2005
2. In your sketchbook or on a blank piece of paper, respond to these questions:
 - How are these artworks similar to books you normally use, like textbooks or storybooks? How are they different?
 - Consider: Traditional books have covers, spines, binding, and pages. They typically contain information in the form of written text and illustrations. Are these elements (or versions of them) present in the artworks?
3. Focus on Emily Martin's *Eight Slices of Pie*. Observe closely and describe what you see. Try answering these questions:
 - What shape is the book?
 - What color is it?
 - What materials did the artist use to make it?
 - What words, if any, are in the book?
 - How would you hold it? How would you read it?
 - What clues do you see that might tell you the artwork's subject or theme?
4. Next, look closely at *Teatimes* by Allison Cooke Brown and respond to the questions above. Then, compare the two books, noting similarities and differences between them.

Create

Martin and Brown both took inspiration from their past and present life experiences and hopes about the future. They thought about relationships with friends and family, family stories and traditions, and memories that have shaped their lives. Their artists' books serve as containers for these ideas.

You will create your own artist's book as a container for your personal timeline. The book form you will make is a one-sheet book called a "snake" or "meander" book. This format seems ideal for a timeline—human lives also do not travel in a straight line. We meet twists and turns along the way that point us in new directions. Using words and images, you will illustrate some of the people, places, and events that have influenced you growing up so far and then imagine your future.

1. Make your book.

- To begin, watch the video (8:25) in which [book artist Carol Barton](#) demonstrates how to make a single-sheet book. It may help to watch the video once all the way through and then replay it while you make your book. To make your book, you will need:
 - One sheet of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper
 - Scissors
 - Something to help you make sharp creases in your paper.
 - Book artists like Barton use a tool called a bone folder, but most people do not have those handy. You can use a Popsicle stick, tongue depressor, the edge of a spoon, an old gift card, or even your fingernail.

2. Add covers and chapters to your book.

- You will need:
 - Two pieces of cardboard or other sturdy paper. They should measure 2 3/8 x 3 inches each, which is slightly bigger than the size of your book block.
 - Visual Guide for adding covers and chapters to your book (see below)
 - A glue stick (or other glue or tape)
- If the cardboard you have chosen for your covers has a pattern or printing on one side, decide whether you want the blank side facing outward or inward.
- Using the images and instructions in the Visual Guide (see below), add front and back covers to your book and then label chapter headings.
- Set your finished book structure aside while you plan the contents.

3. Plan your personal timeline.

- In your sketchbook or on a separate sheet of paper, write and sketch details about:
 - Your life and your identity right now.
 - The events or people earlier in your life (between your birthdate and your current age) that have influenced who you have become.
 - Who you hope to be 10 years from now and the people and experiences you imagine influencing your journey.
 - Who you hope to be 20 years from now and the people and experiences you imagine influencing your journey.
- Use the prompts below to help you get started. Ask older family members and other grownups about major life events that you might not remember.
 - What do you look like: hair color, eye color, skin tone, height, etc.?
 - What major life events have occurred (learning to walk, starting school, welcoming a sibling to your family, the adoption of a family pet, a move to a new home, the loss of a loved one, etc.)?
 - Where do you/have you lived? Is there some place else you want to live?

- What people make up your family? Who are your friends?
 - What is your favorite book? Movie? Game? Music? Food? Memory?
 - What makes you proudest about yourself?
 - What was/is your favorite subject in school and why?
 - What is something you learned recently and how it has affected you?
 - What makes you happiest? What worries you most?
 - Who is your hero or role model and why?
 - What do you look forward to about becoming an adult?
 - What goals do/did you have for your life now and 10 or 20 years from now? How can you reach them?
 - What challenges do face, and who or what can help you face them?
 - What job do you have/hope to have?
- Select the 3-4 most important people, places, and events for each age range you designated in your book earlier.

4. Complete your book.

- Take a few minutes to think about the words and images you will use to complete your personal timeline. Will you work in black-and-white, color, or both? Write in cursive or print in various styles? Add collaged words and letters in **bold** fonts? Make your illustrations larger? What techniques (collage, drawing, painting) and materials (words and images cut or torn from magazines or newspapers, photographs, paint, markers, crayons, etc.) will you use? How will you emphasize the most important people and experiences in your life?
- Open your book. Using your notes and sketches, begin to fill in your timeline.
- Once you have finished decorating your book's interior, close it, and decorate the front and back covers too, if you wish.

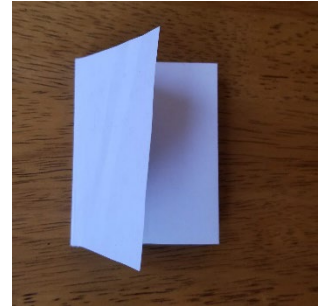
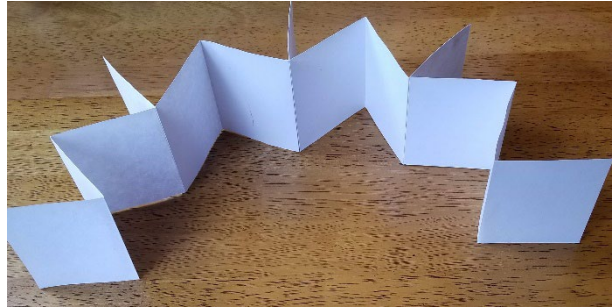
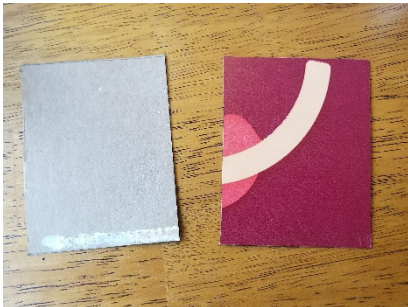
5. Choose a case or container to protect your book.

- Many book artists use a found object or create a container for their finished book. Often the container relates to the content of the book in some way—such as the tea box in Brown's work or the pie tin in Martin's.
- For additional inspiration, see more examples of artists' books that use found objects. The Visual Guide includes additional ideas.
- Identify an object around the house that you can recycle/repurpose as a container for your book. Some found objects that make good containers: old boxes, jars, plastic sandwich bag, paper lunch bag, piece of fabric, envelopes, etc. There is no need to limit yourself to one of these suggestions—let your creativity run wild! (If it is not something of yours, just be sure to ask permission before you use it.)
- Optional: Decorate your container in a way that provides clues about the subject of your book.

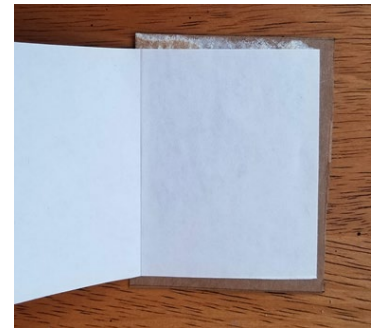
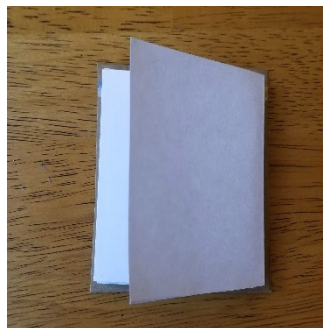
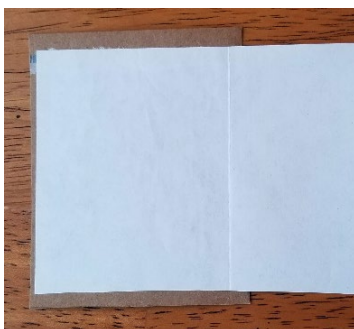
Resources

- Visual Guide for adding covers and chapters to your book
- Images of books by Emily Martin and Allison Cooke Brown
- Additional examples of artists' books that use found-object containers

Visual Guide for Adding Covers and Chapters to Your Book

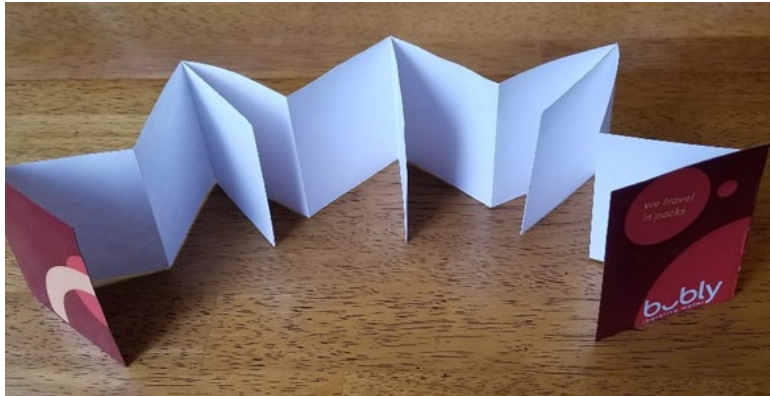


1. Have your pre-cut pieces of cardboard ready to go and decide which piece will be the front cover.
2. With your book open and the glued tabs facing away from you, refold the accordion, starting from the right.
3. Place the book on your work surface in portrait position (Make sure it opens from right to left.). Cover the top page of your book with glue.

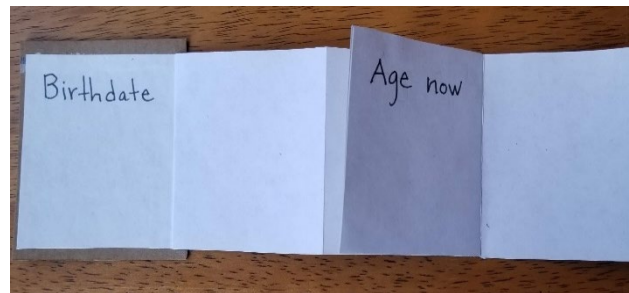
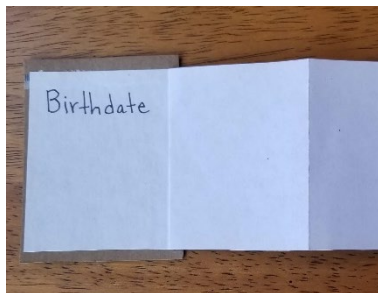


1. With your front cover face down, glue down the top page, centering it on the cover. Press firmly. The page will be slightly smaller than the cover.
2. Leave your book in the same position and close it. Add glue to the back page that is now on top.
3. Place your cover face down and attach the back page, centering it on the cardboard. Press firmly.

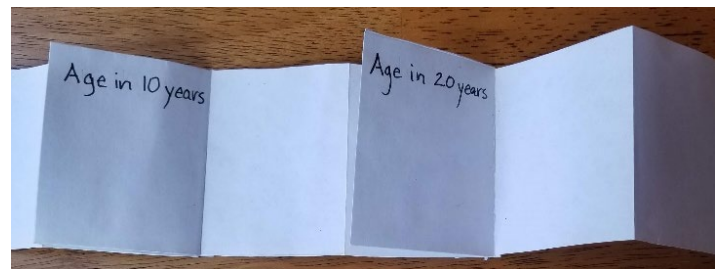
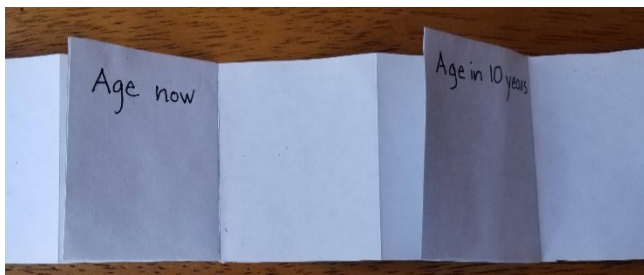
You have completed your book structure!



Next, add chapter breaks:

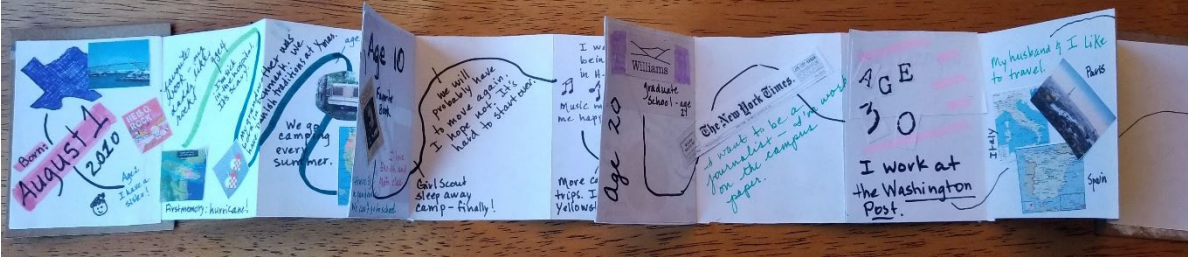


1. Open your book. On the inside of the cover, write the date of your birth.
2. On the first chapter divider (page 5), write the age you are right now.



1. On the second chapter divider (page 9), write the age you will be 10 years from now.
2. On the third chapter divider (page 13), write the age you will be 20 years from now.

FINAL STEP: Select a found object as a container for your book!



If you have time, decorate your container. What words and images will provide clues to the subject of your book?





Emily Martin, *Eight Slices of Pie*, 2002; Inkjet printing on paper, aluminum and plastic pie pan, 10 in. (Dia.); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Zena and Arnold Lerman in honor of Iris Greene; © Emily Martin



Allison Cooke Brown, *Teatimes*, 2005; Teabags, sepia ink, silk-covered box with paper lining, bone clasp, 5 3/4 x 5 3/4 x 3 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wilhelmina Cole Holladay; © Allison Cooke Brown



JoAnna Poehlmann, *Drawings in a Nutshell*, 1998; Graphite and hand-colored lithographs on paper, nuts, burlap; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Barbara Brown Lee, Educator, Milwaukee Museum of Art, Wisconsin; Photo by Lee Stalsworth

M. Jordan Tierney, *"She keeps her secrets in an amber jar so the light won't fade them."*, 2003; Mixed media, Scroll: 5 x 294 in.; jar: 11 x 4 x 4 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of June Rosner; © Jordan M. Tierney





Elisabetta Gut, *Libro-Seme* (Seed-Book), 1983 Tropical fruit and pages of musical notes on Japanese paper, 3 1/4 x 3 1/2 x 3 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Elisabetta Gut; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Julie Chen, *Bon Bon Mots*, 1998; Letterpress on paper, Fimo, polymer clay, and Plexiglas, 2 x 13 5/8 x 10 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: Library and Research Center Acquisition Fund; © Julie Chen