

Art, Books, and Creativity (ABC) Curriculum

Lesson 1: Introduction to Art, Books, and Creativity

Grade Levels

3 to 5; 6 to 8; 9 to 12

Subjects

Visual Art; English/Language Arts

Lesson Overview

Students are introduced to the Art, Books, and Creativity (ABC) curriculum. The art form known as artists' books will be introduced, as will the main concepts of the curriculum. During this lesson, students will make journals, either to use throughout the year or to save for end-of-the-year reflections, and folders in which to keep the artwork they create in class.

Length of Lesson

Two 45-minute periods

Key Connections

- Artists and writers have tools they use to create works of art and writing.
- Visual art and writing have parallel processes that enrich communication.
- Observation and reflection are part of the creative process used by artists and writers.
- The tools and methods used by artists and writers to create works of art can also be used to interpret works of art and writing.
- A journal is a place to record and keep observations and reflections.

Instructional Objectives

Students will:

- Understand they are embarking on a project through which they will learn about visual arts and writing
- Be introduced to the art form artists' books
- Be introduced to artists' and writers' tools and methods
- Understand they will create their own artists' books during the curriculum
- Create or receive journals to use throughout the project
- Create folders to hold their project-related work

For the Teacher

Read the [ABC Curriculum overview](#) to familiarize yourself with the curriculum's main concepts. Look at examples of artists' books before teaching this lesson so that you can lead a discussion about artists' books and the tools artists and writers use to make them. Share examples of artists' books with students.

Read about student journals in the "Introduction to the ABC Curriculum." If funds are available to provide journals to all students, hand them out during this lesson; the rubber-band journals students make in this session may be saved for end-of-the-year reflections. Otherwise, the rubber-band journals should be used for the writing activities in the curriculum (students may make additional journals as needed).

Students will learn about artists' books in depth in [Lesson 8](#); this lesson will serve as an introduction to the art form.

Some things to notice about artists' books:

- An artist's book has elements of traditional book forms combined with elements of art.
- 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.

Review examples of artists' books from the [ABC art gallery](#) and "[The Book as Art](#)" online exhibitions.

Vocabulary

- **Observation** is a process of gathering information through the senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch) and then analyzing the information.
- **Reflection** is an activity in which an experience is remembered, thought about, and evaluated. Interpretation is the process of constructing the meaning of an object, work of art, or writing through observation and reflection.
- **Elements of art** are color, line, shape, form, space, and texture. Artists use these tools to create visual art, whether it is representational, abstract, or non-representational. (Review the [vocabulary list](#) for definitions of individual elements of art.)
- **Traits of writing** are ideas, voice, word choice, organization, sentence fluency, and conventions. Written works are created using the traits of writing.
- An **artist's book** is an art form that uses elements of traditional book forms in combination with the elements of art.

Instructional Plan: Observe, Create, and Reflect

Introduction

Tell students they are beginning a yearlong project in which they will look at, talk about, and make different kinds of art and investigate the similarities between making art and writing. They will learn about the tools artists and writers use and will use those tools in their own artwork and writing. Students will create several simple book forms during the project and one final artist's book in which they will integrate their own writing and images.

One goal of ABC is to build students' awareness of women's contributions to the arts; therefore, all of the artwork included in the curriculum was created by women artists. Students will learn about professional women artists from the 1600s to the present.

Tell students they will keep journals during the project. The journals provide a place for each student to reflect, keep notes, jot down ideas, make sketches, and record how they feel about it about the project. Teachers will read the journals occasionally for assessment, but the journals will not be graded. Students will keep their journals at the end of the project.

Observation is an important tool used by artists and writers. Introduce observation to students and ask them if they can come up with a definition. What is the difference between seeing and observing? Students will use this tool to learn about artists' books in this lesson.

Observe: Look and Discuss

Look at examples of artists' books with students and choose one to use for demonstration. Ask students to observe and describe what they see. Use some of the following questions to start your discussion:

- What shape is the book?
- What color is it?
- What materials were used to make it?
- Are there any words in the book?
- How would you hold it? How would you read it?
- What are some differences between this and a book from the library? What are some similarities?
- How would you describe this artist's book to someone who can't see it?

Show another artist's book to students and ask the same questions. Compare the two books, noting similarities and differences between them; then compare artists' books and regular books.

Show students a few more examples of artists' books made by artists and by students to help them understand the variety of the art form and the many possibilities they will have when they create their own artists' books.

Summarize by noting that students used their observational skills to investigate and describe various artists' books. They will use observation throughout the project to help them learn about and create visual art and writing.

Create: Rubber-band Journal and Student Portfolio

For the Teacher

In advance of this project, you may wish to view this ["how-to" video](#), which provides a step-by-step demonstration of how to create a rubber-band book. You may find it helpful to show the video to your students in class, in addition to providing them with the written directions.

Supplies

For the rubber-band journal:

- 8 1/2-by-14-inch copy paper, 5 to 10 sheets per student
- 9-by-15-inch construction, drawing, or watercolor paper for cover, 1 sheet per student
- 1 stick (6 in. to 8 in. long), or use a pencil, twig, chopstick, straw filled with pipe cleaner, etc. per student
- 1 rubber band, at least 3 in. long per student
- Hole punch or scissors
- Paper clips

For the work folder:

- 12 in. by 18 in. construction paper or poster board, 2 sheets per student
- 2-inch-wide masking tape
- Staplers
- Art supplies for decorating journal covers and folders (optional)

Activity: Make the Pages

1. Begin by placing one sheet of paper horizontally on the desk in front of you. (One of the paper's long sides will be closest to you.)
2. Fold the paper in half by bringing the two short sides together. Line the edges up as evenly as possible and crease firmly.
3. Open the paper back up. Using a ruler, measure 2 inches down from the top edge of the paper and make a pencil mark on the creased line at that point. Now, measure 2 inches up from the bottom edge of the paper and use a ruler to make a pencil mark on the crease at that point. Set this sheet to the side.
4. Using your pencil marks as a guide, make two holes on the folded edge of the paper using a hole punch. You can also use scissors to cut two notches out of the folded edge.
5. Repeat all of these steps for your remaining sheets of paper.

6. Finally, nest your completed pages together so that the punched holes line up. Set your completed pages to the side.

Activity: Make the Cover

1. You will need one sheet of 9-by-15-inch construction paper, drawing paper, or watercolor paper.
2. Begin by placing the cover paper horizontally on the desk in front of you. (The longer side of the paper will be closest to you.)
3. Fold the cover paper in half by bringing the two short sides together. Line the edges up as evenly as possible and crease firmly.
4. Open the paper back up. Using a ruler, measure 2 1/4 inches down from the top edge of the cover paper and make a pencil mark on the creased line at that point. Now, measure 2 1/4 inches up from the bottom edge of the paper and use a ruler to make a pencil mark on the crease at that point. Set this sheet to the side.
5. Using your pencil marks as a guide, make two holes on the folded edge of the cover paper using a hole punch. You can also use scissors to cut two notches out of the folded edge.

Activity: Assemble the Journal

1. Place your nested paper inside your cover, lining up the holes.
2. Open the book, and thread the rubber band through the bottom hole on the inside of your book and pull it through to the outside. You will want a loop about 1/2-inch long to be visible on the outside. Place one end of your stick into this loop.
3. Thread the other end of the rubber band through the top hole on the inside of your book and loop it around the top end of the stick.
4. Have students write their names on their journals.

Activity: Create Student Work Portfolio

The student work portfolio is a simple folder created by stapling and/or taping two sheets of heavy paper together on three sides, leaving one long side open.

1. Give each student two sheets of 12-by-18-inch paper.
2. Have students line up the sheets on top of each other and, working with a partner, staple the paper together along one long side and two short sides of the paper. Place the staples about half an inch from the edge of the paper, about two inches apart.
3. Cut three pieces of 2-inch-wide tape the length of the three stapled edges. Place a piece of tape along one side of the folder, leaving one inch to fold under, covering the staples on both sides of the folder. Repeat until all three sides of the folder are taped.
4. Have students write their names on their folders.

Reflect

Ask students to think about what they have learned in this lesson and write a few sentences about it in their journals. Use one or more of the following prompts:

- How do you think you will like this project?
- What questions do you have about the project?
- Looking at artists' books makes me wonder...?

Lesson Extensions

Visual Art and Writing

- Have students personalize their journals and/or portfolios by decorating, drawing, and/or writing on the front and back covers.
- Students can make a sketch or write a description of an artist's book they might want to create.
- Ask students to describe another time when they used observation to explain or solve something.