



HANDMADE BOOKS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

Susan Kapuscinski Gaylord

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**Sixteen Earth-Friendly Projects
From Around The World**

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Handmade Books for a Healthy Planet is about three things: making and creating books, connecting with cultures across the globe by exploring different forms of books, and using recycled materials to conserve resources and learn to look at the things we discard in a fresh way. It is also the expression of a big part of the last twenty years of my life. I began making books when my first child was two, two years after the life-changing year that brought the birth of my son and the death of my mother. Making books gave me a place to both celebrate and grieve.

I started by making books about the closest things around me, my children and my memories. Over the years, I have expanded to the world at large: the clouds in the sky, the leaves in the trees, events in history. Making books gives me a way of looking both inward and outward. It has made me more creative and more curious. It has given me a quiet center in this ever-more-quickly-moving world. I hope that making handmade books will do the same for you.

in good spirit



About this Book



Handmade Books for A Healthy Planet teaches you how to make sixteen handmade books, four from each of four areas of the world: Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe. Each section begins with a history of the book in that part of the world. All of the books are based on traditional forms and are arranged in order of difficulty. They take me between ten minutes and a half-hour to construct, but may take longer with young children or a large group. Adding the content is done after the book is made and can take as long as you want.

Each project opens with a photograph of books I made to show the variety of materials you can use, encouraging you to experiment. The cultural/historical inspiration for the book is followed by a description of the project and a list of things you'll need. The tools are the simplest and the materials are mostly recycled.

Making the book has step-by-step instructions for the construction of the book. I have made them as clear and detailed as possible. If you are teaching others, I find it is always best to demonstrate the steps by making a book of your own.

Fill the book appears when the introductory explanation doesn't give you all the information you need to complete the book. There are charts to help you write runes and Roman numerals, information on writing haiku, and adinkra symbols from Africa to copy and use.

Vary the Book suggests ways to vary the construction of the book as well as additional ideas for content.

Books to Read gives a sampling of picture books and folktale collections that can be read as an accompaniment. Some books have very specific connections and directly echo the theme of the projects. Others are related only in that they are a story from or about that particular culture. A brief description of each book is included along with publication information.



Materials



Recycled/Repurposed/Upcycled

While I use the word recycled to describe the materials we use, repurposed or upcycled might be better words. The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines recycle as “return (material) to a previous stage of a cyclic process, esp. convert (waste) to a reusable material.” Recycling paper gives us more paper, recycling glass makes glass. When we make books from discarded materials, we are making something new. We can use the term repurpose because we are taking something (a cereal box or a grocery bag) and using it for another purpose. But the term I like the best is upcycle which was coined by William McDonough and Michael Braungart, authors of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. Wikipedia defines it like this: “Upcycling is the practice of taking something that is disposable and transforming it into something of greater use and value.” McDonough and Braungart point out the recycling is not an even exchange. The paper that gets recycled does not make paper of equal quality without the addition of other materials and the use of energy. When we reuse paper to make a book, we are using it in its entirety. The energy we use is only our own and what we create has new meaning and greater value.

Paper

The main ingredient in making books is paper, heavier for the covers and lighter for the pages. The books in *Handmade Books for a Healthy Planet* use three main kinds:

Brown paper grocery bags: Front and back panels and occasionally the side panels.

Cereal boxes: Front and back panels without the flaps on the top and bottom and occasionally the side panels. I use the term cereal boxes in the directions but you can also use cracker boxes, waffle boxes, leftover file folders, anything that is sturdy but will fold.

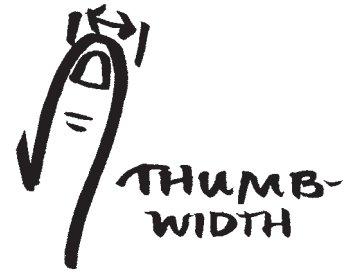
Used US Letter/A4 paper with writing on one side only.



Measuring Guide



Instead of rulers, use fingers, hands, and arms to measure.

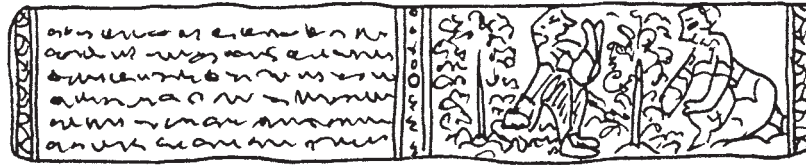


PALM LEAF BOOK

INDIA · INDONESIA · SOUTHEAST ASIA



Back Left: Book pages made from two pieces of recycled paper glued together, with yarn and pony beads. Back Right: Book pages made from a granola bar box, with curling ribbon, saved from a gift, and buttons. Front: Book pages made from discarded CDs, with strips cut from a plastic rice cake bag, milk container tops, and bread closures.



Rectangular books of palm leaves are the traditional form of India, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. The leaves have one, two, or three holes and are strung together on a cord. Knots, rings, beads or coins at each end of the cord keep the book together.



The book contains four pages—a title page followed by three pages with a text that creates a sequence. The page design is inspired by a page from an Oriya manuscript from India, a drawing of which is pictured above. A center border divides the pages, one side for the text and one side for the illustrations. I keep it simple with one hole so that there are only two knots to tie.

For young children, cut the strips ahead. It will be easier for them to punch the holes if you use two sheets of paper glued together rather than a cereal box panel. I suggest treating the ends of the yarn to make it easier to thread. (See page 17.) Be prepared to help with the knots.

You'll Need:

- 1 cereal box panel or 2 pieces of used paper glued together with the writing sides facing each other
- 1 piece of yarn or curling ribbon, the length of the cereal box or Short Measure x 1 (See page 9.)
- 2 pony beads, plastic bread closures, or buttons
- Scissors
- Hole Punch
- Pencil

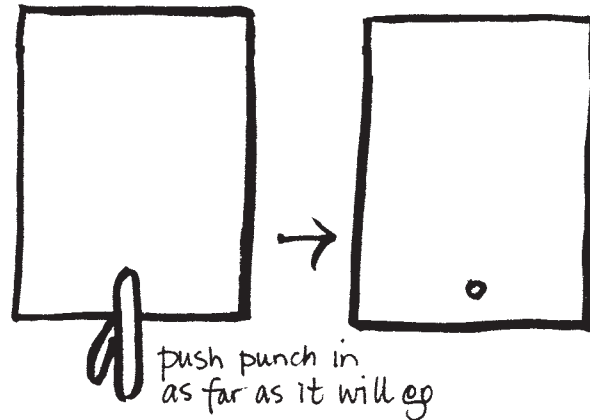


Make the Book

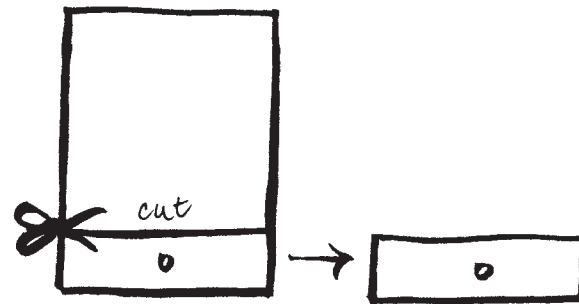


1. Punch holes and cut the pages:

a. Place the cereal box panel in front of you so that it is taller than wide. At the center of the bottom edge, push the hole punch in as far as it will go and punch a hole.



b. Make one palm leaf page by cutting above the hole so that the hole is in the center of the page from top to bottom. You may find it easier to draw the line in pencil before you cut. If the line and your cutting isn't exactly straight, don't worry about it.

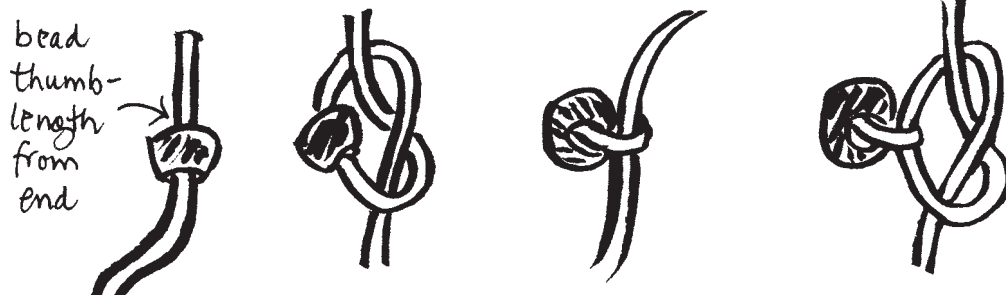


c. Make three more pages. Repeat the same process of punching a hole and cutting above or use the page you have made as a guide and cut the page first and then punch the hole.



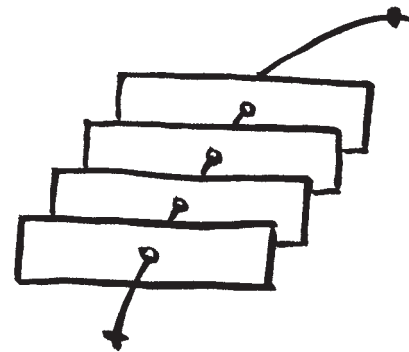
2. Tie the bead to one end of the yarn:

- a. Put the yarn through the hole in the bead. The bead should be about a thumb-length from one end of the yarn.
- b. Tie a knot around the bead so that the bead is inside the knot.
- c. Tighten the knot around the bead.
- d. Tie a second knot to secure it. Tug on the bead to tighten the knot.



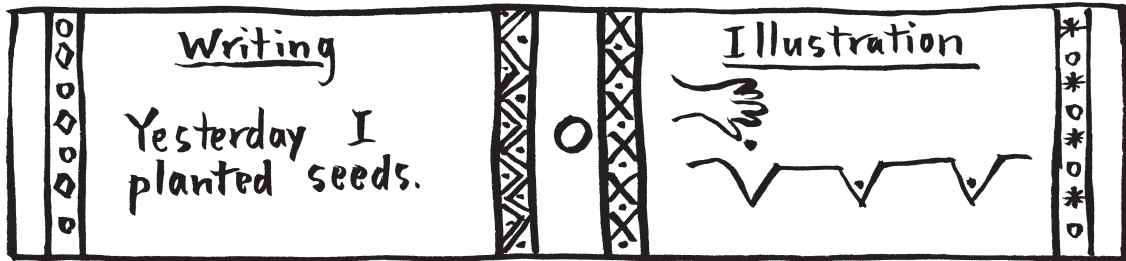
3. String the pages on the yarn and tie on the second bead:

- a. Starting with the end of the yarn without a bead, push the yarn through the holes in the pages.
- b. Put the other end of the yarn through the hole in the bead about a thumb-length from the end. Tie the bead onto the yarn.





Fill the Book



On each page, draw a border on either side of the center hole. Draw a border on each end of the page. Write the text on the left side and draw an illustration on the right side.

Read the book by flipping the pages forward. Because there is only one center hole, the pages can spin around. Don't worry if a page is upside down as you read the book. Just turn it around to get it right-side-up.

To close the book: Pull the yarn so that the front bead is resting against the front of the book. Wrap the yarn around the book and tuck the back bead under the yarn.





Vary the Book



Make wider books with three holes. Place the cereal box panel in front of you so that it is wider than tall. Punch the center holes and cut pages. For the two side holes, push the punch in as far as it will go at each side edge and punch. For a book with two holes, leave out the center hole and just punch a hole on each side.

Make a book about the planets with one page for each planet. Draw a picture and put facts—the size, the number of moons, and the distance from the sun.

Use for book reports. Use separate pages for beginning, middle and end. Make longer books with more pages for significant events in the plot or character descriptions.



Read a Book

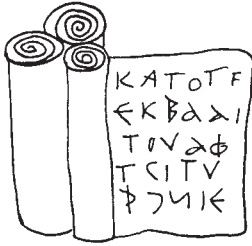


Rama and Sita: A Tale from Ancient Java, David Weitzman. Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 2002. Taken from the Hindu epic *The Ramayana* or *Rama's Way*, Rama and Sita is full of adventure, intrigue, loyalty and devotion. The striking illustrations are modeled after Javanese shadow puppets. I have two palm leaf books from Bali which tell the story of *The Ramayana*.

How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head, Harish Johari and Vatsala Sperling, illustrated by Pieter Weltevrede. Rochester, Vermont: Bear Club Books, 2003. The story of how Ganesh, well loved as the god who has the power to make good things happen, got his elephant head is illustrated with paintings using traditional Indian techniques.

Silent Lotus, Jeanne M. Lee. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991. This beautifully illustrated story, set in long ago Cambodia, tells of a young girl who cannot hear or speak and becomes the most famous dancer in the Khmer court.

EUROPE



The history of the book in Europe begins in Africa with the papyrus scrolls of Egypt. The use of papyrus as a writing material spread to Greece and Rome where scrolls were the primary book form of the classical era. Our word page comes from the Latin word *pagineum*, which means column on a scroll. The scrolls of Greece and Rome were all writing with no illustrations. One of the largest collections was at the Alexandrian Museum and Library in Alexandria, Egypt. The founding of the library is attributed to Ptolemy II (283–247 BCE). The library housed over 700,000 volumes of works of literature, philosophy and science. Because the scrolls were written by hand, Alexandria became an important city for book production.

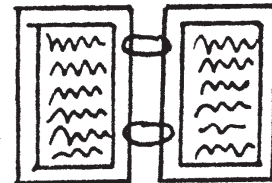
Parchment (treated animal skins) came to replace papyrus as a writing surface for books. There is an interesting story about the invention of parchment which may be legend. Around 200 BCE, the Egyptians stopped exporting papyrus. It is said that the Egyptian king was jealous of a new library in Pergamum, Turkey and afraid it might surpass the Alexandrian Library. The librarians at Pergamum looked for a substitute for papyrus and developed parchment. Writing had already been done on leather, but the surface was somewhat rough. The preparation of animal skins into parchment is a more involved process and results in a smooth writing surface.

With the invention of parchment came the evolution of the book from the scroll to the codex. This basic form is the same style of book we use today, with sets of folded sheets gathered and sewn together along the fold. The earliest folded book in existence today is from the second century and is made of papyrus. Folded papyrus books did not hold up well and tended to crack along the folds. Parchment proved to be a more suitable material. Through the sixth century, the papyrus scroll, the papyrus codex and the parchment codex were all used, with the codex form favored by the Christians.



After that time, the parchment codex became the preferred form for everyone. The folded parchment sheets were attached to wooden covers. These were then covered with leather or metalwork.

Because parchment and papyrus were expensive, they were only used for works of lasting value. Accounts, correspondence, and rough drafts were done on wooden tablets that were covered with wax. The writing was scratched into the surface and could be erased when finished. These were used in Greece and Rome and continued to be used in Europe through the Middle Ages. The Greeks also wrote notes on *ostraca* which were pieces of broken pottery.



As Christianity spread throughout Europe, the parchment codex traveled with it. Every monastery had a *scriptorium* where monks copied the Bible and the teachings of the early church. Latin was the common language. The writing was often embellished with decorated initial letters and borders. Books were also made for the courts of kings and princes. While the monks were writing on parchment in scriptoria, the Vikings were making their way through Europe and leaving their mark on stones with a form of writing called *runes*. In the twelfth century, book production became more widespread. Scribes and illuminators formed craft guilds and worked on commission for the new merchant class as well as the nobility.



As the demand for books continued to increase, production by hand could not provide a sufficient supply. The earliest printed books in Europe were done with woodcuts, which were originally developed by the Chinese. Text and illustrations were carved into wooden blocks in reverse, one block per page, inked and then printed. Johann Gutenberg invented movable metal type in Europe and produced the first printed Bible in 1455. The first copies were done on parchment, with colored initials and borders added by hand. His idea was to make a book that looked like a handmade one. As printing replaced handwritten books and paper replaced parchment, new styles of lettering and page design developed. The history of books in Europe continued with innovations in type and paper and the mechanical processes of printing and binding.



Handmade Books for a Healthy Planet

ONLINE

makingbooks.com/hbhp

Show and Tell

Color photos and video of all the sample books

Video of authentic books from around the world from my collection

Bookmaking Help

Line guides and patterns for making your books

Video instructions on *The Basics*

Web Explorations

Links to accompany each project

Recycling Information

Links for more information on making handmade books

Handmade Books For A Healthy Planet

a how-to book with a purpose—to take tiny steps toward a healthier planet by creating books from around the world with recycled materials.

These *sixteen projects teach us to see* things not just for what they are *but what they can become*. Using **everyday tools and easy-to-find materials**, children and their families and teachers experience the **joy of using their hands, minds, and hearts** to make books that tell *their stories and reflect* on the world around them. Complete with a history of books through time and illustrated step-by-step directions. Including a **Wish Scroll** from *Ethiopia*, a **Medieval Book of Hours**, a **Time Line Accordion Book** from *Central America and Mexico*, and a **Book of Haiku** from *Japan*.

Susan Kapuscinski Gaylord has been a passionate promoter of making handmade books for over twenty years. She has taught thousands of children, teachers and parents in schools and libraries as well as made books with her own children. Her artists' books are featured in *500 Handmade Books* and other publications. Visit her website at **makingbooks.com**.



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ISBN: 978-0-9842319-0-4

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