



Paper-Making in the Classroom

Helen Werntz

When I think of my most treasured memories as a student in elementary school, I often think of the artistic projects that we made from paper, glue, paints, and crayons. Maybe those experiences gave me the resolve to find different ways to incorporate art in the elementary curriculum. Paper-making seemed to be the biggest hit with my fourth-grade students.

When I first introduced the craft of paper-making to my students, we discussed how we already help the environment by recycling paper in the classroom. The paper that we toss into the recycling bin is used to make new paper and save many valuable trees.

Making Paper with a Mold

I pulled some crumpled pieces of paper from the recycling bin, tore them into smaller pieces, dropped them into two cups of water in a blender, and turned on the blender to make paper pulp. I showed students how to assemble the paper-making screen and drain rack on a "pour" hand mold before placing it in a plastic tub of water. (The complete directions, mold, and other supplies were included in a paper-making kit I had purchased.)

The pulp from the blender was poured into the hand mold and mixed slightly with the fingers to evenly distribute the paper fibers. After lifting the mold from the water and placing it on a tray, I removed the hand mold to reveal a brand new piece of



paper! I pressed water from the wet paper, first using a sponge over a screen and then using couch (blotter) paper.

I demonstrated how to make other sheets of paper using magazine pages, used wrapping paper, junk mail, and brown school paper towels. Students worked in pairs to make their own pieces of paper to be used for future projects. Since I could not devote a whole day just to paper-making, we went on with other subjects as the blender whirled periodically for the next two days and everyone had a freshly made piece of paper drying on their desk.

Making Paper with Tin Cans

Our next paper-making experience was to make a round piece of paper using the "tin can" method. Students

placed torn scraps of different shades of blue paper, some leaves, and a few blades of grass into the blender to make an interesting blue pulp. The pulp was evenly distributed into two cups and quickly poured into a large tin can that rested on a screen, drain rack, and another tin can. Both of the

tin cans must have the tops and bottoms removed so the water can drain easily. Be sure to do this

in a sink or plastic tub to avoid spilling water all over the place!

After these initial paper-making experiences, students were soon "experts" at making paper to be used in art, poetry projects, descriptive writing lessons, letter writing, history units, and science. Using paper-making in the curriculum helped make learning fun and meaningful for both students and teacher! 🐞

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

WEB LINK

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Materials for the Pour Method of Making Paper

- paper to be recycled
- plastic tub for water
- commercial pour mold kit (contains sponge, drain rack, screens, and couch paper)
- blender
- water
- tray

Above left: The cover of a Map Skills booklet was made using the tin can method; Autumn language arts projects are enhanced with handmade paper. Below, left to right: Students use the tin can method to make round sheets of paper; The pour mold kit is used for making rectangular paper; Students press excess water from their new sheet of paper.

