

# Class Novel

## objective and theme

In this ongoing project, which can be started at the beginning of the year and culminate at the end, students will write, individually or in pairs, a short chapter of a novel. The chapters will be photocopied and each student will bind the chapters together into their own “novel,” jointly written by themselves and their classmates.

This project emphasizes individual creativity as well as collaboration. Students will decide on main characters, as well as any other key elements to a novel: an antagonist, recurring images, conflicts, etc. Then, chosen randomly, one or two students will write the first “chapter” of the novel, to be followed by the next student(s). Students will be involved in a creative writing project, have the opportunity to think and talk about the writing process as well as a novel’s structure, and leave the class with a finished book.

## materials

1. paper to photocopy students’ chapters
2. thread
3. curved needle
4. beeswax

## project

1. In a discussion facilitated by the teacher, and with an imposed time limit, students will decide on some basic aspects of their novel.
2. The teacher will write the final decisions on the board.
3. Students, individually or in pairs, will select a number randomly from a hat. This will be the chapter for which they are responsible.
4. After a set amount of time, about one week, the writer(s) of the first chapter will give the Chapter 2 writer(s) their work.
5. The author(s) of Chapter 2 will read Chapter 1, and write a continuation of the story. They will then give the Chapter 3 writer(s) the first two chapters.
6. This will continue until all chapters are written.
7. Each student will receive a photocopy of the chapters. Led by their teacher, they will bind all the chapters into a novel using Coptic binding (see page 44), which emphasizes how each individual chapter contributes to the creation of the whole.

## notes

Because this project could become difficult or time-consuming, limits (on time spent on the project, length of chapters, etc.) should be set if the teacher feels this will be a problem.

This project will occur over a long time frame, so to keep students’ interest in the book, readings after every three or four chapters could be planned.

# The Coptic-Bound Birthday Card Book

OR ANY OCCASION CARD

## objective and theme

Here is an alternative way to approach conventional gift giving. For the disillusioned, disenchanting holiday shopper who cannot bear another season of representing true feelings via sweater sets and electronics equipment, there are thoughtful and creative solutions for countering the uncomfortable sensations that arise while perusing sale racks and fluorescent aisles. The coptic-bound book provides a unique forum for sharing a variety of thoughts, sentiments, and beliefs. The content and overall layout of the book is highly subjective, as there is no one particular way of conveying love, trust, friendship, humor, politics, or faith.

Perhaps show examples of visual journals and then compare/contrast with standard Hallmark greeting cards. Ask questions (that deconstruct both visual image and text): Are images of hearts the only way of conveying love? Can birthdays be signified by objects that are not balloons and confetti oriented? Can Christmas be commemorated without skiing elves and candy canes? How do you celebrate fathers who do not enjoy fishing or golf? How do you honor men who are neither fathers nor uncles, but do in fact serve a familial function? Can you express your deepest appreciation for your mother without making it rhyme?

Discuss alternative ways of representing holidays, feelings, and gestures. Talk about storytelling, photography, collage, and drawing.

Think about particular people (to whom you would want to dedicate a book) and identify traits and matters of interest specific to the individual. Think about ways of recreating/representing these traits; a literary person might enjoy portions of fictional texts found within drawings or under flaps, a grandparent may appreciate photographs and stories from the past, a friend infatuated with soccer and brie cheese may well derive pleasure from a collage created out of *Home and Garden* and *Sports Illustrated* magazines.

## materials

1. 8 1/2" x 11" or 11" x 17" paper or use whatever is available
2. thread/embroidery floss/string
3. curved needle (for sewing and hole punching)
4. found objects rescued from the crannies within purses, backpacks, kitchen cupboards, and jacket pockets
5. collage materials (magazines, newspapers, maps, photographs, etc.)
6. mark-making materials (rubber stamps, inkpads, stickers, stencils, Polaroid film, labels, colored pencils and pens, envelopes, etc.)

## procedure

Depending on the age level and length of class, paper may be cut to size beforehand.

*For younger students, the book can be bound using the pamphlet stitch.*

1. Visualize and discuss layout of the book.
2. Fold paper in half. (How many pages do you want in your book?)
3. Punch holes for sewing. (If students are younger, a hole puncher and yarn may be substituted for a needle and thread.)

4. Sew book together step-by-step (see page 44). Emphasize the importance of not being discouraged by the coptic stitch. Practice is really essential for understanding the simplicity of the stitch.
5. Begin inventing stories, pasting pictures, and collaging materials. A helpful way of approaching this process might be to gather and assign some materials for the students, so that they have no prior notion as to what they could be used for. The students will therefore be required to provide a context for the items. The results may prove more imaginative and unconventional if the student is also encouraged to use, along with his or her own materials, that which was allocated by the facilitator. Also, think about the book as a gift, a token of appreciation and a means of personal expression. What do I want this to represent? What do I want to express to this person?

**notes**

For younger students, a more premeditated approach may be necessary. For example, devise a format for constructing a story or art project so that students are more focused and better able to execute their ideas. Ask specific questions, so that the student's answers will ultimately provide content for the book. Questions can be answered either through visual or written explanations.

Other occasion ideas: Anniversary, Valentine, Halloween, Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents Day, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah

# Coptic Blank-Book Project

## objective and theme

Students will learn the coptic stitch and use it to create a blank book that they can use as they please (journals, address books, organizers, etc.). Discuss the book form, show examples of hand-bound books (including coptic stitch). Brainstorm ideas for blank books (sketchbooks, notebooks for current classes, recipe books, etc.). What size do you want your book to be? What colors do you want to use? Have you ever kept a journal?

## materials

1. paper (can be cut down before class to save time or students can be given parameters for dimensions and bring their own paper)
2. cover stock—file folders (which come in many different colors) are ideal for limited budgets
3. thread—binder's thread or other sturdy options (embroidery thread, rafia, dental floss, etc.)
4. curved needles
5. beeswax

## project

1. Distribute materials and illustrated instruction sheets to students (see page 44).
2. Discuss bookmaking terms—what is a *signature*? what is a *folio*? (see page 5)
3. Go over the coptic stitch with students in class, paying close attention to the first two signatures.
4. Students will need individual attention on this project until they get the hang of it.
5. Allow students to work/finish their books in class. Honor the work by either passing the books around toward the end of class or displaying at another planned time.

## notes

This project is ideal for students in grade 7 and up. The coptic stitch is tricky; leave multiple class periods or about three hours for book construction.