

With My Hands: Poems About Making Things

Written by: Amy Ludwig VanDerwater

Illustrated by: Lou Fancher & Steve Johnson

Grades 1st – 3rd

Content Area: Language Arts

This book could be used in a first grade classroom to support standard **CC.1.R.L.4** "Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses."

This book could be used in a second grade classroom to support standard **CC.2.R.L.4** "Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song."

This book could be used in a third grade classroom to support standard **CC.3.R.F.4** "Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate and expression."

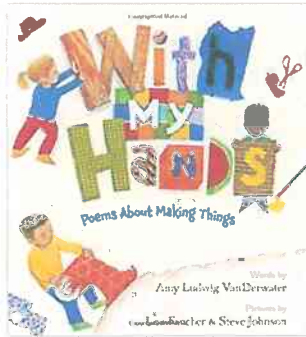
In my own classroom after using this book to learn from its poetry, I would send home a letter to parents telling them about the poetry their student has interacted with and offer at-home activities they could do with their child that were found in the book.

Other classroom uses from this book:

- Creativity mindset...building from a growth mindset!
- Have students write informational "How To" instructional pieces of things they know how to make with their hands.
- Makerspace literature for STEAM

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MAY 7, 2018 BY ERIKA THULIN DAWES



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ISBN 978-0-544-31340-8

Grades PreK – 3

Book Review

“I am making / something new / with my hands/ my head / my heart. That’s what makers do.” The act of creation is celebrated in Vanderwater’s picture book collection of twenty-six poems. Collage illustrations by Fancher and Johnson perfectly convey the experience of cobbling together something new from the materials that you have at hand. Readers will pore over these illustrations, delighted to find familiar objects used in innovative ways (for example, the body of a snail is depicted with a coiled rope). Each rhyming poem serves as an invitation to re-envision everyday objects as something that you could construct yourself such as, a clay pot, a bird house, a parachute, or a sock puppet. A growth mindset pervades the collection, for example “ A maker/ pushes/ through mistakes... a maker will explore.” Tap into the power of creativity, propelled by these colorful collages and delightful poems.

Teaching Ideas: Invitations for Your Classroom

Picture Book Pairings. Many of the poems in this collection can be extended through a picture book pairing. Read the poem first, and then read the picture book, which extends the possibilities and storyline around the act of making. Some suggested pairings are:

Poem	Picture Book
“Birdhouse”	<i>Riki’s Birdhouse</i> by Monica Wellington
“Parachute”	<i>Sky High Guy</i> by Nina Crews
“Boat”	<i>Toy Boat</i> by Randall De Seve / Ill. by Loren Long
“Spaceship”	<i>The Nowhere Box</i> by Sam Zuppari
“Leaf Pictures”	<i>Leaf Man</i> by Lois Ehlert

“I Made This!” *With My Hands* recognizes the many ways that children create, including everyday activities such as drawing, painting, baking cookies and fort building. Invite your students to make a statement about how and what they like to create, designing a poster that shows themselves engaged in creating something; encourage kids to select activities that they are good at and feel proud of. Create a class book or bulletin board to share their assertions of themselves as creators.

A Creativity Mindset. Reread the last poem in the collection, “With My Hands” and consider the first line: “When I make something new / I am never the same.” Discuss this idea with your students and invite them to make connections to their own lives. Encourage children to see the human imprint of creativity on the world around them inviting them to think about design in terms of aesthetics and function. How do/can people shape the world around them through the creative acts? Invite your students to commit to a project in which they make an impact on their surroundings through their own

handiwork. Additional books that can support this activity featured on The Classroom Bookshelf include: *Maybe Something Beautiful*, *Ideas Are All Around*, *Extra Yarn*, *Wild Ideas: Let Nature Inspire Your Thinking*, *Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building* and *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.

How Was it Made? A text like *With My Hands* invites us to consider the objects around us as human made. Invite your students to select an item/object of interest to them and to engage in research to learn more about how the object was made/constructed. For example, students might want to investigate how the pencils they hold in their hands were made. Consult online resources and texts such as David McCaulay's *The Way Things Work Now*. Students can share their findings through oral presentation, with a presentation tool such as Google Slides or Prezi, or in writing with illustration.

Creativity Center. Design a Creativity Center for your classroom. Source recycled materials from your students' homes and community business. Provide pencils, paper, and other artistic medium, as well as craft supplies like beads, ribbons, tape, and fasteners. Allow students time to experiment with and construct with the materials in the Creativity Center. If students need some help getting started, consult with your school or public librarian to add some activity books, such as *Junk ReThink: Amazing Creations You Can Build From Junk* and *Earth-friendly Crafts From Recycled Stuff in 5 Easy Steps*. Books like these can serve as a scaffold as kids learn some building techniques, but be sure to encourage your students to develop their own ideas and designs.

Artist and Craftsman Interviews. Provide your students with an opportunity to learn more about invention and craftsmanship by inviting a range of community members who 'make' things to visit or skype with your students. Include artists, craftsmen, carpenters, machinists, bakers / chefs, jewelers, tailors, etc. Have students prepare questions in advance, some general, focusing on materials, tools, function, and users, and some specific to the item that is made. Document the interviews with photographs and ask students to make notes about what they learn.

"How To" Text Set. Gather a collection of activity book, books that describe how to make or do something. These might be craft books, recipe books, or gaming manuals, for example. Invite students to study this writing genre. How are these books organized? Structured? What kinds of information are included? How are visuals incorporated? Students are likely to note such items as materials listings, sequenced instructions, and photographs and drawing that illustrate steps. Invite students to consider which examples are the clearest and easiest to follow. Compare these texts with instructional videos found on YouTube (such as *Life Hacks for Kids* and *SuperAwesomeSylvia*). Ask students to consider which modality they find most effective. Develop criteria for evaluating "how to" texts and videos.

Composing Multimedia "How To" Texts. There has been a recent proliferation of YouTube videos targeted to an eager kid audience that focus on how to make or do something. Capitalize on this interest through an extension to the previous teaching activity. Invite your students to create multimedia "how to" videos, sharing something that they are an expert at making. Have students storyboard their video, deciding which steps in their making process they will need to share and what methods and materials they will need to create their video. Work with an app such as iMovie, Explain Everything, or Book Creator to produce students' videos and create a YouTube channel or share on their class blog.

Extending from Creating to Making. The poems in this book celebrate the ways in which children have a natural inclination to create, expressing themselves through art and acting on their world

through construction. As teachers, we can take this a step further, building on students' interests and capacities to incorporate Making into the curriculum as a tool for learning across the subject areas. This approach builds on children's inherent desire and ability to create and brings that interest and engagement into curriculum and instructional planning, inviting kids to learn through inquiry and innovation. Learn more about Makerspaces and design thinking through online resources, such as the [Lesley STEAM Learning Lab](#), [Makerspace for Education](#), [Novel Engineering](#) and professional resources such as [Invent to Learn: Making, Tinkering, and Engineering in the Classroom](#) (Martinez & Stager, 2013) and the [May 2018 issue of School Library Journal](#), "Let's Make!"

Making Stories. "[Makers Make it Work](#)" is a new beginner reader series by Kane Press. Each title in the series features a problem to be solved by child protagonists and the problems are solved by making! For example, in *The Runaway Chicken* (Thorpe, 2018), Maddy adopts a lost chicken and builds a coop to properly house her new pet. In *Robot to the Rescue* (Lawrence, 2018), Greta and Bruce modify a plant watering robot so that it can feed Greta's cat while she is away. Share several of these stories with your students and then invite them to compose new installments for the series. Small groups can brainstorm a problem and a solution (that involves making something) and then co-compose a narrative. Display the students stories along with prototypes of the inventions that saved the day.