

## Build a Treasure Box!

**Teacher:** Barbara Wamboldt

**School:** Sierra Madre Elementary (Pasadena Unified School District)

**Grade:** K - 8

**Lesson:** Build a Treasure Box, an art project that transforms ordinary materials into a decorated box with a secret compartment

### Materials

One box per student, tissue (cut into one-inch squares), glue stick, white glue, brushes, scissors

### History/culture

It seems part of human nature to keep some special things private or hidden. Hidden treasure is part of every time and place. Eighteenth-century French writing desks found in The Huntington's art collections demonstrate this interest in secrecy. These highly decorative pieces of furniture were made to look fancy and to hold the owner's special stuff. Do you have something that you would like to hide away in your own fancy box?

### Creative expression

- Encourage students to talk about how they might create a hidden space in their box: attach a false bottom or top to the inside, add a smaller box inside or out of their box. How would students make their box fancy? Which colors, textures, and patterns would add visual interest? An example might be a smooth, red box with white and black buttons on the lid.
- Students can cover their boxes with colored tissue cut into small squares and held in place with glue stick (this allows students to maintain clean hands while attaching tissue). Using a paint brush, gently cover the box/tissue with watered down white glue (50/50). Allow to dry. The outside surface of the box can be ornamented with buttons, beads, jewels, and/or small figures (ask families to contribute). Students can install their secret compartment at this point.

### Aesthetic Valuing

Students can tell a small group/class what they like about their secret box and what they might change the next time they make art like this.

### Extensions

- Paint can be used instead of tissue to create a different effect.
- The box idea could become a purse made of fabric or a duffel bag with hidden compartments.

### Photos

*Sample box created by 6-year-old girl*

Sample box, unadorned

Box, closed

Box, opened

Box, opened to reveal secret compartment