

Greek Book Vase

An upcycled paperback book serves as the basis for a lesson in classical form

(art + history)

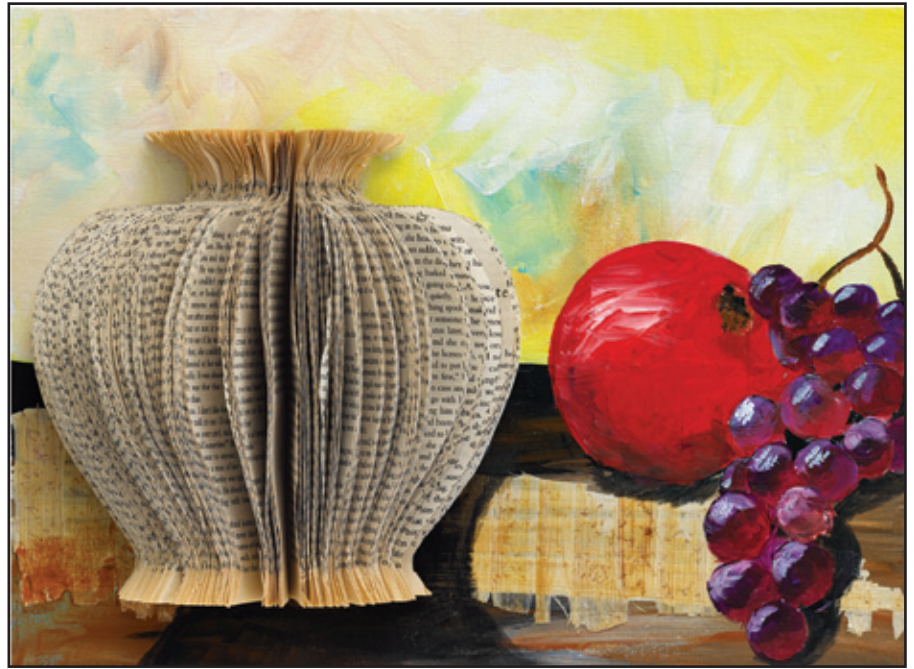
Greek pottery was a very important part of Greek life and culture. Each piece of pottery had a specific shape that followed a specific function. And although Greek pottery gives us a wide range of shapes, from cups to plates to huge amphora, many of the forms remained mostly unchanged. Because the Greek potters were producing such practical and useful forms, once the optimal shape had evolved, it was copied and maintained for centuries. Examples from 1000 to 400 BCE provide us with some of the most distinctive vase shapes and also some of the oldest and most diverse representations of the cultural beliefs and practices of the ancient Greeks.

The most common forms of pottery were amphorae for storing oil, wine, and foods such as olives; large kraters for mixing wine with water; jugs called oinochoai for pouring liquids; kylixes or stemmed cups with horizontal handles for drinking (especially practical if lifting a cup from the floor when reclining on a lounger at dinner); hydra with three handles for holding water; skyphoi or deep bowls; and lekythoi jars for holding oils and perfumes.

Greek pottery was thrown on the potter's wheel and was usually made in separate horizontal sections: the foot, the lower and upper body, the neck, and finally the handles, if necessary. These sections were then joined together with a clay slip and the piece was then put back on the wheel to smooth the join marks and add the final shaping. The potter considered every curve and tried to make the parts of each pot into a homogeneous whole.

The use of the french curve, an X-Acto knife and a template made of yupo watercolor paper are all that is needed to create a three-dimensional model of a Greek vase made out of a recycled paperback book! When glued to a background representing a Greek scene, a wonderful and educational mixed-media piece is born.

GRADES 5-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.



Materials (required)

[Yupo Watercolor Paper Pads](#), 10-sheet pad, Bright White, 9" x 12" (10149-1023); share one to two pads across class depending on sizes of books

[Westcott C-Thru Set of French Curves](#), Set of 8 (55452-1009); share two sets across class

[X-Acto #1 Knife](#) (57445-1101); one per student

[Blick Economy Canvas Panel Classroom Packs](#), package of 24, 9" x 12" (07015-1023); need one panel per student

[Alene's Quick Dry Tacky Glue](#), 4 oz (23884-1104); share five across class

Pencil

Recycled paperback book; one per student



Preparation

1. Collect discarded paperback books.
2. View Greek pottery forms and their uses.

Process

1. Trace the outline of the paperback book onto a piece of white yupo paper. The template created by the yupo paper will be half of the finished pottery form. Imagine a line extending down through the middle of a piece of pottery. Starting at the spine edge of the book outline, use the French Curve set and a pencil to create the rim, shoulder, belly, and foot of a Greek vase form in profile. Handles are not easily cut out, so they should be added onto the background in step #3 if desired. Cut out the template with the X-Acto knife or scissors. (need sketch of template here)
2. Place the template on the cover of the book and trace around it with a pencil. Using the X-Acto knife, carefully cut along the line down through as many pages as are comfortable. Separate the cut pages and place the template on the next uncut page. Trace. Repeat tracing and cutting until all the pages of the book and back cover have been cut.
3. Open the book to reveal the vase! Paperback books normally range in size from 4 1/2" x 7" to 6" x 9". On a 9" x 12" or larger canvas panel, create a background that might be a scene where the piece of Greek pottery could be found. Perhaps a lekythoi jar for holding perfume might be found on a dressing table. Or a large krater could be found by a stream or water source. The background could be done using a variety of media such as paint or collage.

Options:

- Open the book vase and glue front and back covers together to allow it to be a free-standing sculpture. A 1/4" dowel glued at the spine of the book helps it to stay spread open evenly. Binder clips or clothespins help to hold in place while glue is drying.
- Brush watercolor on the outside edges of the pages while the book is still closed. The slight waving of the pages that occurs adds even more volume to the finished product.

National Core Arts Standards

- Visual Arts

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.



Step 1: Make template of a Greek vase using French Curves. Cut out.



Step 2: Trace template onto discarded paperback book and cut pages.



Step 3: Add Greek Book Vase to a background with a painted Greek motif.

