

The Kids' Book of Incredibly Fun Crafts

Roberta Gould

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"I'm bored. There isn't anything to do!" These words won't be heard with this new Kids Can! publication in hand. The author, who has worked with kids in after-school and summer arts and adventure programs since 1990, brings her love of crafts and cultures from around the world to this title. Readers are encouraged to be unique and creative, to be messy, and to use free and found materials, while being safety-conscious and getting adult help when necessary.

Twenty-nine crafts await the adventurous. Some will be familiar, such as flip book animation and fortunetellers, also known as "cootie catchers." Some of the crafts in this first section, "Incredibly Fun Creations," include creating a claymation film, making masks, and constructing a landscape cake. "Creating with Light & Sound" has instructions for making a variety of candles (remember ice candles?) and candleholders, building tin-can lanterns, creating sound effects, and observing the winter solstice sky and then recreating constellations using a foam tray and a flashlight.

Crafts from other cultures are found in "Incredible Crafts from Near & Far." Learn to decorate eggs in the Pysanky (Ukrainian) style, or make an Inupaq Yo-Yo, a favorite of the Alaskan Inuit people. Native American crafts include dreamcatchers and moccasins. An edible Northern European craft is the peek-in sugar egg. These would all work well in social studies classes.

"Incredible Knots, Weaves & Not Knots" shows kids how to make friendship bracelets, braid leather, create a loom and weave with it, and knit using fingers as needles. One project, trick-braided leather, didn't seem to make sense at first, but the illustrations were ultimately clear and easy to follow. The final chapter, "Incredible Crafts from Nature," uses vines, straw, cones, and grasses to make wreaths, baskets, and Scandinavian wheat shapes.

For each craft, Gould includes a list of materials, directions, and Crafter's Clues-tips for doing the particular project, with suggestions for going beyond the initial instructions. She also gives a difficulty rating, with the amount of time each project should take, useful for a more formal setting. Illustrations are a combination of color photographs and drawings, supporting the directions for those with a visual learning style and showing kids engaged in each project. An index is also included.

A final section, "Boring Stuff For Adults," suggests ways for adults to work with kids on these crafts, and offers good reasons for kids to be creative, including giving kids a sense of mastery and control, adding variety to their lives while learning something about other cultures, as well as having fun. The wide variety of crafts, and the variations included, make this book a good choice for youth group leaders, teachers, and parents.

TRACY FITZWATER (November / December 2003)

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