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## Scene-stealer: Craft a holiday story diorama

Fourth- and fifth-graders bring favorite seasonal stories to life with a miniature set.

by: *Tessa White* (<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/author/tessawhite/>)



There's no better gift for the holidays than a handcrafted creation — and not just because it doesn't involve a frenzied trip to the mall. Having kids make gifts from scratch not only shows them the value of giving but also the brain-boosting benefits of taking up a hobby.

Hand-making a present involves more than gluing and coloring — it's a great opportunity to learn a thing or two. A simple project like creating wax ornaments offers a lesson in beginning chemistry, and making gooey "play dough" helps

math basics stick in youngsters' brains. For older kids, designing a December-themed calendar teaches them the meaning (and math) behind the month and building a story-based diorama brings holiday literature to life.

The project: craft a 3-D diorama of a holiday tale

Help your fourth- or fifth-grader's favorite seasonal tale come alive by making a memorable scene jump off the page. Reread the story with your child, and discuss the most important elements of the scene. Your child will get to practice his storytelling skills while kindling a love and appreciation of books.

## What you'll need

- A favorite holiday or winter tale. Examples include *T'was the Night Before Christmas*, *The Snowy Day*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *By the Hanukkah Light*, and *Festival of Lights*
- Rectangular tissue box
- Watercolor and tempera paints
- Cotton balls (for snow)
- String or fishing line (to hang objects and cutouts)
- Construction paper
- Figurines (action figures or toy animals)
- Glue stick

## Make it happen

Cut out the face of the tissue box, leaving a half-inch lip all the way around as a frame. Paint the outside of the box with tempera paint. Repeat two to three times to make sure it's completely covered. Paint the inside of the box with watercolors: Your child can decide if it's a gray, wintry day or a crisp, blue sky. Now the diorama is ready to be filled with objects to recreate the story. Cut out landscapes and buildings from the construction paper, and glue them onto the back and bottom. Add objects such as toy animals, cars, and trees and use pulled-apart cotton balls for a layer of snow. Use the string to hang birds or other objects for a 3-D effect.

You can also print out a copy of the scene from the book and paste it on top of the diorama, so that the recipient (or your child) can read it aloud while admiring the tiny recreation.

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## About the author

**Tessa White** (<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/author/tessawhite/>)

Tessa White earned her MFA from the University of San Francisco. She has two kids and can't wait to unwrap their homemade gifts.

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