

ART ADVENTURES

At-Home Art Project: Storytelling Crankies



This At-Home Art Project is an exploration of storytelling. We find stories everywhere in life—we read stories in books, watch stories in movies, and hear stories from our friends. What is your favorite story? What do you like most about it? Good stories have interesting characters, settings (times and locations where the story takes place), and plots (series of events that make up the story). Many stories are linear, which means that the events are told in chronological order over time (from earliest to latest).

Look at

THE WALTERS
ART MUSEUM

Art:



The Myth of Io, Bartolomeo di Giovanni (Italian), 15th century

Take a few minutes to look at this picture. What do you notice about the characters? How would you describe the setting? What do you think the story might be about?

This painting depicts the story of Io, the wife of the Roman god Zeus. It is unique because the artist included several parts of the story in one painting, sequentially from left to right just like a comic strip. Read the story below and see if you can follow along as you look at the painting.

In the beginning of the story (not shown here), Zeus falls in love with a princess named Io. When Zeus's wife Hera finds out, she gets very upset and jealous. In order to protect Io from his angry wife, Zeus turns Io into a cow. Hera demands that Zeus give her the cow (Io). Hera hires Argos, a watchman with one hundred eyes, to protect the cow. Zeus is sad that Io is going to spend the rest of her life as a cow.

This painting depicts the second half of the myth of Io. Starting in the bottom left, Zeus's messenger, Hermes (seen in the bottom left of the painting), disguises himself as a shepherd. Waving a flute, Hermes approaches Argos and the cow. Hermes plays his flute to put Argos to sleep. Then Hermes cuts off Argos's head. Hera is very sad, so she honors Argos by placing his one hundred eyes on the tail of her favorite bird. Legend has it, that is how the peacock got its feathers!

Hera also sends three furies (demons of the underworld) to torment Io the cow and chase her from place to place. Io wanders the earth as a cow until she arrives in Egypt. Then, Zeus finally convinces Hera to return Io back to human form.

In some stories, Io becomes the Queen of Egypt. In another version of the story, Io transforms into a group of stars (a constellation). In yet another version, she becomes the moon of the planet Jupiter (the Roman name of Zeus).

Did You Know?!

An art form that uses a scroll to tell stories is a crankie. They are a unique way of depicting a story because the artist can continually add paper to the scroll and add scenes to the story. The painting of the Myth of Io is visually similar to a crankie because of its scroll-like format with multiple scenes of the story depicted on a single surface (canvas/scroll paper).

Crankies began thousands of years ago in India and Indonesia as scrolls were used to tell the stories of religious epics. Because most people could not read at that time, they could follow the story by looking at the images on the scroll. Over time, story scrolls were used across the world. Storytellers decided to make a box-like contraption with dowel rods so they could more easily roll (or crank) the paper out instead of doing it by hand as they were telling their story. This storytelling form became known as a crankie. In recent years this kind of storytelling has been revived by artists around the world. There is even a festival in Baltimore that celebrates the art of crankies each year!

CHALLENGE:

The painting of the myth of Io highlights the important scenes of a story. The next time you are watching a movie or reading a book, think about the moments that stand out to you. Which ones would you depict on a crankie, or story scroll?

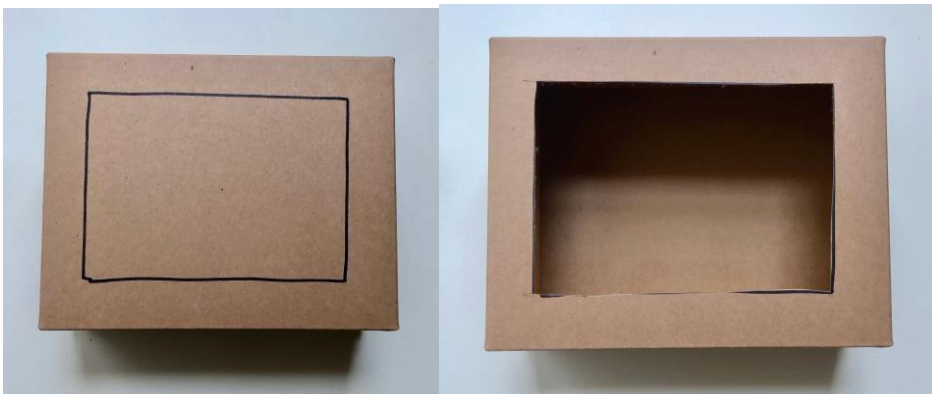
Make Art: Storytelling Crankies

Supplies:

- Any small box that is three (3) inches deep or less and ten (10) inches wide or less
- Paper scroll (any paper that is already in scroll form or that can be taped together to make a scroll)
- Markers or colored pencils
- Tape
- Two (2) dowel rods
- Two (2) dowel finials or stoppers (items that can be glued to the ends of the dowels so that they stay in the crankie)
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Glue
- Awl, scissors, or other pointed tool (to make holes in the box)
- Two (2) clothespins (for crank handles) or two more dowel finials/stoppers

Steps:

1. Cut a hole out of the bottom or side of the box. This will be the front of the crankie. (Leave the lid side of the box as its back so you can access the back to attach your scroll.)



2. Measure one (1) inch from the front of the crankie (the side you just cut) and one (1) inch from the side of the crankie and make a mark. Repeat this for all four corners. This helps ensure the dowels will be straight.



3. Once you have your marks, use them as guides to poke holes for the dowels.



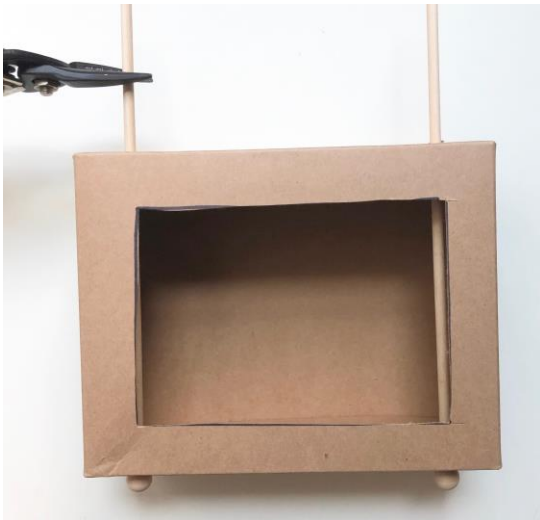
4. Glue a finial or stopper to one end of both dowels.



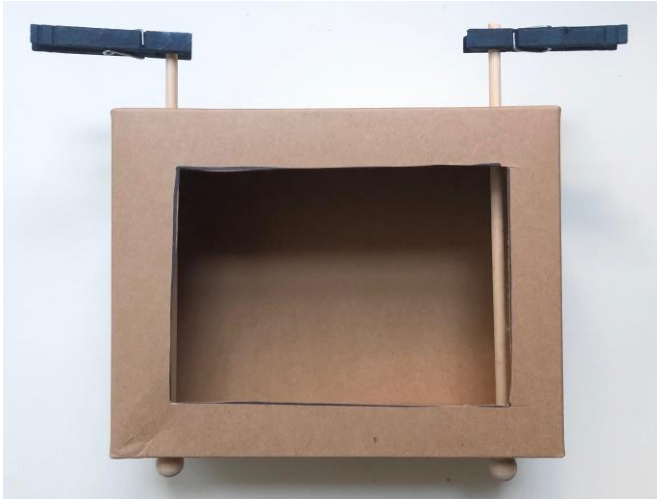
5. Slide the dowels through the holes in the crankie box.



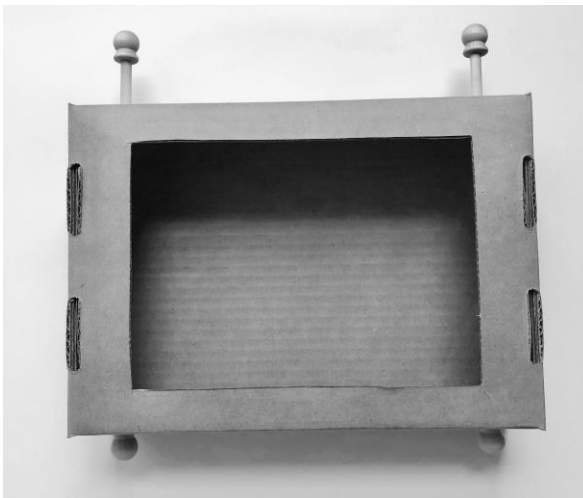
6. Trim the dowels (if you need to) to be about two (2) inches taller than the box.



7. Glue a clothespin to the top of both dowels to be the hand cranks. Or, use another dowel finial or stopper and twist with your fingers to crank.

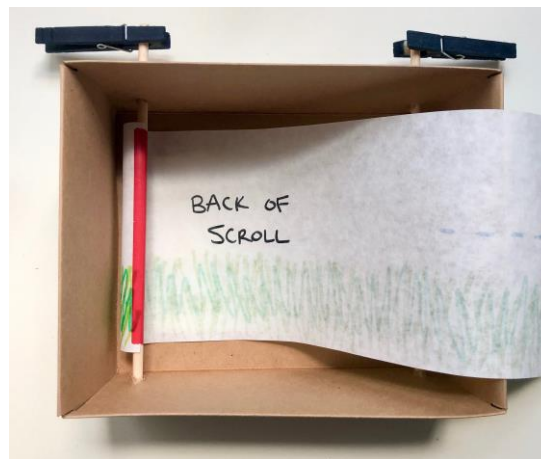


8. Now you are ready to create your scroll! If you do not have a long piece of paper you can tape pieces together. Start with about three (3) feet of paper. It is best to use thin paper, such as computer paper, that curves easily. Once you have a long piece of paper, cut it to half (.5) an inch shorter than the height of your crankie box. For example, if your box is seven (7) inches tall, make the scroll six and a half (6.5) inches tall.

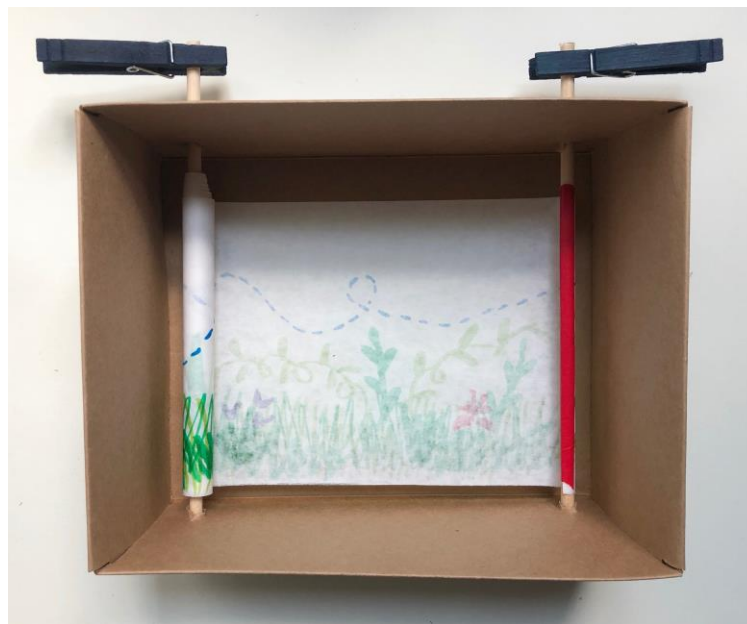


9. Think about a story that you would like to depict on your paper scroll. Sketch your ideas on scrap paper first. Who are the characters? What is the setting? What are the important events in the plot? What pictures or designs will you use to connect, or transition, from one scene to the next?
10. Once you have your plan, use markers, colored pencils, or any other mark-making tools that you have to draw your story on the scroll. You can cut pictures from magazines to tell your story. Be aware that things drawn close to the bottom or top edges of the scroll might get covered up by the crankie box frame, so it is best to put your pictures in the center of the paper.

11. If your paper is too long (you have empty space after you finish your drawings), cut it shorter. If your paper is too short (you run out of space to make your drawings), tape more pieces of paper to the end to make it longer. You can also continue to add to your story over time!
12. Once you have finished drawing your story, you may decorate the outside of your crankie box. Some artists have elaborate crankie boxes with drawings and designs. Others leave their boxes plain.
13. Open up the back of your crankie box. Using the washi tape, tape the end of your story scroll to the dowel on the left so the drawing will face out the front side with the window. Carefully twist the left side dowel and wind your story into the box.



14. Tape the other end (which should be the beginning of the story) to the other dowel and close the box.



15. Crank your story and share it with your friends and family!



SHARE: Send pictures of your artwork to familyprograms@thewalters.org so that we can add them to our online gallery. Please include your first name and age.

A Soundtrack For Storytelling

Music is sounds that have been arranged in a pleasing or meaningful way. Every culture around the world makes some form of music. Make music right now by tapping on a table or clapping. Sometimes artists use music to help tell a story. This is called a soundtrack. For this scavenger hunt, you will search for sounds that go along with your crankie story. Make a list of the characters, setting, and events (plot) that take place in your story. Add notes about the characters' feelings and the mood of the story. Then, write down sounds that you associate with each item in your list. Below are a few examples.

Once you have your scavenger hunt list, head outside and listen carefully for the sounds that you wrote down. As you explore, write notes, sketch, take pictures, or use a phone to record what you hear.

When you find something new, ask yourself: What do I hear? What do I think about this sound? What do I wonder about it?

When you finish your scavenger hunt, think about how the different sounds made you feel. Which one was your favorite, and why? How did the sounds enhance your interpretation of your story?

Soundtrack examples:

If the crankie is set in the woods, you may listen for...

- Birds singing
- Bees buzzing
- Running water

If the crankie is set in the city, you may listen for...

- Car horns beeping
- Footsteps on pavement
- Dogs barking

If a character is feeling happy, you may listen for...

- People clapping
- Friends talking
- Wind chimes

REFLECT: Tell us about your experience by completing this quick [survey](#).



The Myth of Io
Bartolomeo di Giovanni (Italian, active 1488-ca. 1500)
ca. 1490

This scene is a portion of the painting, *The Myth of Io*. In this section, Zeus emerges from the clouds to order Hermes, who is disguised as a shepherd, to rescue Io. Io had been transformed into the cow you see in the top right corner. Zeus, Hermes, and Io are all examples of **characters**. The **setting** is where a story takes place. Add **characters** and details to the **setting**, and then color in the scene!