

Activity Guide for

Not A Box

by Antoinette Porter

# Literacy Activities

## Become Part of the Story

Acting out the story adds another level of comprehension.

Materials:

- Shoe boxes
- Stuffed animals or toys that fit inside the shoe box

Directions:

- Read the story aloud.
- Recreate each scene with the stuffed animal. For example, have the stuffed animal sit inside the box for the race car and stand on top of the box for the mountain.

Questions:

- What else would your stuffed animal like to pretend with the box?

## How Good Are Your Listening Ears?

One early literacy skill involves paying close attention to what you hear and read. This activity helps preschoolers work on listening closely.

Materials:

- A copy of *Not a Box*

Directions:

- Teach everyone how to say “box” in sign language. A video of this simple sign can be viewed here: <https://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/BOX/1039/1>.
- Practice making the sign every time you say the word “box.”
- Read the book aloud and ask everyone to do the sign every time they hear the word “box.”

Questions:

- What other words would you like to learn in sign language? (Signingsavvy.com has a great alphabetical list of words that you can learn via video.)

## How Many Ways?

A large part of literacy is interacting with letters. How many different ways can you interact with the letters B, O, and X?

Materials: (Note: All materials for this activity are optional. Include as many or as few as you like.)

- Magnetic letters
- White paper

- Markers
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Laminating paper
- Pipe cleaners
- Glue
- Playdoh
- Small, low-sided container

Directions:

- Write the word “BOX” in a variety of mediums and let children interact with the word. Examples include:
  - Magnetic letters on a refrigerator
  - Use a marker to write the word in large letters on a piece of paper. Encourage children to trace the letters with their fingers.
  - Cut the letters out of construction paper. Let children play with the letters. Laminate them so they last longer.
  - Use pipe cleaners to form the letters. Glue the pipe cleaners to paper for a tactile version of the word.
  - Fill the bottom of a small container with playdoh. Write the word in the playdoh forming an indentation. Let children run their fingers gently over the letters.
- This is just a small sample of the different ways you can write the word “BOX.” If you have more ideas, be sure to include them.

Questions:

- What sound does a “B” make? What about “O” and “X”?
- What other words start with “B”?

## **Group Reading**

The text in picture books is rarely large enough to read from the back of a room. By creating posters of the text, you are including everyone in the reading of the words. It will help children realize that the letters and words in a book are important.

Materials:

- A copy of *Not a Box*
- 12 pieces of posterboard (or 6 if you use back and front)
- Markers

Directions:

- Clearly write the text from each page on a separate piece of posterboard.
- Make the text large so that a group of children can see the words.
- As you read the book, display the correct piece of posterboard so that everyone can read together.

- Note: This activity is easiest with two adults – one to hold the book and one to flip the posterboard pieces.

Questions:

- How many words are used in this story?
- What word has the most letters?

Extensions:

- Count the number of words on each page.
- Point out all of the capital (big) letters together.

### Add Your Own Text

For many of the pages in *Not a Box*, you read the illustration because there is no text. This activity allows children to write their own text for those pages.

Materials:

- A copy of *Not a Box*
- Post it notes
- Pen

Directions:

- As you read through the story, decide if there are pages that need text. For example, on the page with the race car, you may decide to add text saying “It’s a race car. It goes really fast. VROOM!”
- Write your addition to the text on a post it note and stick the note on the corresponding page.
- Continue for every page that you want to add text to.
- Read the story aloud with your new words.

Questions:

- Why do you think the author did not include text on some pages?

### Parts of a Book

It's never too early to talk about the parts of a book. Learning how to identify the title and author is an especially important skill. This skill will enable children to look for their own books in the library. It will also eventually help them create bibliographies for research projects.

Materials:

- A copy of *Not a Box* (or any other book of your choice)

Directions:

Point out and discuss the various parts of a book:

- Author – the person who wrote the book
- Copyright Page – cataloguing information about the book, usually in the front of the book but sometimes in the back
- Endpapers – pages glued to the inside of the book cover (Note: The endpapers in *Not a Box* are made to look like a cardboard box)
- Illustrator – the person who created the illustrations for the book (For *Not a Box* the illustrator and author are the same)
- Recto – right hand page of a book
- Title – the name of the book
- Verso – left hand page of a book

Questions:

- Can you identify these parts of a book on another book?
- Why is it important to be able to identify the title and author of a book?

### **How Many Things Can a Box Be?**

This activity seems very simple but it's a precursor to writing and reading.

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Marker

Directions:

- Brainstorm a list of things that you can make with a box.
- Write every idea in a list on the chart paper.

### **About the Author**

Picture books don't appear out of thin air. Someone has to write the words and draw the illustrations. Use both of these links to learn more about Antoinette Portis to share with kids:

- <http://www.antoinetteportis.com/about/>
- <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780061123221/not-a-box/> (Scroll down to "Book Interview" under "Resources.")

## Rhymes and Songs

Sing these rhymes and songs together or make up your own.

### Little Turtle

I had a little turtle (hands on top of each other, move thumbs)  
Who lived in a box (make box)  
He swam in the puddles and climbed on the rocks (with hands swim, climb)  
He snapped at a mosquito (clap), he snapped at a flea (clap)  
He snapped at a minnow (clap), and he snapped at me (clap)  
He caught the mosquito (cup hands), he caught the flea (cup hands),  
He caught the minnow (cup hands), but he didn't catch me! (wag finger)

### Row Row Row Your Boat

This is especially fun if you sit in a box and pretend that it is a boat. There is also a fun version of this song on Songs and Games for Toddlers by Bob McGrath and Katharine Smithrim. In the third verse of the CD version, the lyrics change and the boat becomes a submarine.

Row, row, row your boat  
Gently down stream  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily  
Life is but a dream

### If You Think the Box ....

(Tune: If You're Happy and You Know It)  
This version follows some of the pages of *Not a Box*.

If you think the box is a car say vroom vroom  
If you think the box is a car say vroom vroom  
If you think the box is a car  
Your imagination takes you far  
If you think the box is a car say vroom vroom

If you think the box is a mountain climb up high...  
If you think the box is on fire spray the water...  
If you think the box is a robot say beep beep...

### Ten Little Spaceships

(Tune: Ten Little Indians)  
This rhyme is a great complement to the final page of *Not a Box*.

One little, two little, three little spaceships,  
Four little, five little, six little spaceships,  
Seven little, eight little, nine little space ships,  
Ten little spaceships ready to go. Countdown...Ready?  
10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 Blastoff!

### Laurie Berkner – Rocketship Run

Play this fun song after finishing the book to go on your own rocketship ride. A YouTube video of Laurie singing the song is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4OgPHpUjh4>

## **Books to Share**

### Books About Boxes

Kids loves playing with boxes and authors and publishers have taken note. There is a fantastic array of books about boxes. Try a few of these books and play with boxes all week.

Berenstain, Stan and Jan. *Inside Outside Upside Down*.

1968. New York: Random House.

This beginning to read title has great cadence for children who want to read a book all by themselves.

Best, Cari. *If I Could Drive, Mama*.

2016. Illus., Simone Shin. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

A child builds a car out of a cardboard box and takes his mother on a ride to the library (their bookshelf), to the store (her closet), and to dinner with daddy.

Braun, Sebastien. *Meeow and the Big Box*.

2009. Great Britain: Boxer Books.

Follow along as Meeow the cat makes a fire engine out of a big brown box.

Carter, David A. *B Is For Box: The Happy Little Yellow Box*.

2014. New York: Little Simon.

Go through the alphabet with the yellow box. This book has a unique black background and lots of fun moving parts.

Carter, David A. *The Happy Little Yellow Box: A Pop-Up Book of Opposites*.

2012. New York: Little Simon.

Learn about opposites in this highly interactive book.

Cleminson, Katie. *Magic Box*.

2009. New York: Disney Hyperion Books.

Eva receives a magic box for her birthday and her imagination runs wild.

Dodds, Dayle Ann. *The Color Box*.

1992. Illus., Giles Laroche. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

Alexander the monkey climbs into a box to find may colorful worlds to explore. Use this book to talk about colors and boxes.

Dunbar, Polly. *Where's Tumpty?*

2009. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Tumpty the elephant tries hiding under a cardboard box but it isn't big enough to hide him. When Tumpty does find a big enough place to hide, will his friends be able to find him?

Flyte, Min. *Box*.

2015. Illus., Rosalind Beardshaw. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

When Thomas, Alice, Sam, and Nancy end up with a collection of boxes, they make all sorts of creations. Flaps and foldout pages add to the fun of this book.

Lillegard, Dee. *Sitting In My Box*.

1989. Illus., Jon Agee. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

A boy sitting and reading in a box is quickly joined by a giraffe, elephant, baboon, lion, and hippopotamus. There's no room to sit but no one wants to leave, until a flea joins them. This particular story is especially fun to tell with puppets and a box.

McCarty, Peter. *Chloe*.

2012. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Chloe doesn't want to crowd around a television during family fun time. Instead, she plays with the box the TV came in and soon everyone wants to play along.

Slack, Michael. *Shorty & Clem*.

2017. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

When Clem receives a package, Shorty can't help but try to guess what is inside. The anticipation finally gets to him and he opens the box. Will Clem be mad when he gets home?

Hillenbrand, Will. *My Book Box*.

2006. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc.

A box can hold many things from bugs to pizza to socks. Obviously, the best use of a box is to hold books so you can bring them with you everywhere. Make your own box for books after reading this title.

Patricelli, Leslie. *The Birthday Box*.

2007. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

A child get a puppy for his birthday but the real fun is playing in the box with the new puppy.

Yolen, Jane. *What To Do With a Box*.

2016. Illus., Chris Sheban. Mankato, MN: Creative Editions.

A poetic ode to all the things a box can be, this book includes pages that appear to be made from cardboard boxes.

### More Books About Pretend

Baker, Keith. *Just How Long Can a Long String Be?!*

2009. New York: Scholastic.

How many different ways can you use a string? Use it to hold a balloon. Use it to make a necklace. Use it to play jump rope. Use a piece of string and act out the pages in this book to make it interactive.

Porter, Antoinette. *Not a Stick*.

2008. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

This book follows the same format as *Not a Box*. A stick can be a fishing pole, a baton for the leader of the band, a paintbrush, and more.

Schaefer, Carole Lexa. *The Squiggle*.

1996. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.

During a class trip, a young girl finds a piece of red ribbon and pretends it is a dragon, a great wall, fireworks, and more. This imagination book has a fantastic Asian flair.

Shaw, Charles G. *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*.

1947. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

It may look like a rabbit or a tree or and ice cream cone but it's really just a cloud in the sky. After reading this book can you see any shapes in the clouds?

Whitman, Candace. *Lines That Wiggle*.

2009. Illus., Steve Wilson. Maplewood, NJ: Blue Apple Books.

What can you create with a line? A line can be a bridge, waves, cat whiskers, or lightning. Explore your own line designs after admiring this book

# STEM Activities

"Out of the box: Playing with empty boxes is not only fun, it's educational" Read this 2015 article from Michigan State University:

[http://www.canr.msu.edu/news/out\\_of\\_the\\_box\\_playing\\_with\\_empty\\_boxes\\_is\\_not\\_only\\_fun\\_its\\_educational](http://www.canr.msu.edu/news/out_of_the_box_playing_with_empty_boxes_is_not_only_fun_its_educational)

Where are we going to get all these boxes? Many of the activities in this guide suggest using boxes of a variety of sizes. Ask for boxes at grocery stores and places that sell large appliances. They often have many boxes that they are willing to part with.

## What Can You Build?

Stacking boxes requires planning so that structures don't collapse. Allow children to experiment with a variety of size boxes and learn through failure.

Materials:

- A variety of size boxes

Directions:

- Put the boxes out and allow children to build whatever they want.
- Be sure to allow for plenty of time of self-discovery. Celebrate when towers collapse and celebrate when structures stand tall.

Questions:

- What types of boxes are best to use on the bottom? Why?
- What did you build? How does it work?

Extension:

- Build a mountain to correspond with the second imaginative use of a box in *Not a Box*.

## Comparing Size

Young kids can start learning about size differences. Be sure to use words like: smaller, smallest, bigger, largest, etc. Talking about sizes is an early math skill.

Materials:

- At least two different size boxes
- A collection of objects that will fill the larger box (a bunch of stuffed animals, a stack of books, toy balls, etc.)

Directions:

- Before doing anything else with the boxes, talk about them. Which one is bigger? Which one is taller?
- Talk about which one will hold more stuffed animals, books, balls, etc. Why do you think that?
- Fill one box with objects. Count how many that box holds.
- Fill the other box with objects. Count how many that box holds.
- Which one held more? Were you correct in which one you thought would hold more?

Extension:

- If possible, find two boxes that hold the same volume but have different dimensions. You might find one that is short and wide and another that is tall and thin. Talk about which one is “bigger.” Many kids may say that the taller box is bigger. Experiment with the boxes to see if one holds more objects than the other. This could get interesting because the tall and thin box might not be able to fit a large elephant stuffed animal whereas the short and wide one can.
- This activity can also be done with two pieces of “tupperware” that hold the same volume but have different shapes. You can demonstrate how they both hold the same amount of water.
- Use four or more boxes of varying sizes. Put the boxes in order from shortest to tallest and smallest to biggest.

### **Help the Pennies Float**

STEM skills revolve around hypothesis, exploration, and a little bit of trial and error. Play around with different types of cardboard together. Be sure to ask lots of questions along the way.

Materials:

- At least three different types of cardboard (a pasta box, a pizza box, and a shoebox will work)
- Pennies
- Scissors
- A container of water

Directions:

- Cut the same size square out of each piece of cardboard.
- One at a time, float the piece of cardboard in the water. Does it float?
- One at a time, put pennies on top of the cardboard. How many pennies does it hold before it sinks? Or before they fall off?
- Continue with each of the different types of cardboard.

Questions:

- Which type of cardboard held the most pennies? Why do you think that is true?
- What else could we try testing on top of the cardboard?
- What happens to the cardboard as it sits in the water for a long time?

Extensions:

- Do different shapes work better? Try three different shapes from the same type of cardboard. Which one holds more pennies?

- What if you use duct tape or a hot glue gun to create a little boat out of the cardboard. Does that make a difference?
- This activity is often done with aluminum foil boats. Try making boats that way and see if they do better than the floating cardboard. These boats will certainly last longer as the cardboard will slowly disintegrate in the water.

## **Car Racing**

Building ramps helps to develop engineering and math skills. Use this activity to correspond with the first imaginative use of a box in *Not a Box*.

Materials:

- Matchbox cars or other toy cars
- Pieces of cardboard to use as ramps
- Objects to prop up ramps (stacks of books can work well for this)

Directions:

- Build one ramp.
- Hold two cars at the top of the ramp.
- Let the cars go at the same time and see which one gets to the bottom first.
- You can also see which car then rolls the furthest.

Questions:

- Which car won? Why do you think that car went faster? Further?

Extensions:

- Build two different height ramps. Race one car on each ramp. Which one do you think will go further? Why?
- Build a down ramp and a jump ramp. Do cars travel further if they ride down a ramp? Or if they travel down a ramp and then up a jump?
- What happens if you glue speed bumps onto the ramp? Glue pipe cleaners or folded paper on the ramps to create speed bumps.
- Download the Peep Family Science: Ramps app for more activities with ramps. Created by WGBH (Boston's PBS Station), the app offers four weeks of shared activity ideas in both English and Spanish. ([peepandthebigwideworld.com/peepfamilyscience](http://peepandthebigwideworld.com/peepfamilyscience))
- Make racing tracks using pool noodles and marbles. Cut a pool noodle in half and use the inside track to race marbles. The noodle is malleable making it easy to lay against a sofa or other surface to prop a ramp. Refer to this website for an image of the final product:  
<http://djpeach.blogspot.com/2012/04/day-1-project-pinterest-2012.html>

## **Cardboard Construction Set**

Sturdy cardboard from your recycling bin can be used to create cheap building materials for play. Kids love building with Legos. Cardboard can be a new building material to encourage engineering skills.

Materials:

- Sturdy cardboard
- Scissors

Directions:

- Cut the cardboard into squares.
- Cut narrow v-shaped slits into the squares.
- Give the squares to kids and let them build.
- This idea came from this website. Refer to it for images of the final product:  
<https://happyhooligans.ca/homemade-cardboard-construction-set/>

## **Straw Rockets**

Build your own rocket to go along with the Not-a-Box rocket at the end of the book.

Materials:

- Drinking straws
- 8 ½ X 11 paper cut in half
- Tape
- Scissors
- Optional: Crayons to decorate the paper

Directions:

- If you wish to decorate the paper, do so before working on the rest of the project.
- Loosely roll the paper around the end of the straw. Tape to hold the tube shape.
- Cut a small triangle for the tip of the rocket. Tape to the top of the rocket to close off the tube.
- Put the rocket over the straw.
- Blow on the other end to launch the rocket.
- Scroll down on this blog post to see an image of the final product:  
<http://www.toddlerapproved.com/2014/06/tinkerlab-hands-on-guide-for-little.html>

Questions:

- What happens if you blow lightly through the straw? What happens if you blow hard?
- What happens if you hold the rocket straight up and down? What happens if you hold it on an angle?

## **Build a Ball Maze**

Materials:

- Large shallow box
- Cardboard tubes (empty paper towel rolls and wrapping paper rolls)
- Scissors
- Hot glue gun
- A variety of small balls (ping pong balls, marbles, etc.)

Directions:

- Cut the cardboard tubes in half.
- Use the glue gun to attach the tubes to the box in an alternating pattern.
- Experiment with the different balls to see what works best in the maze.
- This blog post has a great image that you can copy for your project:  
<http://www.ahappywanderer.com/2011/08/ball-maze.html>

Questions:

- Which balls work best in the maze? What doesn't work in the maze?
- Are there any changes that should be made to the maze so that it works better?

## **What's in the Box?**

Encourage kids to use their sense of touch to build observation skills.

Materials:

- Empty tissue boxes (the square size boxes are better than the short, long boxes)
- A variety of objects that are familiar to children (a crayon, a ping pong ball, a pine cone, a matchbox car, etc.)

Directions:

- Put one object inside each empty tissue box.
- Teach the kids to put their hands inside the box without pulling out the object.
- Encourage them to use their hand to feel the object to try to guess what it is before seeing it.
- Once they have guessed, have them pull out the object to see if they are correct.

Questions:

- Before they pull the object out – What do you feel?
- Why did you make the guess you made?

## **Color Sorting**

Sorting objects is an important early math skill.

Materials:

- An empty box for every color in your activity. (Tissue boxes work well for this.)
- A variety of small items for each color
  - Crayons
  - Feathers
  - Plastic fruit
  - Magnetic letters
  - Buttons
  - Ribbon
- Construction paper for each color.
- Tape or glue

Directions:

- Cover the outside of each box with one color of paper. You will end up with a red box, an orange box, a yellow box, etc.
- Sort the items into the matching color boxes.

## **Giant Shape Sorter**

Playing with a shape sorter helps kids work on their spatial sense.

Materials:

- A large box
- X-Acto knife
- Colorful masking or duct tape
- A variety of toys with different shapes

Directions:

- Cut a variety of different size shapes in the sides of the box.
- Finish off the cuts with tape to smooth rough edges.
- Let kids experiment with putting different toys into the box through the holes.
- This website has an image of a possible final product:  
<https://www.parents.com/holiday/christmas/crafts/genius-and-fun-crafts-to-make-with-leftover-boxes/>

Questions:

- Why do some toys fit in some holes and not others?

### **Box City**

This activity helps kids learn about the world and work on building and sorting skills. The box helps to contain the city into a small area.

Materials:

- Giant cardboard box
- Markers
- Blocks
- Toy cars

Directions:

- Cut the box to create a shallow play area.
- Use the markers to draw roads inside the box. Consider adding train tracks.
- Put the blocks and toy cars inside the box.
- Let children interact with the toys. They can create buildings with the blocks and drive cars on the road.
- This website shows a sample of the activity: <https://theimaginationtree.com/small-world-play-cardboard-box-town/>

Questions:

- What other toys can we add to this city?

### **Climb to the Top of the Mountain**

The box in *Not a Box* becomes a mountain. Climb to the top of a “real mountain” to work on science observation skills.

Materials:

- A hill outside

Directions:

- Climb/walk to the top of the hill as a group.
- While walking up the hill, pay attention to things that you see. Can you find any bugs? What plants do you see along the way? (Even an all grass hill most likely has clover or weeds mixed in.)

- Are there trees on the hill? If the sun is out, where do the shadows lie?

### **What Absorbs Water**

In the book, the bunny pretends that the box is a burning building that she has to spray with water as a firefighter. Obviously, it is not a good idea for preschoolers to play with fire. There are many other water activities that can build STEM skills.

Materials:

- Variety of materials that absorb water (paper towel, wash cloth, cotton balls, construction paper, etc.)
- Variety of materials that do not absorb water (plastic wrap or plastic bag, aluminum foil, a plastic toy, etc.)
- Eye dropper (for more precise experimenting)
- Food coloring (to see the water better on the materials)
- Water
- Bowl

Directions:

- Before starting, talk about what materials you think will absorb the water and which ones will not.
- Using the eye dropper to control the experiment, slowly put a few drops of colored water on one of the materials.
- Watch to see what happens. Does the material absorb the water? Does the water sit on top?
- Continue on to the next material.
- Don't rush through the materials. Take time to watch and see what happens.
- A sample of this activity can be found here: <https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/preschool-water-science-experiment/>

Questions:

- Why do some materials absorb water?
- Why do some materials repel water?

### **Pretend Fire Fighting**

You don't need to put out a real fire to have fun with a garden hose. Use this opportunity to see how water acts and reacts as it comes out of the hose.

**Materials:**

- Outdoor area that can get wet
- Garden hose

**Directions:**

- Experiment with the water.

**Questions:**

- What happens when you hold the hose straight up and down?
- How can you build a water arc?
- What happens if you put a finger over part of the end of the hose?
- Can you create a puddle on the ground? What happens if you jump in the puddle?
- What happens if you spray water directly at the side of a building?

**Balancing Robots**

This simple activity helps children learn about balance and gravity. It also corresponds with the page when the box becomes a robot.

**Materials:**

- White cardstock
- Scissors
- Pennies
- Poster putty (or scotch tape)
- Robot template (available at the link in the directions)
- Optional: Crayons to decorate the robots

**Directions:**

- Find this activity here: <https://buggyandbuddy.com/science-kids-balancing-robot-free-printable/>
- Print the template onto white cardstock.
- Cut the robot out with scissors.
- Color the robot.
- Using poster putty, add two pennies to various parts of the robot until you can make it balance on the end of your finger.

## **Using Technology**

Tiggly Cardtoons: Learn to Count with 25 Interactive Stories

- Free app for iPad, Android, Fire Phone, and Kindle Fire
- Learn to count from one to five.
- Kids use their fingers to manipulate one to five dots. Once the dots are in place, pieces of cardboard on the screen transform to create a story. What will the cardboard become this time?
- There is also an option to use Tiggly Counts Toys with the app.

Toca Robot Lab

- \$2.99. Available for iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad.
- The box in *Not a Box* becomes a robot. This app lets kids build a robot out of recyclable materials then fly the robot around a maze to collect stars.

Bee-bots

- If you have the funds, Bee-bots are an appropriate robot to use with preschoolers: <https://www.bee-bot.us/> Use these to go along with the robot page in the book.
- This page has some great customer stories of success stories of using Bee-bots with a variety of age children: <https://doc.terrapinlogo.com/doku.php/stories:start?datasrt=age>

The publisher's website (<https://www.harpercollins.com/9780061123221/not-a-box/>) has an event kit full of ideas for *Not a Box*. The kit includes printable coloring pages, a matching game, and a template for making your own Not-a-Box. While the activities do not require technology, this link is included in this section because technology is needed to access the activities. Once on the webpage, scroll down to "Printable Activity" under "Resources" for the .pdf event kit.

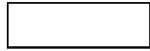
# Arts Activities

## Create Your Own Book

Materials:

- Not a Box template with a simple rectangle outline and the words “This is not a box. It’s a\_\_\_\_\_” (see below)
- Crayons

This is not a box.



It's a \_\_\_\_\_

Directions:

- Read *Not a Box* aloud.
- Give every child a template and crayons.
- Encourage everyone to draw their own box creation.
- Help them write what their box is on the bottom line.
- Post all of the pages on a bulletin board or collect them into a book.

Questions:

- Tell me about your drawing.

## It's Not a Box

In *Not a Box*, the box becomes a race car, mountain, burning building, robot, pirate ship, hot air balloon, elephant transport, tugboat, and rocket ship. What else can a box be?

Materials:

- Box for every child. They can be shoeboxes, pizza boxes, large boxes, whatever you can get your hands on.
- Crayons, marker, stickers, ribbon, glue, scissors, anything you want to include to decorate the boxes.

Directions:

- After reading the story, let every child create their own Not a Box.
- The options are endless. Boxes can be a bed for a doll, a treasure chest, a telephone booth, a library, a tablet, a monster, anything that a child can dream up.

Questions:

- What did you make?
- How does it work?

Extension:

- Recreate a scene from the book with your box. Can you decorate your box to be one of the things that bunny pretends it is in the book?

### **Tissue Box Guitar**

Materials:

- Empty tissue box (the kind with a hole along the top side)
- Rubber bands with different widths
- Optional: stickers or markers to decorate the box

Directions:

- Carefully slide the rubber bands around the thinner part of the box so that they fall over the opening.
- Experiment with playing your new guitar.

Questions:

- Do the rubber bands make different sounds?
- Which sound do you like best? Why?

### **Box City**

Materials:

- Construction paper cut into various size squares and rectangles
- Full sheets of construction paper as the background
- Glue
- Optional: Crayons or markers to further decorate the city

Directions:

- Every child needs one full sheet of construction paper to build their city.
- Glue squares and rectangles onto the paper to create a cityscape.

Questions:

- What buildings did you include in your city?

Extensions:

- Cut out some triangles and kids can create rockets on their paper.

## **Marble Art**

Materials:

- Shoebox or another small box
- Paint
- Marbles

Directions:

- Put a small dab of paint in all four corners of the box.
- Add a couple marbles into the box.
- Gently shake the box to see what you can create.
- Carefully remove the marbles and let the paint dry.

Questions:

- Does your painting look like anything?

## **This Is Not A....**

Why do boxes get to have all the fun? Encourage creativity by pretending that all sorts of objects are something else.

Materials:

- Anything you want

Directions:

- Pretend everything is something it is not. Examples:
  - This is not a book. It's a giant clam that ate a bunch of paper.
  - This is not a crayon. It's a worm that throws up color.
  - This is not the floor. It is lava!
  - This is not a blanket. It is a superhero cape.
  - This is not a ball. It is a marble for a giant.
  - This is not a sticker. It is a magic shield that protects my clothes from getting dirty.
- Everything can be anything!

## **Let's Go to the Movies**

Drive-in theaters are a fun and nostalgic way to watch a movie. You can recreate this opportunity right in your library or classroom.

**Materials:**

- Boxes large enough for children to sit in
- Crayons, markers, glue, paper, or anything else you want to decorate box cars
- A large open space to “park” the cars
- A movie and screen

**Directions:**

- Tell everyone that their box is a car.
- Let everyone decorate their car however they wish. They might add tires. They might “paint” their car with swirls. Make your fantasy car.
- Line up the cars facing the movie screen.
- Climb in your car and watch the movie.
- You may choose to add snacks for this special movie screening.

**Become a Robot**

The rabbit wears the box to become a robot in the book. Now it’s your turn.

**Materials:**

- Boxes that are large enough for a child to wear
- Scissors
- Crayons, markers, paper, glue and other items to decorate the robot body

**Directions:**

- Cut off the bottom of the box.
- Cut arm holes in both sides and a hole for the child’s head in the top.
- Use all of your decorating supplies to create a fun robot body.
- Wear your robot body with pride. Be sure to make lots of fun robot noises.

**Box Playscape**

Imagine walking into a room full of boxes. Everything can be anything.

**Materials:**

- Large open space
- Large collection of boxes. Especially try to find large boxes like those that hold refrigerators and washing machines.
- Crayons and markers
- X-Acto knife (adult use only)
- Optional: Toy cars and trucks

**Directions:**

- Place all of the boxes into a large area.
- Cut doors and windows into some of the boxes.

- Let kids decorate and pretend as they see fit.
- Optional: Cut smaller holes in the bottom of some of the boxes so kids can drive through them with toy cars and trucks.
- Need some inspiration? Try some of these ideas: <http://www.playideas.com/25-epic-cardboard-forts/>

Questions:

- Which box did you like best? Why?

### **Cardboard Art**

Materials:

- Scrap pieces of cardboard
- Glue
- Crayons or markers
- Construction paper

Directions:

- Give everyone a piece of construction paper and a piece of cardboard.
- Glue the cardboard somewhere on the paper.
- Use crayons to draw an image on the construction paper. Use the cardboard as part of the image.

Questions:

- What did you draw?
- Why did you decide to use the cardboard that way?

### **Coloring Box**

This is the one time it's ok to color on the "walls."

Materials:

- Box large enough for a child to fit inside
- Crayons

Directions:

- Let the child color and draw whatever they want inside or outside of the box.

Extensions:

- Bring the activity outside and let kids use paint inside the box.
- Make the painting activity active and messy. Dip plastic toy balls in the paint and throw them into the box. Talk about how the paint splatters everywhere. Experiment with using hard balls and softer ones. An image of how much fun this can be can be found here:  
<http://www.funlittles.com/art-activity-throw-ball-painting/>

## **Big Foot Races**

This physical activity requires a bit of coordination and a lot of laughter.

Materials:

- Two shoeboxes per child
- Scissors
- Tape
- Optional: Crayons, markers, construction paper, glue, and stickers

Directions:

- Cut a hole in the lid of the shoebox that is large enough for a child's foot to fit through it.
- Tape the lid to the bottom part of the shoe box.
- Optional: Kids can decorate their big shoes with crayons, markers, construction paper and glue, or stickers.
- Kids then slide their feet into the box and try to walk around.
- Option to have the kids race while wearing the shoeboxes.
- This webpage has a photo of the final product: <https://meaningfulmama.com/day-129-big-foot-races.html>

## **Crafts Big and Small**

Powell, Sarah. *The Cardboard Box Book*.

2014. New York: St. Martin's Press, LLC

This resource is full of project ideas from a mailbox to fairy wings to a cool car. The book includes clear instructions and templates for projects that are more involved.