

COMMON WEAL COMMUNITY ARTS

Artful Isolation Activities

Week Nineteen: Storytelling Terrarium



Yasmin Dar is a multidisciplinary visual artist, graphic designer, and illustrator currently working towards a Bachelor of Arts with a focus on Cultures of Display at the University of Regina. She loves getting messy with a variety of mediums and believes that we all have an innate need to nurture our creativity in whatever form it takes.

This activity is possible thanks to a partnership with the Heritage Community Association in Regina, Saskatchewan.



Tell a unique story by creating your very own terrarium!

What is a Storytelling Terrarium? Terrariums are miniature gardens traditionally housed in enclosed glass containers that use condensation to create a self-watering environment. For this activity, however, you can use whatever type of container you like. The focus will be using found objects and accessible materials to create a garden as a means of storytelling. Creativity is encouraged!

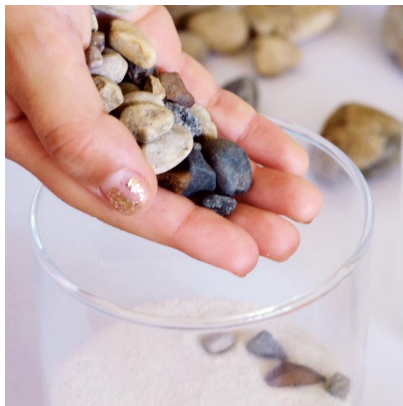
Why a Story Terrarium? Yasmin often looks to natural materials to inspire her artistic practice. She chose this activity to promote ways of fostering self-expression, reflection, and calm through an organic, creative practice. In her own words: "Collecting found objects from our everyday environment encourages new ways of looking at the ordinary and creates opportunities for personal narrative. This gentle push away from our routine perspective encourages us to slow down, be mindful of physical and emotional space, and build intention in our interactions and response."

Suitable For: All Ages (note that wee ones will need support).

What You'll Need: Wide-mouth glass container (mason jar, vase, bowl, cup, or anything else you like), pebbles or rocks, potting soil, small plant/s, and assorted decorative items of your choice such as sand, moss, shells, driftwood, stones, small figurines, etc. Note that you may choose to use only some of these materials. This project focuses on process and story-building rather than the particular objects and materials used, so be sure to have fun with it!

Getting Ready:

- Before you begin, spend some time exploring some resources. Learn about terrariums [here](#), read about making kid-friendly terrariums [here](#), and explore Paula Hayes' crystal and giant terrariums [here](#). Visit a terrarium art shop such as the one found [here](#), or explore ideas on [Pinterest](#) or [Instagram](#). You may also choose to get inspired by the photos on this page which showcase some of the materials Yasmin used.
- Consider the story you wish to tell. What is the intent of your story? What colours, textures, materials, and shapes will help form the narrative?
- Examine how others have constructed their terrariums and used them to tell a story. How do they make you feel? Do they inspire any ideas? What are some similarities and differences between them?



Activity:

- Take a stroll around your neighbourhood, collecting small objects that inspire you. Or, if you prefer to stay home, wander around your house or yard while exploring the contents of drawers, cupboards, pockets, bins, bags, or other containers.
- Return home and assemble your objects in a flat, open workspace that is easy to clean. You may want to lay down a towel or some newsprint in case of any spills. Think of your terrarium as a living picture. What story do the objects you've gathered tell when they are brought together? How does rearranging them affect that story?
- Now it's time to pour out your layers. Layers may include sand, pebbles, rocks, potting soil, and plants, but we encourage you to be creative! Once you have an idea of what materials you'd like to layer, Yasmin has created a step-by-step visual assembly guide [here](#).
- It's time to decorate your garden! Use some or all of your collected objects and remaining items to decorate the space around your plant. Think about your story, be creative, and have fun!
- Remember: The focus of this exercise is on process rather than materials, so if you're short on supplies, simply improvise with what you have on hand. An example may be to arrange some collected objects on the floor, in a drawer, or in your garden to tell a story.

Reflection:

- Once you're done, share your creation with a friend. You may also choose to write a story about what is going on in your terrarium. Here are some things you may wish to discuss:
 - What story have you told and why did you choose to tell it?
 - Does your terrarium represent an entire story or a single scene? You may even want to create additional terrariums to represent different parts of the same story!
 - What do the objects included say about you, and how do they contribute to the narrative?
 - How have you used the items in your terrarium? Do they act as the original objects or have you repurposed them into something new?
 - If you've created a miniature world, who are its inhabitants or visitors? What is the climate like? How does one feel in this world? Is it friendly or hostile? Would you like to spend time there?
- Take a picture of your story terrarium and share it with us on Facebook or Instagram by tagging [@skcommonweal](#) and using the hashtags [#cwterrarium](#) and [#cwneighbours](#)