# DIRECTOR'S LESSON PACKAGE OVERVIEW

## Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

K–2 Literacy Package — Informed by 4-H STEAM Imagination Guide 2025
Created by Helix Education in partnership with Beyond School Bells

| 📋 FOR | 📖 USE | ➡️ FRONTLINE EDUCATORS |
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| Program directors, site coordinators, and lead educators | Background knowledge, standards alignment, materials planning, and reporting data to implement this 3-lesson unit | Should use the Grab & Go Lesson Package |

## Unit Overview

This three-lesson unit uses ***Not a Box*** by Antoinette Portis as the anchor text for an integrated K–2 literacy and STEAM experience. The book tells the story of a rabbit who sees a plain cardboard box as anything but ordinary—imagining it as a rocket ship, a mountain, a burning building, and more. This theme of **creative imagination** runs through every lesson.

## Lesson-at-a-Glance

| # | Lesson Focus | Lesson Overview | SOR Skill | STEAM Activity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Imagining & Phonemic Awareness** | Students are introduced to the book and the concept of imagination as transformation. They use the Engineering Design Process to repurpose real cardboard boxes into something new—a tunnel, step stool, mailbox, or more. The lesson builds foundational literacy through phonemic awareness using words from the story. | Phonemic Awareness (rhyming, segmenting, phoneme substitution) | Students use the Engineering Design Process to repurpose cardboard boxes into a functional object of their choosing. |
| 2 | **Shared Reading & Vocabulary Exploration** | Students use the 4-Step Vocabulary Routine to explore five key words from the story (indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond). They participate in a shared reading with vocabulary stops, then go outside to collect natural objects for a Found Art assemblage inspired by artist Louise Nevelson. | Vocabulary in context (4-step vocabulary routine) | Students collect outdoor found objects and arrange them inside a shoebox to create an assemblage sculpture inspired by Louise Nevelson. |
| 3 | **Author's Craft & Writing Celebration** | Students study the mentor text's author craft, then write and illustrate their own "Not a | Writing: | Students write and illustrate original "Not a ___" story pages; |

| # | Lesson Focus | Lesson Overview | SOR Skill | STEAM Activity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ___" story pages using the book's structure as a model. They celebrate as authors with a class share and assemble their pages into a class book. They also build 3D cardboard sculptures inspired by abstract art. | mentor text structure, sentence craft, illustration | build abstract 3D cardboard sculptures. |

## Nebraska ELA Standards Alignment

| Grade | Literary Text (Reading) | Science of Reading Focus |
|---|---|---|
| K | **LA.K.RP.1** With adult help, retell stories with details and identify the main message. / With adult help, describe characters, settings, and events. | **LA.K.F.2.b** Recognize and produce rhyming words. (L1)<br>**LA.K.W.1** With adult help, write using drawing, dictating, and writing. (L3) |
| 1st | **LA.1.RP.1** Retell a story using important details; identify characters, setting, and events. | **LA.1.F.2.a** Segment and blend phonemes in CVC words. (L1)<br>**LA.1.W.1** Write opinions, informative pieces, and narratives. (L3) |
| 2nd | **LA.2.RP.1** Retell stories, explain lessons; describe how story structure contributes to meaning. | **LA.2.F.2.a** Manipulate phonemes (substitution) to build new words. (L1)<br>**LA.2.W.1** Write for different purposes and audiences. (L3) |

## Lesson Structure

Each lesson is designed for **60 minutes** in an out-of-school time (OST) setting. The timing below is flexible and can be adjusted based on your group's needs. The full lesson includes welcome and closing time, which can be removed if already included in your programming. For programs that prefer to divide lessons into literacy and project days, see the recommended split structure on the right.

| Standard 60-Minute Lesson | Time |
|---|---|
| Welcome & Check-In | **5 min** |
| Activate Prior Knowledge | **5 min** |
| Science of Reading Mini Lesson | **10 min** |
| Read Aloud or Shared Reading | **15 min** |
| STEAM Activity | **20 min** |
| Closing & Celebration | **5 min** |

### Divided Lesson Structure

#### Day 1 – Literacy Focus

| Lesson Component | Time |
|---|---|
| Welcome & Check-In | **5 min** |
| Activate Prior Knowledge | **5 min** |
| Science of Reading Mini Lesson | **10+ min** |
| Read Aloud or Shared Reading | **15 min** |

#### Day 2 – STEAM Project

| Lesson Component | Time |
|---|---|
| Welcome & Check-In | **5 min** |
| Activate Prior Knowledge | **5 min** |
| STEAM Activity | **30+ min** |

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| Closing & Celebration | **5 min** |

## Lesson Modifications

Each lesson contains modifications throughout for grade-level specific modifications (Kindergarten, First, and Second), along with modifications for Emerging and Advanced students.

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| **Emerging** | **Emerging Learner**<br>An emerging learner is just beginning to develop foundational literacy or numeracy skills and relies heavily on hands-on manipulatives, visual cues, and direct adult support. |
| **Advanced** | **Advanced Learner**<br>An advanced learner quickly grasps new concepts and can independently apply them to different tasks or creative projects without needing step-by-step instructions. They often show curiosity beyond the basic lesson, using more descriptive language or complex logic to solve problems and explain their thinking. |

## Literacy Background & Staff Preparation Guide

This unit integrates three Science of Reading skills across three lessons — phonemic awareness, vocabulary in context, and fluency. The sections below give you the background knowledge to understand each skill, run the activity yourself, and prepare your staff. **You do not need a teaching degree to facilitate these lessons effectively.**

### Lesson 1 — Phonemic Awareness

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| **What it is** | Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words, entirely by ear, not by sight. It is one of the strongest early predictors of reading success. It is not about letters or spelling; it is purely about sound. |
| **Why it matters** | Students who can hear and manipulate sounds in words are better able to decode unfamiliar words and spell. Phonemic awareness is a bridge to phonics. Research shows it is best taught explicitly and playfully. |
| **Skills in this unit** | **Kindergarten: Rhyming:** Recognizing that words share the same ending sound (cat/hat). Activity: Thumbs up/down for rhyming word pairs from the story.<br>**1st Grade: Elkonin Boxes:** Segmenting a word into its individual sounds by pushing a counter into a box for each phoneme heard. The word "box" has 3 letters and 3 sounds: /b/–/ɒ/–/ks/ = 3 boxes.<br>**2nd Grade: Phoneme Substitution:** Swapping one sound for another to build a new word. Example: Change /skw/ in "square" to /b/ → "bare." |
| **How to run Elkonin Boxes** | 1. Draw or print 3–4 connected boxes on paper (one row per word). Laminated sheets can be reused.<br>2. Place small objects (coins, chips, beans) above the boxes, one per box.<br>3. Say the word slowly. As you say each sound out loud, push one object down into a box from left to right.<br>4. Count the objects in the boxes to confirm the number of sounds.<br>**Key rule:** Count sounds, not letters. "Box" = /b/ /ɒ/ /ks/ = 3 sounds, 3 boxes. "Hot" = /h/ /ɒ/ /t/ = 3 sounds, 3 boxes. |
| **Director try-it** | Practice segmenting these words before the lesson, say each sound aloud as you push a counter:<br>• "box" → /b/ /ɒ/ /ks/ = 3 sounds (b - o - ks)<br>• "top" → /t/ /ɒ/ /p/ = 3 sounds (t - o - p)<br>• "fox" → /f/ /ɒ/ /ks/ = 3 sounds (f - o - ks) |

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| **What to tell staff** | "You're not teaching spelling — you're teaching listening. Say the word out loud, have students repeat it slowly, then push a counter for each sound they hear. If students say letters instead of sounds, redirect them: sounds only. Model it two or three times before asking students to try independently." |

## Lesson 2 — Vocabulary in Context

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| **What it is** | Vocabulary in context means using surrounding text and pictures to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word, rather than giving students a definition before they encounter it. This mirrors how skilled readers naturally build vocabulary. This is completed in lesson 2, so students have experience with the words in lesson 1. |
| **Why it matters** | Vocabulary is the bridge between decoding (sounding out words) and comprehension (understanding what you read). OST settings are uniquely positioned for vocabulary development because conversation and exploration are less restricted than during the school day. |
| **Words in this unit** | **Indignant —** Feeling annoyed or angry because something unfair just happened to you. Rabbit feels indignant every time someone calls the box "just a box."<br>**Ordinary —** Nothing special, plain, everyday. A plain cardboard box seems ordinary at first.<br>**Transform —** To change completely from one thing into something else. Rabbit transforms the box with imagination. |
| **Teaching strategy** | **Model the 4-Step Vocabulary Routine (Say It → Define It → Connect It → Use It) aloud before students try:**<br>1. SAY IT: Say the word aloud together. Whisper it, then say it<br>2. DEFINE IT: Give a student-friendly definition. Connect to the story.<br>3. CONNECT IT: Ask students to connect the word to their own life or experiences.<br>4. Make a reasonable guess. Try it in the sentence — does it make sense? |
| **Grade-level practice** | **K:** Teacher points to the picture + word. Students say it aloud and draw what it means.<br>**1st:** Sentence frame: "The word [___] means ___ because in the book it says/shows ___."<br>**2nd:** Students write an original sentence using the vocabulary word in their own context. |
| **What to tell staff** | "Don't give students the definition first, let them be word detectives. Point to the picture, read the sentence around the word, and ask 'What do you think this means?' Accept reasonable guesses and guide them toward meaning using the book as evidence." |

## Lesson 3 — Writing from a Mentor Text

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| **What it is** | Writing from a mentor text means using a familiar, well-crafted book as a model for students' own writing—studying the author's structure, word choice, and style, then applying those same techniques to original work. Not a Box uses a simple, repeating sentence structure that makes it an ideal model for K–2 writers at every level. |
| **Why it matters** | When students have a concrete model to follow, writing feels approachable even for emerging writers. Studying a mentor text builds literary awareness, and develops voice. OST settings are ideal for this work because low-stakes sharing and celebration are built into the culture. |
| **Techniques in this unit** | **Sentence Frame (K):** Students complete: "It's NOT a ___. It's a ___." using drawing and dictation. Focus is on the illustration.<br>**Sentence + Detail (1st):** Students write the sentence frame plus one additional detail sentence. Example: "It's NOT a spoon. It's a magic wand. It grants three wishes if you stir it in moonlight."<br>**Expanded Writing (2nd):** Students write 2–3 sentences incorporating at least one vocabulary word (transform, imagine, ordinary, beyond, indignant) with figurative language or vivid detail. |
| **Director try-it** | Try this yourself before the lesson: *Pick an ordinary object in the room. Write: "It's NOT a ___. It's a ___." Then add one detail sentence. Notice how even one extra sentence makes the writing feel complete.*<br>Share this with staff and model drawing an illustration that *adds details the words don't say.*<br>That contrast between flat writing and vivid writing is exactly what students are practicing. |

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| **Mentor text structure** | Not a Box follows a simple question-and-answer pattern: a narrator asks "Why are you sitting in a box?" and Rabbit always responds with what the box really is. This repeating structure makes the author's craft visible and easy to imitate. Students are essentially stepping into Antoinette Portis's role as author when they declare "It's NOT a ___." |
| **What to tell staff** | "Modeling is everything here. Write your own "Not a ___" example on chart paper before students start. Think aloud as you write and draw — let them hear you choosing words and adding details to your illustration. When students get stuck, ask: 'What does your imagination see? Draw it first, then write what you drew.'" |

## Grant & Reporting Data

This unit supports the following reporting categories for **21st CCLC and similar OST grant programs**:

- **21st CCLC Program Quality:** Literacy enrichment aligned to Nebraska ELA standards (K–2). Each lesson targets grade-level reading standards in literary text, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and writing from a mentor text.
- **STEAM Integration:** Engineering + Creative Problem Solving (L1: Engineer It! — Cardboard Box Design), Art + Creative Expression + Repurposing (L2: Found Art Assemblage), Art + Engineering + 3D Design (L3: Cardboard Sculpture). All activities align to ELG Standard M.02.
- **School-Day Alignment:** Phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and writing instruction mirrors the Nebraska Science of Reading framework at each grade level. This unit reinforces, not replaces, school-day instruction.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Grade-level modifications are built into every lesson for K, 1st, and 2nd grade learners in a multi-grade OST setting, supporting both emerging and advanced learners.

## Recommended Documentation

If your program is collecting impact and student data, the following options are recommended:

- Photograph completed STEAM projects (Square Sculptures, Nature Observation Drawings, Mondrian Art)
- Collect student Check-In Forms to document character development and behavioral tiered data
- Note which grade-level Science of Reading activities were implemented
- Record attendance for each of the 3 sessions
- Optional: Have students write one sentence about what they learned for a portfolio artifact

## Materials & Budget Planning

All materials for this unit are intentionally chosen to be **low-cost and easy to source**. Most items are everyday classroom or household supplies. Where a standard item may not be available, substitutions are listed — nearly every material in this unit has a free or no-cost alternative. The **Student Materials and Printables** package includes all printable items needed per student.

| Material | Quantity | Lesson | Substitution / Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Not a Box by Antoinette Portis | 1 per class | All | Free library copy or YouTube read-aloud |
| Helix K-2 Check-In Forms | 1 per student | L1, L2 | Draw simple faces on sticky notes; post feelings chart on board |
| Cardboard boxes (various sizes) | 1+ per group | L1 | Collect from families or stores in advance |
| Cardboard shoeboxes | 1 per student | L1 | Ask families to collect in advance |
| White paper | 1 per student | L1, L3 | Any available white paper |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Scissors, glue, crayons/markers | 1 per student or shared | L1, L3 | Share supplies across groups |
| Elkonin Box sheets (1st grade) | 1 per student | L1 | Draw 3 boxes on any paper |
| Counters/coins (1st grade) | Set per student | L1 | Bingo chips, buttons, beans, or ripped paper |
| Outdoor collection gloves | 1 per student | L2 | Optional; bare hands work fine outdoors |
| Clipboards | 1 per student | L2 | Use any notebook or binder; draw on any paper |
| Mentor text structure (Mon–Sun) | 1 per student pair | L3 | Pre-print template with illustration box + writing lines |
| Vocabulary word cards (indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond) | 1 per student | L3 | Print large for whole-group display or one set per student |
| Adhesives: tape, sticky tack, glue sticks | 1 set per student | L3 | Let students experiment with different adhesive types |
| Whiteboards (optional) | 1 per student | L1 | Use for SOR whiteboard activities |
| Tin foil (optional) | 1+ per group | L2 | Alternative sculpting medium for L3 cardboard sculpture |

## Director's Prep Guide

The following provides an overview of prep for the full unit and itemized prep for each day. This can be completed by a director or site coordinator, or assigned to a staff member who receives prep time.

### BEFORE THE UNIT BEGINS (ALL 3 LESSONS)

- Obtain a copy of Not a Box by Antoinette Portis.
- **Print required items:** Helix Daily Check-In Form (2 copies per student — L1 and L2), Emoji Feeling Cards (1 per class, L1 and L3), Vocabulary Word Cards (1 set for display, L2), "Not a ___" story page template (1 per student, L3), Optional: images of Louise Nevelson's found art (1–4 per class, L2), images of Lee Lawrie's Sower statue and abstract sculptures (1–4 per class, L3).
- **Organize grade-specific Science of Reading materials.** Determine whether students will be grouped by grade or whole group for SOR activities. K: Print Rhyming Picture Cards (L1). 1st: Print Elkonin Boxes and review instructions. 2nd: Prepare whiteboards and markers or paper.
- Collect cardboard boxes of various sizes (1+ per group for L1). Ask families or staff to bring in boxes in advance.
- **Secure supplies for each lesson:** L1 – Cardboard boxes, tape, scissors, colored pencils, scratch paper. L2 – Cardboard shoeboxes, gloves, craft glue, natural/recycled found objects (sticks, rocks, leaves, bottle caps). L3 – Cardboard scraps, adhesives (duct tape, sticky tack, scotch tape), scissors; optional tin foil.
- Identify a safe outdoor space for L2 found object collection (playground, field, garden) or prepare indoor materials trays with recycled household items (cardboard scraps, bottle caps, fabric squares, yarn).
- Optional: Create teacher examples of STEAM projects.

### LESSON 1 CLASSROOM PREP – DAY OF

- Write the book title Not a Box on the board. Below it, draw a simple box and write: "What could this be... besides a box?"
- Set out Check-In Forms per student.
- Place cardboard boxes in a central area or under tables (one per student or pair).
- Write phonemic awareness target words on the board: box, fox, top, hop, hot, not.
- 1st grade: Review Elkonin Boxes instructions to familiarize with the concept.

## LESSON 2 CLASSROOM PREP – DAY OF

- If going outdoors, gather gloves for students. If staying indoors, prepare materials trays.
- Write the 5 vocabulary words on the board: Indignant, Ordinary, Transform, Imagine, Beyond.
- Print or pre-write sentence frame strips for 1st grade ("I felt indignant when ___.").
- Set out mini whiteboards and dry-erase markers at each table for 2nd grade vocabulary responses.
- Bookmark specific pages in Not a Box for shared reading stops.

## LESSON 3 CLASSROOM PREP – DAY OF

- Pre-print the 'Not a ___ Story Page' template (one per student). Top two-thirds = illustration box; bottom third = writing lines with sentence starter.
- Prepare a writing model on chart paper: draw a simple object in the illustration area and write your own 'It's NOT a ___. It's a ___!' as a teacher example. Think through your illustration details.
- Display vocabulary anchor chart from Lesson 2 for ongoing reference.
- Set out cardboard materials, scissors, and adhesives at a separate station for the sculpture activity.
- Prepare the class book cover: write 'Our Class Book of NOT a ___' on cardstock.
- Option: Pre-write sentence frames on story page templates for emerging students.

**FOR SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP**

# Not a Box — K–2 Literacy & STEAM Unit

**A share-out for principals, superintendents, and school-based partners**

**Developed by:** Helix Education in partnership with Beyond School Bells, informed by 4-H STEAM Imagination Guide 2025. Designed for K–2 students in out-of-school time (OST) settings.

**Purpose:** This 3-lesson unit uses *Not a Box* by Antoinette Portis as an anchor text for integrated literacy and STEAM instruction.

## What Students Are Doing

Over three 60-minute sessions, students engage with *Not a Box* by Antoinette Portis, a picture book about a rabbit who imagines a plain cardboard box into anything and everything. This theme of **creative imagination** connects literacy, engineering, art, and design into a cohesive three-lesson unit.

| # | Literacy Skill | STEAM Project | What Students Learn & Do |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Phonemic Awareness — rhyming, segmenting & blending sounds | Engineer It! (Engineering + Creative Problem Solving) | Identify and produce phonemes; retell key story events; use the Engineering Design Process to repurpose cardboard boxes into functional objects |
| 2 | Vocabulary in Context — 4-step vocabulary routine | Found Art Assemblage (Art + Creative Expression + Repurposing) | Define vocabulary from context clues using the 4-Step Vocabulary Routine; collect found objects outdoors and create a Found Art assemblage |
| 3 | Fluency — accuracy, expression, and partner reading | Author's Craft Writing + Cardboard Sculpture (Writing + Engineering + 3D Art) | Write and illustrate original “Not a ___” story pages; the their “Not a ___” story pages; celebrate as authors; build abstract 3D cardboard sculptures |

## Alignment to School-Day Standards

This program directly reinforces Nebraska ELA standards being taught during the school day. OST staff are often not certified teachers, so this unit is specifically designed with scripted lesson plans so non-credentialed facilitators can implement high-quality, standards-aligned activities.

| Grade | Nebraska ELA Standards | Connection to School Day |
|---|---|---|
| K | LA.K.RP.1 · LA.K.F.2.b · LA.K.F.4 | Retelling stories, rhyming words, writing using drawing and dictation |
| 1st | LA.1.RP.1 · LA.1.F.2.a · LA.1.F.4.a | Retelling with details, phoneme segmentation and blending, narrative writing |
| 2nd | LA.2.RP.1 · LA.2.F.2.a · LA.2.F.4.a | Story retelling with lesson identification; phoneme substitution; writing for different purposes and audiences |

## Grant & Reporting Category Alignment

This unit supports the following reporting categories for **21st CCLC and similar OST grant programs:**

- **21st CCLC Program Quality:** Literacy enrichment aligned to Nebraska ELA standards (K–2) across literary text, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and writing from a mentor text.
- **STEAM Integration:** Art + Math + Engineering (L1), Science + Math + Nature (L2), Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression (L3). Aligns to ELG Standard M.02.
- **School-Day Alignment:** Mirrors the Nebraska Science of Reading framework at each grade level. Reinforces, not replaces, school-day instruction.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Grade-level modifications built into every lesson for K, 1st, and 2nd grade learners in a multi-grade OST setting, with Emerging and Advanced learner supports.
- **Attendance & Engagement:** 3-session unit with structured check-in forms and portfolio artifacts for impact documentation.

## Additional Notes

Extra space to provide additional context and notes for school-based leadership.

SCRIPTED LESSON PACKAGE

# Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

**Lesson 1 of 3 — Imagining & Phonemic Awareness**

⏱ 60 minutes • ✏ STEAM Focus: Engineer It! — Engineering + Creative Problem Solving

## STANDARDS

**Reading Prose & Poetry / Literary Text:**

- **K: LA.K.RP.** With adult help, I can retell stories with details and show understanding of the main message or lesson.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.1** I can retell a story I know using important details.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.1** I can retell stories and explain the important lessons within them.

**Science of Reading: Phonemic Awareness Focus:**

- **K: LA.K.F.2.b** I can recognize and make rhyming words.
- **1st: LA.1.F.2.a** I can break down short words and say each sound by itself. I can put sounds together to speak words.
- **2nd: LA.2.F.2.a** I can break down short words and say each sound by itself. I can put sounds together to speak words.

## OBJECTIVES

**Adult Language (SWBAT):**

- Students will be able to retell key events in Not a Box and identify the theme that imagination can transform ordinary objects into anything.
- Students will be able to identify and produce rhyming words (K) or segment and blend CVC words (1st/2nd) using words from the story.

**Student-Friendly Language:**

- I can tell what the rabbit imagined the box was and why using my imagination matters.
- I can hear the sounds in short words and tell what they are.

### Reading & Check-In

- Not a Box by Antoinette Portis
- Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form (student copies)
- Whiteboard or chart paper + markers
- Feeling words cards/emoji visuals

**Science of Reading Mini Lesson**

- Whiteboard or chart paper + markers
- K: Printed rhyming picture card pairs (one set per partner)
- 1st: Printed or hand-drawn Elkonin Box sheets (one per student)
- 2nd: Mini whiteboards + dry-erase markers OR lined paper

### STEAM Activity: Engineer It! (from 4-H STEAM Imagination Guide)

- Cardboard boxes of various sizes (collect in advance — 1+ per group)
- Adhesive: tape, sticky tack, glue sticks, zots
- Scissors
- Coloring utensils: colored pencils, markers, crayons
- Scratch paper and pencils for planning sketches

**Optional / Additional Materials**

- K: Picture cards showing words that rhyme with 'box' (fox, socks, rocks, locks) for visual support
- Small counters, coins, or bingo chips (3 per student) for Elkonin box pushing
- Sentence strips with target words printed in large font

**PRE-LESSON SET-UP**

- Write the book title Not a Box on the board. Below it, draw a simple box and write: “What could this be... besides a box?”
- Set out Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student’s spot.

- Collect cardboard boxes in various sizes — one per student or pair. Place them in a central area or under tables.
- Write phonemic awareness target words on the board: box, fox, top, hop, hot, not.
- Prepare the Elkonin Box sheets for 1st grade and set aside rhyming picture cards for K.

## WELCOME & STUDENT CHECK-IN (8–10 min)

**Educator Script**

Greet students warmly as they arrive and invite them to pick up their Check-In Form.

*"Good [morning/afternoon], friends! Before we start today, I want to know, how are you feeling right now? Take a look at the feeling words and emoji on your form and circle or cut and paste the one that shows how you feel inside today."*

Give students 2–3 minutes to complete the "How am I feeling?" section. Then invite 3–4 volunteers to share.

*"Who would like to share? Tell us: 'I am feeling ___ today because ___.' There are no wrong answers — all feelings are okay!"*

Play a "Say It Game" with the word *imaginative*.

*"Our word for today is imaginative. Let's all say it together, imaginative! Now whisper it… now say it like you just had the BIGGEST idea of your life! Turn and say it to a friend."*

*"Being Imaginative means using your brain like a magic paintbrush to dream up stories, ideas, and worlds that don't exist yet."*

*"In our story today, a rabbit has a very imaginative mind. That rabbit looks at a plain brown box and sees something incredible. Let's find out what!"*

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Provide a printed emoji chart. Allow students to point to their feelings instead of writing/cutting.
- Advanced: Ask students to share two feelings and explain the connection between them.

## ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE (7 min)

**Educator Script**

*"Before we open our book, I have something to show you."*

Hold up (or draw) a simple cardboard box. Ask:

*"What is this? [A box!] What do we normally do with boxes? [Put things in, ship things, throw them away.]"*

Now pause dramatically and say:

*"But what if this box was not just a box? What else could it be? Turn and tell a partner your most creative idea!"*

Take 4–5 wildly creative responses. Celebrate imagination!

*"Today's book, Not a Box by Antoinette Portis, is about a rabbit who gets asked over and over again, 'Why are you sitting in a box?' And every single time the rabbit answers… 'It's NOT a box!' As I read, think about: What does Rabbit imagine? Could you imagine the same things?"*

## SCIENCE OF READING MINI LESSON: PHONEMIC AWARENESS (10 min)

**Teacher-Led Instruction**

**Introduce (All Grades):**

*"We're going to listen carefully to the sounds in words today. The rabbit in our story hears the word 'box' and imagines something completely different, we're going to play with the sounds IN words to make new ones, too!"*

**Kindergarten (Rhyming):**

*"I'll say two words. Thumbs up if they rhyme, thumbs down if they don't! Box… fox. [pause] Top… hop. [pause] Hot… dog. [pause] Now your turn, can you think of a word that rhymes with 'box'?"*

**1st Grade (Segmentation & Blending with Elkonin Boxes):**

**What are Elkonin Boxes? (Educator Background)**

Elkonin Boxes (also called Sound Boxes or Push Boxes) are a research-based phonemic awareness tool. Each box represents ONE phoneme (sound), not one letter. The word 'box' has 3 letters and 3 sounds (/b/–/ɒ/–/ks/), so it uses 3 boxes. Students push one counter per sound as they say it aloud — the physical motion anchors the auditory learning.

*"Watch me first. The word is 'box.' /b/ [push] — /ɒ/ [push] — /ks/ [push]. Three sounds, three boxes! Now let's try 'top' together. Say it slowly with me..."*

Teacher tip: Always say the sounds aloud as you push. Never spell the word — this activity is purely about sound, not letters.

**2nd Grade (Phoneme Substitution):**

*"We're going to change one sound in a word to make a brand new word! Start with 'box.' Change the /b/ to /f/... you get FOX! Now try: Change the /h/ in 'hot' to /p/. What do you get? [pot!] Change the /t/ in 'top' to /h/. [hop!] What other words can you change?"*

**Hands-On Practice (5 min):**

- K: Partners share a rhyming picture card set and take turns saying a rhyming pair aloud. Challenge: can they make up a silly rhyming sentence? ('The fox hid in a box with some socks!')
- 1st: Students use 3 counters placed above a printed Elkonin Box sheet to segment: box, top, not, hot, fox. Push one counter per sound. Count and check!
- 2nd: Students write two 'before and after' word pairs on mini whiteboards (e.g., box → fox, hot → pot, not → dot).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Kindergarten** | **Rhyming:** Recognize & produce rhyming words |
| **1st Grade** | Phoneme segmentation & blending of CVC words with Elkonin Boxes |
| **2nd Grade** | Phoneme manipulation — substituting initial sounds to build new words |

## READ ALOUD (15 min)

**Educator Script**

Hold up the book *Not a Box* and review the author and illustrator.

*"Let's look at this cover together. The title is Not a Box, and the author and illustrator is Antoinette Portis. She wrote the words and drew all the pictures! What do you notice on the cover? [A rabbit sitting in, or maybe not in, a box!]"*

*"As I read, I want you to notice something very important: on every page, there's a voice, it might be you, the reader, that asks, 'Why are you sitting in a box?' And Rabbit always disagrees. Listen for why Rabbit disagrees, and what Rabbit sees instead."*

Read the book aloud. Use the following prompts throughout:

*"On this page, someone asks Rabbit why it's sitting in a box. What does Rabbit say? Look at the picture. What does the box become in Rabbit's imagination?"*

*"The word 'indignant' might be new! When someone feels indignant, they feel annoyed because they think they've been treated unfairly. Does Rabbit look indignant? Show me an indignant face!"*

*"What has the box been so far? [mountain, rocket ship, burning building...] What do you think it will become next? Turn and tell a partner!"*

After reading, quick phonemic awareness connection:

*"The word 'box' is so important in this story! Let's clap the sounds: /b/ — /ɒ/ — /ks/. Three sounds! Can anyone think of a word that rhymes with box?"*

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Seat near the book; use finger pointing to track. Offer the sentence frame: 'Rabbit imagined the box was a ___.'
- Advanced: Ask students to predict the next imagination before turning the page, or to draw what THEY would imagine a box to be.

## STEAM ACTIVITY: ENGINEER IT! — ENGINEERING + MATH + CREATIVE THINKING (20 min)

**Educator Script**

**Part 1 — Introduce Engineering**

*"Rabbit in our story looked at a plain cardboard box and imagined it could be anything. Today you're going to do something Rabbit would love: you're going to be engineers! Engineers are people who identify a problem and build a solution. And today, your materials are cardboard boxes."*

Invite students to look around the room together:

*"Let's observe our space like engineers. Is there something in our room — or something we need — that we could build? Should we make something to crawl through, like a tunnel? A step stool to reach the sink? A mailbox for our table? A garage for toy cars? A stage for performances? Let's brainstorm!"*

Take 4–5 ideas from students. Together, vote or decide which 2–3 items they will build. Allow students to sort themselves into groups based on interest.

**Part 2 — Plan, Build, and Test**

Engineering Design Process: Ask → Imagine → Plan → Create → Improve

- ASK: 'What is the problem we are solving? Who will use what we build?'
- IMAGINE: 'How might we build it? What will we need? What shape should it be?'
- PLAN: Give each group scratch paper. Sketch your design together. What do you need your box to do? Who will do what?
- CREATE: Build using cardboard, tape, and other materials. Encourage measurement — 'Will this be tall enough? Wide enough?'
- IMPROVE: 'What's working? What needs to change? Does it do what we wanted it to do?'

*"Explain that engineers and architects often test out ideas, and it may take several tries to get it right. That is not failure, that is engineering!"*

**Part 3 — Evaluate & Share**

*"Let's test it out! Does it work the way you planned? Share with the group: What worked well? What would you change if you did it again? How did you problem solve when something didn't work the first time?"*

Discuss as a class:

- Why did you choose the shape of box you used? What would happen if a box was a different shape, like a triangle or circle?
- 'Repurpose' means taking something and using it for a different purpose than it was originally intended, just like Rabbit! Can you think of other things we could repurpose?
- How is what you built connected to our story?

**Modifications & Extensions:**

- Emerging: Provide a simple 3-step sketch template (draw → build → test). Pair with a stronger builder. Offer pre-cut box pieces so assembly is the main task.
- Advanced/Early Finishers: Challenge students to improve their design — 'Can you make it stronger? More decorative? Add a label?' Write 1–2 sentences explaining how their invention solves a problem.
- Time: This activity can be extended based on students' interest and available programming time.

## CLOSING & CELEBRATION (5 min)

**Educator Script**

*"Wow, look at what you made! Just like Rabbit, you looked at a plain brown box and saw something extraordinary. Let's do a quick gallery walk — place your creation on your desk and walk around to admire everyone's work. If someone's creation amazes you, give it a quiet thumbs up!"*

Bring students back together:

*"Before we go, let's all say our feeling word one more time: imaginative! Because that's exactly what you were today. How were you imaginative today?"*

*"Next time, we'll read Not a Box again — this time as vocabulary detectives, and then go outside to make our own found art, just like real artists do. See you then!"*

SCRIPTED LESSON PACKAGE

# Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

**Lesson 2 of 3 — Shared Reading & Vocabulary Exploration**

⏱ 60 minutes • ✏ STEAM Focus: Found Art — Art + Creative Expression + Repurposing

## STANDARDS

**Reading Prose & Poetry / Literary Text:**

- **K: LA.K.RP.2** With adult help, I can tell the main character, setting, and important events in a story.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.2** I can tell the characters, setting, and what happens in stories.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.4** I can describe how a story is written, including how the problem is solved.

**Science of Reading: Vocabulary Focus:**

- **K: LA.K.RP.6** With adult help, I can ask and answer questions about important details in stories. I can use words and pictures to understand new words.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.6** I can ask and answer questions about important details in stories. I can figure out the meaning of unknown words using clues from the story.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.6** I can ask and answer different kinds of questions about stories I have read. I can use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.

## OBJECTIVES

**Adult Language (SWBAT):**

- Students will be able to identify and explain key vocabulary words (indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond) using the 4-Step Vocabulary Routine — including student-friendly definitions, story connections, real-life connections, and grade-differentiated practice.
- Students will be able to apply vocabulary words in context during shared reading, identifying them in the text and using them in oral and written responses.

**Student-Friendly Language:**

- I can learn what important words in our story mean — and use them in my own talking and writing.
- I can be a Word Detective and find clues that help me understand new words.

| Reading & Vocabulary | STEAM: Found Art (from 4-H STEAM Imagination Guide) |
|---|---|
| • Not a Box by Antoinette Portis<br>• Vocabulary word cards: indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond (one set per student or printed large for whole group display)<br>• Chart paper for class vocabulary anchor chart<br>• Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form (student copies)<br>• Emoji Faces / Feeling word cards | • Cardboard shoeboxes — one per student (ask families to collect in advance)<br>• Gloves for outdoor collection<br>• Outdoor access to collect natural and recycled items (sticks, rocks, leaves, pinecones, bottle caps, small scraps)<br>• Craft glue or glue gun (educator use only)<br>• Optional: reference images of Louise Nevelson's recycled art or other found art examples printed on cardstock |

**PRE-LESSON SET-UP**

- Print or write vocabulary word cards large enough for whole-group display — one word visible at a time during the SOR mini lesson.
- Set out Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student's spot.
- 1st grade: Pre-write sentence frame strips and place at each student's spot.
- 2nd grade: Set out mini whiteboards and dry-erase markers at each table.
- Bookmark pages in Not a Box that feature the vocabulary words for the shared reading stops.
- Optional: Display reference images of Louise Nevelson's found art or other assemblage examples as a visual anchor for the STEAM activity.

## WELCOME & STUDENT CHECK-IN (5 min)

**Educator Script**

Greet students warmly as they arrive.

*"Welcome back, friends! Before we dive in, let's check in. I'm going to ask you a question, and I want you to show me with your emoji circle — or tell me with words."*

*"Think about Rabbit from our story. Rabbit looked at something ordinary, a plain box, and imagined something extraordinary. Have you ever looked at something ordinary and imagined it was something else? A stick becomes a magic wand? A blanket becomes a fort? Show me with your face how that feels!"*

Take 2–3 brief responses. Connect to the story theme:

*"Using your imagination and seeing something more is what we're going to explore today as we look more closely at our story!"*

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Offer sentence frame: 'Something ordinary was ___. I imagined it was ___.'
- Advanced: Ask: 'Why do you think some people use their imagination more easily than others?'

## ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE (5 min)

**Educator Script**

Recall the story and what Rabbit imagined the box was.

*"Yesterday, we read Not a Box together. Who can remember — what were some of the things Rabbit imagined the box was? Turn and tell a partner before sharing out!"*

Take 2–3 shares. Then:

*"Rabbit never just saw a box; Rabbit imagined something more. Today, we're going to look at that story again through a new lens. We're going to focus on some very powerful words that describe exactly what Rabbit does, and words that describe how Rabbit feels. These are words you can use in your own writing and talking to!"*

## SCIENCE OF READING: VOCABULARY WORD DETECTIVE (10 min)

**Educator Script**

**Educator Background: 4-Step Vocabulary Routine.**

The 4-Step Vocabulary Routine (Say It → Define It → Connect It → Use It) gives students a consistent, repeatable structure for learning new words deeply. Each word takes approximately 2 minutes, can be extended for learners to more deeply understand new words.

**Introduce the Routine**

*"Today we're going to learn 5 powerful words from Not a Box using our Word Detective Routine. Every time I show you a new word, we'll do 4 things together: SAY IT — DEFINE IT — CONNECT IT — USE IT. Ready? Let's go!"*

**Word 1: INDIGNANT**

*"SAY IT: Indignant. Say it with me, indignant. Whisper it. Say it like you are feeling indignant right now!"*

*"DEFINE IT: Indignant means you feel annoyed or angry because you think something unfair just happened to you. Say the word again, showing your face when you are feeling indignant (pause and allow students to show faces). Did your face change?"*

*"CONNECT IT: In our story, Rabbit feels indignant every time someone calls the box 'just a box' because Rabbit KNOWS it's something more! Have you ever felt indignant, maybe when someone didn't believe you, or left you out of something?"*

**Grade-level USE IT:**

- K: Show me your most indignant face! Now act it out, pretend someone just called your favorite creation 'just a drawing.'
- 1st: Complete your sentence frame strip: 'I felt indignant when ___.'
- 2nd: On your whiteboard, write one sentence: describe a time you or someone you know felt indignant.

**Word 2: ORDINARY**

*"SAY IT: Ordinary. Say it together, ordinary. Now say it like it's the most boring word in the world... because it kind of means that!"*

*"DEFINE IT: Ordinary means normal, plain, everyday, nothing special about it. Say the word again, showing your face when you see something ordinary (pause and allow students to show faces)."*

*"CONNECT IT: The box in our story looks ordinary to everyone except Rabbit. Can you find something ordinary in this room right now? Something plain, nothing special... that maybe, with a little imagination, could become something more?"*

**Grade-level USE IT:**

- K: Point to something ordinary in our room. Now whisper to a partner what it COULD be!
- 1st: Complete your sentence frame: 'Something ordinary is ___. But I imagine it is ___.'
- 2nd: Write: 'Something ordinary that I would transform is ___ because ___.'

**Word 3: TRANSFORM**

*"SAY IT: Transform. Altogether, transform. Say it like something is actually changing right now!"*

*"DEFINE IT: Transform means to change from one thing into something very different completely."*

*"CONNECT IT: Rabbit transforms the box into a mountain, a rocket ship, a burning building, completely different things! Can you think of something in nature that transforms? [A caterpillar transforms into a butterfly! Water transforms into ice! Dirt transforms into mud]"*

**Grade-level USE IT:**

- K: Stand up, now transform your body into an animal! [Give 10 seconds.] You just transformed!
- 1st: Complete: 'Rabbit transforms the box into ___.'
- 2nd: Write a sentence using both 'ordinary' AND 'transform.'

**Word 4: IMAGINE**

*"SAY IT: Imagine. Together. Close your eyes and say it slowly."*

*"DEFINE IT: Imagine means to form a picture in your mind of something that isn't actually there in front of you. What word is this similar to that we have learned? [Imagination — Imagination is in us, imagine is the action]."*

*"CONNECT IT: This is Rabbit's superpower! Rabbit can look at something real and imagine something else entirely. Close your eyes for 5 seconds and imagine you are somewhere totally different. [Pause.] Where were you?"*

USE IT (all grades): Share with a partner — 'I imagined I was ___.'

**Word 5: BEYOND**

*"SAY IT: Beyond. Together, beyond. Say it like you're pointing far into the distance!"*

*"DEFINE IT: Beyond means further than, or more than something."*

*"CONNECT IT: Rabbit's imagination goes beyond the box; it goes further than what anyone else sees. When you imagine something extraordinary from something ordinary, your thinking goes beyond too! Beyond can be physical or in our minds."*

USE IT (all grades):

- *Point beyond the door, 'What's beyond that wall?'*
- Show me beyond with your arm.
- Now use it in a sentence with a partner.

**Wrap-Up — Draw It**

*"Great detective work! Let's add a quick sketch next to each word (Complete this on a whiteboard or a shared chart paper). This can be a tiny drawing that helps us remember what it means. Who wants to draw a picture for indignant? Ordinary?"*

Invite 1–2 students to sketch beside each word on the chart.

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Focus on SAY IT and DEFINE IT only for each word. Use the emoji/picture response cards — students hold up a card that matches each word's feeling or meaning instead of writing.
- Advanced: After the routine, challenge students to use all 5 words in one connected sentence or mini story: 'Rabbit felt indignant when someone called the ordinary box just a box, but Rabbit could imagine how to transform it into something beyond extraordinary.'

## SHARED READING WITH VOCABULARY STOPS (15 min)

**Educator Script**

Hold up *Not a Box* and reread with intention, pausing at vocabulary opportunities.

*"Now that we know our 5 powerful words, let's put them to work! As I read, every time you see or hear one of our words, indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, or beyond, give me a quiet thumbs up. Let's see how many we can spot!"*

During reading, pause at these moments:

*"The rabbit's ears are back and its arms are crossed. That's an indignant face! Can you make an indignant face? [Pause for fun.] What made Rabbit feel indignant?"*

*"The narrator keeps saying the rabbit is in a box. But Rabbit calls it something else EVERY time. Is this a problem and solution story? What's the problem? What's Rabbit's solution?"*

*"At the end, Rabbit says this box is 'not just a box.' What do you think that means? What has the box really been all along?"*

After Reading Discussion:

*"Turn and tell your partner: What is the BIG message of this story? What does Antoinette Portis want us to know? [Imagination can transform anything. Ordinary things can be extraordinary.]"*

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Provide a simple sequencing strip with pictures of 3 things Rabbit imagined the box to be, and students point to each in order.
- Advanced: Ask students to identify how the book's structure (question/answer pattern, limited text, illustrations doing most of the storytelling) helps convey the theme/message of the story.

## STEAM ACTIVITY: FOUND ART — ART + CREATIVE EXPRESSION + REPURPOSING (22 min)

**Educator Script**

**Part 1 — Introduce Found Art & Louise Nevelson**

*"In our story, Rabbit takes something that most people would just throw away, a plain cardboard box, and turns it into something extraordinary. There's actually a whole type of art called found art that does exactly that! Found artists take ordinary objects, things they find outdoors, things other people might recycle or throw away, and arrange them into beautiful artwork."*

Optional: Show printed images of Louise Nevelson's recycled assemblage art or search online.

*"This artist's name is Louise Nevelson. She was famous for collecting found objects, scraps of wood, cardboard, and everyday items, and arranging them inside boxes to create incredible sculptures. What do you notice about her art? How is it like what Rabbit does in our story?"*

**Part 2 — Collect & Create**

*"Now it's your turn! Put on your gloves, we're going outside to collect items for our found art. Look for interesting shapes and textures: sticks, rocks, leaves, pinecones, seed pods, bark, anything that catches your eye. Remember, just like Rabbit, you're seeing these items as MORE than just what they are!"*

Review any safety information for students.

Give students 5 minutes to collect outdoors. Return to tables with shoeboxes.

*"Now arrange your found items inside your shoebox. Think about how Louise Nevelson did it. How do the items look next to each other? Do you want them to tell a story? Make a pattern? Create a scene? Once you are happy with your arrangement, glue your items in place. Your shoebox is your canvas!"*

Circulate and ask:

- What does your arrangement remind you of? What could it be besides just sticks and rocks?
- How is what you're doing like what Rabbit does in the story? [Repurposing something ordinary into something creative!]
- What vocabulary word fits what you're doing right now? [Transform!]
- When you look at your found art, what do you imagine it to be?

**Part 3 — Gallery & Writing Connection (2 min):**

*"Let's stand our shoeboxes up and do a quick gallery walk! Shoeboxes can even be stacked to create a whole display wall, just like Louise Nevelson! At the bottom of a strip of paper, write or dictate: 'It's NOT just [an item you used]. It's ___.' Tape your label to your shoebox."*

**Modifications & Extensions:**

- Emerging: Pre-sort a smaller collection of items on a tray and let students pick from those. Offer a sentence frame: 'I put the ___ next to the ___ because ___.'

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Advanced: Challenge students to write 2–3 sentences explaining the story or meaning behind their arrangement and connect it to a vocabulary word from our anchor chart.<br>• If outdoor collection isn't possible: Prepare a materials tray in advance with recycled household items (cardboard scraps, bottle caps, fabric squares, yarn pieces). |

## CLOSING & REFLECTION (5 min)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Educator Script** | *"Hold up your shoebox and look at what you created! Just like Louise Nevelson, you took ordinary found objects and arranged them into something meaningful. You are engineers, artists, and word detectives today!"*<br>Do a quick vocabulary review:<br>*"I'll say a definition, you say the word! 'A feeling of being annoyed because you think you were treated unfairly.' [indignant!] 'To completely change from one thing into something different.' [transform!] 'Nothing special, every day.' [ordinary!]"*<br>*"In our next lesson, we're going to bring everything together — we'll write our own 'Not a ___' book pages and share them in an author's celebration. Start thinking: What ordinary object around you is NOT just what it seems?"* |

SCRIPTED LESSON PACKAGE

# Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

**Lesson 3 of 3 — Author's Craft & 'Not a ___' Writing Celebration**

⏱ 60 minutes • ✏ STEAM Focus: Cardboard Sculpture — Art + Engineering + 3D Design

## STANDARDS

**Reading Prose & Poetry / Literary Text:**

- **K: LA.K.RP.5** With adult help, I can describe how images help me understand the story.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.5** I can explain how pictures and words work together to tell a story.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.5** I can explain how the illustrations help the reader understand the mood and characters.

**Science of Reading: Writing Focus:**

- **K: LA.K.W.1** With adult help, I can write about a topic or tell a story using a mix of drawing, dictating, and writing.
- **1st: LA.1.W.1** I can write opinions, informative pieces, and narratives for different reasons and audiences.
- **2nd: LA.2.W.1** I can write for different purposes and audiences, using what I know about writing.

## OBJECTIVES

**Adult Language (SWBAT):**

- Students will be able to write and illustrate their own 'Not a ___' story page using grade-appropriate sentences, imaginative vocabulary, and illustration details that extend the text — mirroring the structure and style of Not a Box.
- Students will be able to share their writing with an audience and contribute their page to a class book that celebrates each student's unique imagination.

**Student-Friendly Language:**

- I can write and draw my own 'Not a ___' page — choosing an ordinary object and imagining it into something extraordinary.
- I can share my page with my class and celebrate everyone's imagination!

| Reading & Writing | STEAM: Cardboard Sculpture (from 4-H STEAM Imagination Guide) |
|---|---|
| • Not a Box by Antoinette Portis<br>• Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form (student copies)<br>• Emoji Faces / Feeling word cards<br>• Chart paper + markers for shared writing model<br>• Pre-printed 'Not a ___ Story Page' template — one per student (large blank illustration box at top, writing lines at bottom)<br>• Pencils and fine-tip black markers for final tracing<br>• Crayons, colored pencils, or watercolor paints for illustrations<br>• Optional: sentence starter strips for emerging writers<br>• One piece of cardstock for a class book cover + binder rings or stapler to assemble | • Cardboard in various sizes and shapes (scraps, flat pieces, tubes)<br>• Variety of adhesives: duct tape, sticky tack, scotch tape (let students experiment)<br>• Scissors<br>• Optional: tin foil as an alternative medium if cardboard is difficult<br>• Reference images: Lee Lawrie's Sower statue (Nebraska Capitol); abstract sculptures from around the world<br>**Optional: Not a ___ Class Book**<br>• White cardstock (one per student)<br>• Pre-printed page frame: 'It's NOT a ___. It's a ___.'<br>• Fine-tip markers, crayons, colored pencils<br>• Binder rings or stapler to assemble class book |

**PRE-LESSON SET-UP**

- Pre-print the 'Not a ___ Story Page' template — one per student. The top two-thirds of the page is a large blank illustration box; the bottom third has 2–4 writing lines with the sentence starter printed at the top: 'It's NOT a ___. It's a ___!'
- Set out Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student's spot.

- Prepare a writing model on chart paper: draw a simple box in the illustration area and write 'It's NOT a box. It's a rocket ship zooming to the moon!' as a teacher example.
- Display vocabulary from Lesson 2 for ongoing reference.
- Set out cardboard materials and adhesives for the STEAM activity at a separate station.
- Prepare the class book cover: write 'Our Class Book of NOT a ___' on cardstock and leave the center blank for students to illustrate collaboratively at the end.

## WELCOME & STUDENT CHECK-IN (8 min)

**Educator Script**

Greet students warmly as they arrive.

*"Good [morning/afternoon], friends! Today is a very special day, it's Author and Illustrator Day! We are going to write and draw our own pages inspired by Rabbit. But first, let's check in."*

Have students complete their Check-In Form. After 2–3 minutes, invite sharing.

*"Who would like to share how they're feeling? Tell us: 'I am feeling ___ today because ___.' "*

Say It Game: *Proud*

*"Our feeling word today is proud. Say it together, proud! What does proud mean? [The happy feeling you get inside you when you work hard and complete something, or see someone doing something good.]"*

*"Rabbit was proud of their imagination. When have you felt proud? [Allow responses]."*

*"Now say it quietly... say it like you just finished something AMAZING. Because today you ARE going to finish something amazing — a piece of writing that is 100% yours. Turn and say 'I am proud' to a friend! Today YOU get to be proud authors and illustrators. Let's celebrate that!"*

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Provide emoji chart for pointing. Invite students to show their proud face.
- Advanced: Ask 'When do you feel most proud of something you've created or made? What made it feel special?'

## SCIENCE OF READING: 'NOT A ___' WRITING MINI LESSON (10 min)

**Educator Script**

Writing Connection Overview: Writing from mentor texts is a literacy strategy that helps students internalize the structures, vocabulary, and craft of strong writing by using a familiar book as a model. Not a Box has a clear, repetitive pattern that makes it an ideal mentor text for K–2 writers at any level. Students focus on imaginative word choice, sentence structure, and illustration details that extend meaning beyond the words.

**Step 1 — Study the Mentor Text**

*"Before we write, let's look at Not a Box one more time, but this time, we're looking at it like WRITERS, not just readers. Writers learn from other writers!"*

Flip to 2–3 pages and point out:

- *The sentence is short and punchy: 'It's not a box.' — four words. Powerful!*
- The illustration shows everything. It shows us the imagination, the detail, the feeling. The picture does the heavy lifting.
- Rabbit never explains. Rabbit just declares. The reader has to use their imagination too!

*"When you write today, you're going to do the same thing. Pick one ordinary object, anything at all. Declare what it is not. Then tell us what it really is in your imagination. And let your illustration show the details!"*

**Step 2 — Shared Writing Model**

*"Let me show you what this looks like. Watch me write my own 'Not a ___' page."*

Model on chart paper — think aloud as you write and draw:

*"I'm going to pick... a chair. A plain, ordinary chair. [Write 'It's NOT a chair.' on chart paper.] Now, what does my imagination see? [Pause dramatically.] It's a throne for the bravest knight in the whole kingdom! [Write 'It's a throne for the bravest knight in the whole kingdom!' Then begin sketching a chair with a crown on it, armored figures, and a castle in the background.] See how my illustration adds details that the words don't say? There's a knight! A castle! A flag! My picture goes beyond my words."*

**Step 3 — Brainstorm**

*"Now it's your turn to brainstorm. Close your eyes. Think of the most ordinary object you can, something boring, something nobody would look twice at. A pencil. A sock. A spoon. A rock. A water bottle. Got one? Now, what does your imagination see? Whisper it to a partner!"*

Take 3–4 shares. Celebrate the wildest, most unexpected ideas.

## WRITING WORK TIME: 'NOT A ___' STORY PAGES (15 min)

**Educator Script**

*"Take your story page template. At the top is your illustration box, that's where your imagination lives. At the bottom are your writing lines, that's where your words go. Let's create!"*

**Grade-Level Writing Guidance:**

- Kindergarten: Write 'It's NOT a ___. It's a ___.' using best sound spelling and/or dictation. Focus on the illustration — draw every detail of your imagination. Use the sentence starter strip if needed.
- 1st Grade: Write the sentence frame and add one detail sentence that tells more. Example: 'It's NOT a spoon. It's a magic wand. It grants three wishes if you stir it in moonlight.'
- 2nd Grade: Write 2–3 sentences. Include one detail that makes the imagination feel completely real. Try to use at least one vocabulary word from our Lesson 2 vocabulary (transform, imagine, ordinary, beyond, indignant).

**Class Discussion Questions — You can ask this to an individual or whole class:**

- What ordinary object did you choose? Why that one?
- What does your imagination see instead?
- What details can you add to your illustration that your words don't say?
- Can you use a vocabulary word from our anchor chart somewhere on your page?

**Modifications:**

- Emerging: Pre-write the sentence frame on their page. Offer a printed picture menu of ordinary objects (sock, cup, chair, stick, box, rock) to spark ideas. Encourage drawing first, then dictate words while the educator or peer scribes.
- Advanced: Challenge students to write a second sentence that uses figurative language — a simile, a sound word, or an exaggeration — to make the imagination even more vivid. Example: 'It roars like thunder when it flies past the clouds.'

## STEAM ACTIVITY: CARDBOARD SCULPTURE — ART + ENGINEERING + 3D DESIGN (25 min)

**Educator Script**

**Part 1 — Introduce Sculpture & 2D vs. 3D**

*"Today we're going to be sculptors. Does anyone know what a sculptor does? A sculptor creates art you can see from all angles, not just the front! That's called 3D art. 3D means it has height, width, AND depth. It's not flat."*

Hold up a piece of flat paper and a cardboard box to illustrate:

*"This paper is 2D, flat. This box is 3D, you can look at it from four sides, the top, even the bottom! Today you're going to transform flat cardboard pieces into a 3D sculpture. Your sculpture can be abstract, which means it doesn't have to look like a real thing, or it can look like whatever you imagine it to be!"*

Optional: Show images of Lee Lawrie's bronze Sower statue on the Nebraska Capitol and 1–2 abstract sculptures.

*"This statue of the Sower was made from bronze. YOUR sculptures will be made from cardboard, which just proves that like Rabbit, it's not what something is made of that matters... It's what you IMAGINE it can become!"*

**Part 2 — Plan & Build**

*"Talk to me about your ideas before you start building. What do you want to make? How will you connect the pieces? Which adhesive will work best, tape, sticky tack, scotch tape? Let's find out!"*

Students select cardboard pieces and begin building. Encourage experimentation with the different adhesives provided.

Circulate and ask:

- What worked best for holding your pieces together? What didn't work as well?
- Did it turn out as you planned? What happened as you were creating?
- How did you problem solve when something didn't stay?

- What is your sculpture, besides just cardboard? [Connect to the 'Not a Box' theme!]

*"If cardboard is tricky, try wrapping a piece in tin foil — it holds shape differently and might help! Remember, there's no right or wrong here. Art and engineering both involve experimenting."*

**Part 3 — Title & Share (3 min):**

*"Your sculpture needs a name, but here's the rule: the name cannot be 'cardboard.' Because it's not just cardboard, right? Give it a title that tells us what your imagination sees. Write or dictate your title on a strip of paper and display it next to your sculpture."*

**Modifications & Extensions:**

- Struggling: Pre-fold and score some cardboard pieces to create ready-to-connect tabs. Offer side-by-side support and suggest simple L-shapes or towers as starting points.
- Advanced: Challenge students to create a sculpture with a specific number of connected pieces (5+), then write a 2–3 sentence description of what it is and how they built it.
- Alternative medium: If cardboard proves difficult, tin foil works, and students can press, wrap, and sculpt it into any shape.

## CLASS BOOK ASSEMBLY & AUTHOR'S CELEBRATION (if time allows)

**Educator Script**

This celebration is the natural culmination of the writing work time above. It can happen at the end of this session or at the start of the next gathering as a warm-up celebration. The completed story pages become the class book.

*"It's time to celebrate! Let's do an Author's Share. I'll give a few friends the chance to hold up their page, show their illustration, and read their words aloud. Authors: stand proud, hold your work up high, and share your imagination with us!"*

Call on 4–6 students to share. Celebrate specific details, illustration choices, vocabulary words used, and imaginative leaps.

*"Now let's put all our pages together to make our class book. We're ALL the authors and illustrators of this one! Let's sign our names on the cover together."*

Assemble pages with the cover. Bind with binder rings or a stapler along the left edge.

## CLOSING & CELEBRATION (5 min)

**Educator Script**

*"Look at what this group of engineers, artists, writers, and imaginers has made! Over three lessons, you read a story about a rabbit who refused to let anyone call its box 'just a box.' And you refused too. You engineered solutions, made found art from ordinary objects, built sculptures from flat cardboard, and wrote your own pages that prove imagination is everywhere."*

*"Hold up your story page one more time. Look at it. You wrote that. You drew that. That imagination, that extraordinary idea inside an ordinary moment, is yours. Nobody else's."*

*"Let's finish by saying our feeling word one last time: proud. Because each of you took something ordinary and made it extraordinary. That is what Rabbit does. That is what you do. I am proud of you!"*

GRAB AND GO LESSON PACKAGE

# Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

## Lesson 1 of 3 — Imagining & Phonemic Awareness

⏱ 60 minutes · 🌱 Engineer It! (Engineering + Creative Problem Solving)

| 📖 BOOK | 💡 BIG IDEA | 🔤 VOCAB WORD |
|---|---|---|
| Not a Box by Antoinette Portis | Imagination can transform ordinary objects into anything. | Imaginative: using your brain to dream up stories, ideas, and worlds |

## Materials

### SUPPLIES

- Not a Box by Antoinette Portis
- Whiteboard or chart paper + markers
- Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form (student copies)
- Feeling word cards / emoji visuals
- Cardboard boxes in various sizes — 1+ per group (collect in advance)
- Tape, sticky tack, glue sticks
- Scissors
- Colored pencils, markers, crayons
- Scratch paper and pencils for planning sketches
- **TO PRINT:** Helix Daily Check-In Form

### OPTIONAL / GRADE LEVEL SPECIFIC

- **K:** Printed rhyming picture card pairs (fox, socks, rocks, locks — words that rhyme with box)
- **1st:** Printed Elkonin Box sheets (one per student); counters or bingo chips — 3 per student
- **2nd:** Mini whiteboards + dry-erase markers OR lined paper
- Sentence strips with target words in large font
- Small counters, coins, or bingo chips for Elkonin box pushing

## Pre-Lesson Set-Up

1. Write 'Not a Box' on the board. Below it, draw a simple box and write: "What could this be... besides a box?"
2. Set out Helix Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student's spot.
3. Collect cardboard boxes in various sizes — one per student or pair. Place in a central area or under tables.
4. Write phonemic awareness target words on the board: box, fox, top, hop, hot, not.
5. **K only:** Set out rhyming picture card pairs at each table spot.
6. **1st grade only:** Prepare Elkonin Box sheets and set aside.

## Welcome & Student Check-In (8–10 min)

1. Greet students warmly and invite them to pick up a Check-In Form.
2. Give students 2–3 minutes to complete the "How am I feeling?" section. Invite 3–4 volunteers to share.
3. Play the Say It Game with the word Imaginative.
   - Say it together, whisper it, say it like you just had the BIGGEST idea of your life!
   - **Define:** "Being imaginative means using your brain to dream up stories, ideas, and worlds."
   - Turn and say it to a friend.
4. Introduce the book: "In our story today, a rabbit looks at a plain brown box and sees something incredible. Let's find out what!"

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Provide a printed emoji chart. Allow students to point to their feeling instead of writing or cutting.

**Advanced**: Ask students to share two feelings and explain the connection between them.

## Activate Prior Knowledge (7 min)

1. Hold up (or draw) a simple cardboard box. Ask: "What is this? What do we normally do with boxes?"
2. "But what if this box was not just a box? What else could it be? Turn and tell a partner your most creative idea!" Take 4–5 creative responses. Celebrate imagination!
3. Introduce the book: "Not a Box by Antoinette Portis is about a rabbit who has a box, but the rabbit doesn't see it as a box. As I read, think about: What does Rabbit imagine? Could you imagine the same things?"

## Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Phonemic Awareness (10 min)

Before Starting: Determine your grade-level structure. Options:

- Separate students into grade levels with an adult or student leader
- Complete each activity per grade level as a whole group
- Complete one main activity with the whole group

1. "We're going to listen carefully to the sounds in words today, just like Rabbit hears the word 'box' and imagines something completely different, we're going to play with sounds in words to make new ones!"
2. Introduce and model the activity for your grade level (see the leveled table below).
3. Complete the grade-level or whole-group activity.

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: K: Provide picture cards for each rhyming pair so students can point and match before saying the words aloud. 1st: Pre-draw the Elkonin boxes and start with 2-sound words.

**Advanced**: Create a silly rhyming sentence using words from today's list: 'The fox hid in a box with some socks!' Sort sound-swap words into box-related vs. non-box categories.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Kindergarten** | Rhyming<br>• "I'll say two words. Thumbs up if they rhyme, thumbs down if they don't!"<br>• Pairs: box/fox · top/hop · hot/not<br>• "Now YOUR turn — can you think of a word that rhymes with 'box'? Turn and tell a partner!"<br>• Partners share a rhyming picture card set and take turns saying a rhyming pair aloud. |
| **1st Grade** | Elkonin Box Push<br>• Model pushing one counter per sound.<br>• 'The word is box. /b/ [push] — /ɒ/ [push] — /ks/ [push]. 3 sounds, 3 boxes!'<br>• Practice: box (/b/-/ɒ/-/ks/ = 3), top (/t/-/ɒ/-/p/ = 3), not (/n/-/ɒ/-/t/ = 3), hot (/h/-/ɒ/-/t/ = 3), fox (/f/-/ɒ/-/ks/ = 3). Always say sounds aloud as you push. |
| **2nd Grade** | Phoneme Substitution<br>• Change one sound in a word to make a new word!<br>• Change /b/ in BOX to /f/ → FOX!<br>• Change /h/ in HOT to /p/ → pot!<br>• Change /t/ in TOP to /h/ → hop!<br>• Students write two 'before → after' word pairs on their whiteboards and share. |

## Read Aloud (15 min)

1. Preview the cover. Identify author and illustrator (Antoinette Portis wrote the words AND drew the pictures). Ask what students notice on the cover.
2. "As I read, notice: on every page, a voice asks 'Why are you sitting in a box?' and Rabbit always disagrees. Listen for WHY Rabbit disagrees and WHAT Rabbit sees instead."
3. Read the book aloud. Pause at these moments:
   - "What does the box become in Rabbit's imagination? What do you think it will become next? Turn and tell a partner!"
   - "The word 'indignant' might be new! It means feeling annoyed because you think something unfair just happened to you. Does Rabbit look indignant? Show me an indignant face!"
   - "What has the box been so far? [mountain, rocket ship, burning building...] What do you think it will become next?"
4. After reading, quick phonemic awareness connection: "Let's clap the sounds in 'box': /b/ — /ɒ/ — /ks/. Three sounds! Can anyone think of a word that rhymes with box?"

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Seat near the book; use finger pointing to track. Offer the sentence frame: 'Rabbit imagined the box was a ___.'

**Advanced**: Challenge students to predict the next imagination before turning the page, or to draw what THEY would imagine a box to be.

## STEAM Activity: Engineer It! — Engineering + Math + Creative Thinking (20 min)

### Part 1: Introduce Engineering

1. "Rabbit looked at a plain cardboard box and imagined it could be anything. Today you're going to be engineers! Engineers identify a problem and build a solution, and your materials are cardboard boxes."
2. Invite students to observe the room like engineers. Ask: "Is there something in our room we could build? A tunnel to crawl through? A step stool? A mailbox? A stage? Let's brainstorm!" Take 4–5 ideas, then vote or decide on 2–3 items to build. Students sort into groups by interest.

### Part 2: Plan, Build & Test

1. **ASK:** "What problem are we solving? Who will use what we build?"
2. **IMAGINE:** "How might we build it? What shape should it be?"
3. **PLAN:** Groups sketch their design on scratch paper and assign roles.
4. **CREATE:** Build using cardboard, tape, and other materials. Encourage measurement: "Will this be tall enough? Wide enough?"
5. **IMPROVE:** "What's working? What needs to change? Does it do what you wanted?" Remind students that needing to retry is engineering, not failure.

### Part 3: Evaluate & Share

1. Test it out together. Ask the group:
   - What worked well? What would you change if you did it again?
   - How is what you built connected to our story?
   - 'Repurpose' means using something for a different purpose than originally intended — just like Rabbit! Can you think of other things we could repurpose?

**Example Student Build**




**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Provide a simple 3-step sketch template (draw → build → test). Pair with a stronger builder. Offer pre-cut box pieces so assembly is the main task.

**Advanced**: Improve the design: 'Can you make it stronger? More decorative? Add a label?' Write 1–2 sentences explaining how their invention solves a problem.

## Closing & Celebration (5 min)

1. Ask student groups to share their engineered creations.
2. Ask students to share one way they were imaginative today.
3. Celebrate the group: "Just like Rabbit, you looked at a plain brown box and saw something extraordinary. You are engineers!"

GRAB AND GO LESSON PACKAGE

# Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

Lesson 2 of 3 — Shared Reading & Vocabulary Exploration

⏱ 60 minutes · 🌱 Found Art (Art + Creative Expression + Repurposing)

| 📖 BOOK | 💡 BIG IDEA | 🔤 VOCAB WORD |
|---|---|---|
| Not a Box by Antoinette Portis | Imagination turns ordinary objects into something extraordinary. | Indignant, Ordinary, Transform, Imagine, Beyond |

## Materials

| SUPPLIES | OPTIONAL / GRADE LEVEL SPECIFIC |
|---|---|
| • Not a Box by Antoinette Portis<br>• Vocabulary word cards: indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond<br>• Chart paper for class vocabulary anchor chart<br>• Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form (student copies)<br>• Emoji Faces / Feeling word cards<br>• Cardboard shoeboxes — one per student (ask families to collect in advance)<br>• Gloves for outdoor collection<br>• Craft glue or glue gun (educator use only for glue gun)<br>• **TO PRINT:** Helix Daily Check-In Form | • Outdoor access to collect natural and recycled items (sticks, rocks, leaves, pinecones, bottle caps, scraps)<br>• **K:** Printed emoji/picture response cards for acting out vocabulary words<br>• **1st:** Sentence frame strips: 'I felt indignant when ___.' / 'Something ordinary is ___.'<br>• **2nd:** Mini whiteboards + dry-erase markers OR lined paper<br>• Optional: printed images of Louise Nevelson's recycled assemblage art as a visual anchor<br>• If outdoor collection isn't possible: Prepare a materials tray with recycled household items (cardboard scraps, bottle caps, fabric squares, yarn). |

## Pre-Lesson Set-Up

1. Print or write vocabulary word cards large enough for whole-group display: indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond.
2. Set out Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student's spot.
3. **1st grade:** Pre-write sentence frame strips and place at each student's spot.
4. **2nd grade:** Set out mini whiteboards and dry-erase markers at each table.
5. Bookmark pages in Not a Box that feature the vocabulary words for shared reading stops.
6. Optional: Display images of Louise Nevelson's found art on the board as a visual anchor.

## Welcome & Student Check-In (5 min)

1. Greet students warmly. Ask students to show or share how they're feeling using emoji or words. Take 2–3 brief responses.
2. "Have you ever been like Rabbit and looked at something ordinary and imagined something extraordinary?" Take 2–3 responses.

**Modifications:**
**Emerging**: Sentence frame: 'Something ordinary was ___. I imagined it was ___.'
**Advanced**: Why do you think some people use their imagination more easily than others?

## Activate Prior Knowledge (5 min)

1. Recall what Rabbit imagined the box was. Ask students to turn and tell a partner, then have 2–3 whole-class shares.
2. Share that today, students will be word detectives AND artists, looking at the story through a new lens.

## Science of Reading: Vocabulary Word Detective (10 min)

Use the 4-Step Vocabulary Routine for each word: SAY IT → DEFINE IT → CONNECT IT → USE IT

INDIGNANT

- **Say It:** "indignant" — say it together, whisper it, say it like you are feeling indignant right now!
- **Define It:** Feeling annoyed or angry because you think something unfair just happened to you.
- **Connect It:** Rabbit feels indignant every time someone calls the box 'just a box' — because Rabbit KNOWS it's something more! Have you ever felt indignant?
- **Use It:** K: Show your most indignant face! | 1st: 'I felt indignant when ___.' | 2nd: Write a sentence describing a time you or someone you know felt indignant.

ORDINARY

- **Say It:** "ordinary" — say it like it's the most boring word in the world!
- **Define It:** Normal, plain, everyday — nothing special about it.
- **Connect It:** The box in our story looks ordinary to everyone except Rabbit. Can you find something ordinary in this room right now?
- **Use It:** K: Point to something ordinary in our room. Whisper to a partner what it COULD be! | 1st: 'Something ordinary is ___. But I imagine it is ___.' | 2nd: 'Something ordinary that I would transform is ___ because ___.'

TRANSFORM

- **Say It:** "transform" — say it like something is actually changing right now!
- **Define It:** To completely change from one thing into something very different.
- **Connect It:** Rabbit transforms the box into a mountain, a rocket ship, a burning building! Can you think of something in nature that transforms? [A caterpillar into a butterfly! Water into ice!]
- **Use It:** K: Stand up and transform your body into an animal! | 1st: 'Rabbit transforms the box into ___.' | 2nd: Write a sentence using both 'ordinary' AND 'transform.'

IMAGINE

- **Say It:** "imagine" — close your eyes and say it slowly...
- **Define It:** To form a picture in your mind of something that isn't actually in front of you.
- **Connect It:** This is Rabbit's superpower! Close your eyes for 5 seconds and imagine you are somewhere totally different. Where were you?
- **Use It:** All grades: Share with a partner — 'I imagined I was ___.'

BEYOND

- **Say It:** "beyond" — say it like you're pointing far into the distance!
- **Define It:** Further than, or more than something.
- **Connect It:** Rabbit's imagination goes beyond the box — further than what anyone else sees.
- **Use It:** All grades: Point beyond the door. Now use it in a sentence with a partner: 'What's beyond that wall?'

Wrap-Up — Draw It: Invite 1–2 students to sketch beside each word on the class anchor chart to help everyone remember the meaning.

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Focus on SAY IT and DEFINE IT only for each word. Use emoji/picture response cards.

**Advanced**: Use all 5 words in one connected sentence or mini story: 'Rabbit felt indignant when someone called the ordinary box just a box, but Rabbit could imagine how to transform it into something beyond extraordinary.'

## Shared Reading with Vocabulary Stops (15 min)

1. Complete the read-aloud. As you read, ask students to give a quiet thumbs up when they see or hear a vocabulary word.
2. Pause at these moments:
   - "Rabbit's ears are back and arms are crossed, that's an indignant face! What made Rabbit feel indignant?"
   - "The narrator keeps saying Rabbit is in a box. But Rabbit calls it something else every time. Is this a problem and solution story? What's the problem? What's Rabbit's solution?"
   - "At the end, Rabbit says the box is 'not just a box.' What do you think that means? What has the box really been all along?"
3. After reading discussion: "What is the BIG message of this story? What does Antoinette Portis want us to know?" [Imagination can transform anything. Ordinary things can be extraordinary.]

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Provide a simple sequencing strip with pictures of 3 things Rabbit imagined the box to be. Students point to each in order as you read.

**Advanced**: Ask students to identify how the book's structure (question/answer pattern, limited text, illustrations doing most of the storytelling) helps convey the theme.

## STEAM Activity: Found Art — Art + Creative Expression + Repurposing (22 min)

### Part 1: Introduce Found Art

1. "In our story, Rabbit takes something most people would throw away — a plain cardboard box — and turns it into something extraordinary. Found artists take ordinary objects they find outdoors or recycle and arrange them into beautiful artwork."
2. Share images of Louise Nevelson's recycled assemblage art. Ask: "What do you notice about her art? How is it like what Rabbit does in our story?"

### Part 2: Collect & Create

1. Put on gloves and head outside to collect items for found art. Look for interesting shapes and textures: sticks, rocks, leaves, pinecones, seed pods, bark, bottle caps.
2. Return to tables with shoeboxes. Arrange found items inside the shoebox, then glue in place.
3. As students create, circulate and ask:
   - What does your arrangement remind you of? What could it be besides just sticks and rocks?
   - What vocabulary word fits what you're doing right now? [Transform!]
   - When you look at your found art, what do you imagine it to be?

### Part 3: Label & Gallery Creation

1. Write or dictate a label on a strip of paper: 'It's NOT just [an item you used]. It's ___.' Tape to the shoebox.
2. Stand up shoeboxes and do a quick gallery walk. Shoeboxes can be stacked to create a display wall, just like Louise Nevelson.

**Student Example**




**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Pre-sort a smaller collection of items on a tray and let students pick from those. Offer a sentence frame: 'I put the ___ next to the ___ because ___.'

**Advanced**: Write 2–3 sentences explaining the story or meaning behind their arrangement and connect it to a vocabulary word from the anchor chart.

## Closing & Reflection (5 min)

1. Have students hold up their shoeboxes and tell a friend their found art is extraordinary!
2. Quick vocabulary review: "I'll say a definition — you say the word!
   - 'Feeling annoyed because you think something unfair just happened.' → [indignant!]
   - 'To completely change from one thing into something very different.' → [transform!]
   - 'Normal, plain, everyday.' → [ordinary!]
3. "In our next lesson, we're going to write our own 'Not a ___' pages. Start thinking: What ordinary object around you is not just what it seems?"

GRAB AND GO LESSON PACKAGE

# Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

Lesson 3 of 3 — Author's Craft & 'Not a ___' Writing Celebration

⏱ 60 minutes · 🌱 Cardboard Sculpture (Art + Engineering + 3D Design)

| 📖 BOOK | 💡 BIG IDEA | 🔤 VOCAB WORD |
|---|---|---|
| Not a Box by Antoinette Portis | We can write and illustrate our own imaginative stories inspired by Rabbit. | VOCAB FOCUS — Review: indignant, ordinary, transform, imagine, beyond |

## Materials

### SUPPLIES

- Not a Box by Antoinette Portis
- Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form (student copies)
- Emoji Faces / Feeling word cards
- Vocabulary anchor chart from Lesson 2 (displayed for reference)
- Chart paper + markers for shared writing model
- Pre-printed 'Not a ___ Story Page' template — one per student
- Pencils and fine-tip black markers for final tracing
- Crayons, colored pencils, or watercolor paints for illustrations
- One piece of cardstock for class book cover + binder rings or stapler
- **TO PRINT:** Helix Daily Check-In Form; 'Not a ___' Story Page template

### OPTIONAL / GRADE LEVEL SPECIFIC

- Cardboard in various sizes and shapes (scraps, flat pieces, tubes)
- Duct tape, sticky tack, scotch tape (let students experiment with different adhesives)
- Scissors
- Optional: tin foil as an alternative medium
- Optional: reference images of Lee Lawrie's Sower statue or abstract sculptures
- Optional: sentence starter strips for emerging writers

## Pre-Lesson Set-Up

1. Pre-print the 'Not a ___ Story Page' template — one per student. Top two-thirds = large blank illustration box; bottom third = 2–4 writing lines with the sentence starter.
2. Set out Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student's spot.
3. Prepare a writing model on chart paper: draw a simple box and write 'It's NOT a box. It's a rocket ship zooming to the moon!' as a teacher example.
4. Display vocabulary from Lesson 2 for ongoing reference.
5. Set out cardboard materials and adhesives for the STEAM activity at a separate station.
6. Prepare the class book cover: write 'Our Class Book of NOT a ___' on cardstock and leave the center blank for students to illustrate collaboratively.

## Welcome & Student Check-In (8 min)

1. Greet students warmly. Today is Author and Illustrator Day! Have students complete their Check-In Form. After 2–3 minutes, invite sharing.
2. Play the Say It Game with the word Proud.
   - Say it together, whisper it, say it like you just finished something AMAZING!
   - **Define:** "Proud is the happy feeling you get when you work hard and complete something, or see someone doing something good."
   - "When have you felt proud? [Take 2–3 responses.] Turn and say 'I am proud' to a friend!"

**Modifications:**
**Emerging**: Emoji chart for pointing. Invite students to show their proud face.
**Advanced**: When do you feel most proud of something you've created? What made it feel special?

## Science of Reading: 'Not a ___' Writing Mini Lesson (10 min)

Note: Not a Box has a clear, repetitive pattern — short punchy sentence + illustration that shows the imagination — making it an ideal mentor text for K–2 writers at any level.

1. Study the Mentor Text: "Let's look at Not a Box one more time, but this time like writers. What do you notice about how Antoinette Portis built this story?" [The sentence is short. The illustration shows everything. Rabbit never explains, Rabbit just declares. The reader has to use their imagination too!]
2. Model on chart paper: "I'm going to pick... a chair. A plain, ordinary chair. [Write 'It's NOT a chair.'] What does my imagination see? It's a throne for the bravest knight in the whole kingdom! [Write it, then sketch.] See how my illustration adds details the words don't say?"
3. Brainstorm: "Close your eyes. Think of the most ordinary object you can. Got one? What does your imagination see it as? Whisper it to a partner!" Take 3–4 shares.

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Provide a printed picture menu of ordinary objects (sock, cup, chair, stick, box, rock) to spark ideas.

**Advanced**: Use the illustration to show a 'Before and After' contrast on a single page. Explain the transformation process.

## Writing Work Time: 'Not a ___' Story Pages (15 min)

### Grade-Level Writing Guidance:

- **Kindergarten:** Write 'It's NOT a ___. It's a ___.' using best sound spelling and/or dictation. Focus on the illustration — draw every detail of your imagination.
- **1st Grade:** Write the sentence frame and add one detail sentence. Example: 'It's NOT a spoon. It's a magic wand. It grants three wishes if you stir it in moonlight.'
- **2nd Grade:** Write 2–3 sentences. Include a vivid detail that makes the imagination feel real. Try to use at least one vocabulary word from Lesson 2.

### Circulate and prompt with these questions:

- What ordinary object did you choose? Why that one?
- What details can you add to your illustration that your words don't say?
- Can you use a vocabulary word from our anchor chart somewhere on your page?

**Modifications:**

**Emerging**: Pre-write the sentence frame on their page. Offer a printed picture menu of ordinary objects. Encourage drawing first, then dictate while an educator or peer scribes.

**Advanced**: Add a second sentence using figurative language — a simile, a sound word, or an exaggeration: 'It roars like thunder when it flies past the clouds.'

## Class Book Assembly & Author's Celebration (if time allows)

1. Complete an Author's Share. Call on 4–6 students to hold up their page, show their illustration, and read their words aloud.
2. Celebrate specific details: the ordinary object they chose, vocabulary words used, and illustration choices.
3. Assemble pages as a class book. Bind with binder rings or a stapler along the left edge.

## STEAM Activity: Cardboard Sculpture — Art + Engineering + 3D Design (25 min)

### Part 1: Introduce Sculpture & 2D vs. 3D

1. "Today we're going to be sculptors! A sculptor creates art you can see from all angles — that's called 3D art: height, width, and depth." Hold up a flat piece of paper and a cardboard box to illustrate. "You're going to build a 3D sculpture out of cardboard and create something from your imagination."
2. Optional: Show images of Lee Lawrie's Sower statue or abstract sculptures. "This statue was made from bronze. Your sculptures will be made from cardboard, which proves that like Rabbit, it's not what something is made of that matters... It's what you IMAGINE it can become!"

### Part 2: Plan & Build

1. Brainstorm ideas as a class of what sculptures might be.
2. Students select cardboard pieces and begin building. Encourage experimenting with different adhesives (glue, tape, etc.)
3. As students build, circulate and ask:
   - What worked best for holding pieces together? What didn't work as well?
   - Did it turn out as you planned? What happened as you were creating?
   - What is your sculpture, besides just cardboard? [Connect to the 'Not a Box' theme!]
   - Tin foil tip: If cardboard is tricky, try wrapping a piece in tin foil — it holds shape differently.

### Part 3: Title & Share

1. Give each sculpture a name, with one rule: the name CANNOT be 'cardboard.' Write or dictate a title on a strip of paper and display it next to the sculpture.

**Student Examples**






**Modifications:**

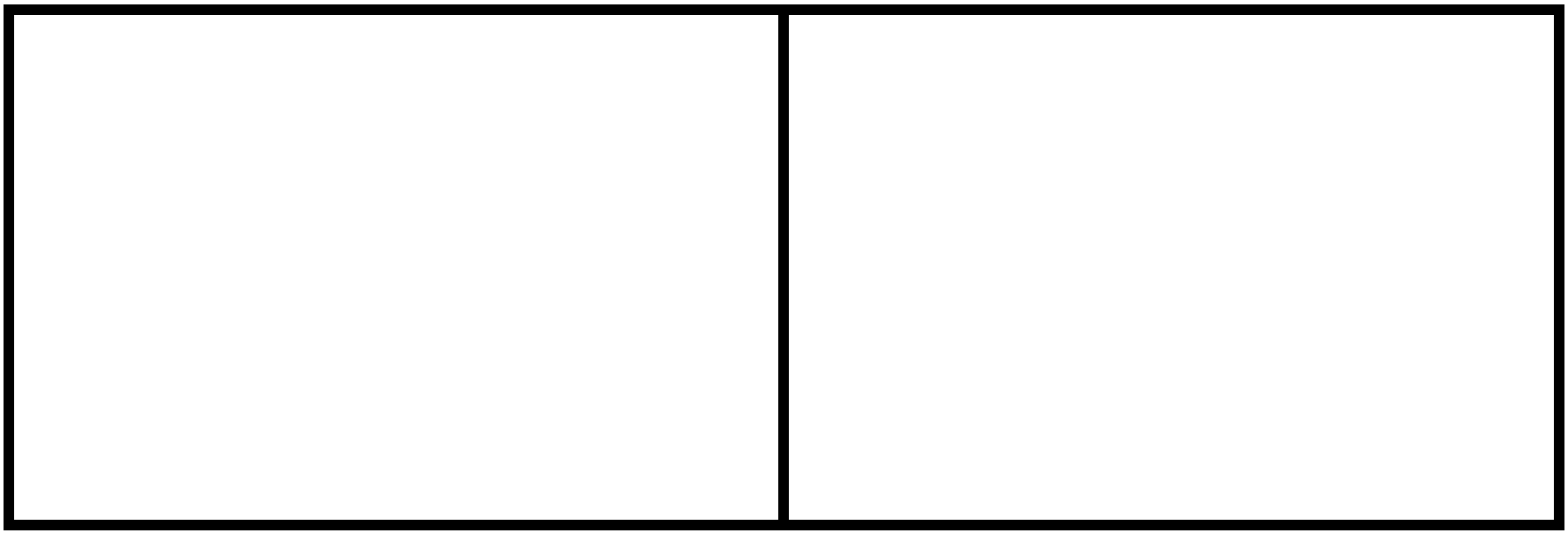
**Emerging**: Pre-fold and score some cardboard pieces to create ready-to-connect tabs. Offer side-by-side support. Suggest simple L-shapes or towers as starting points.

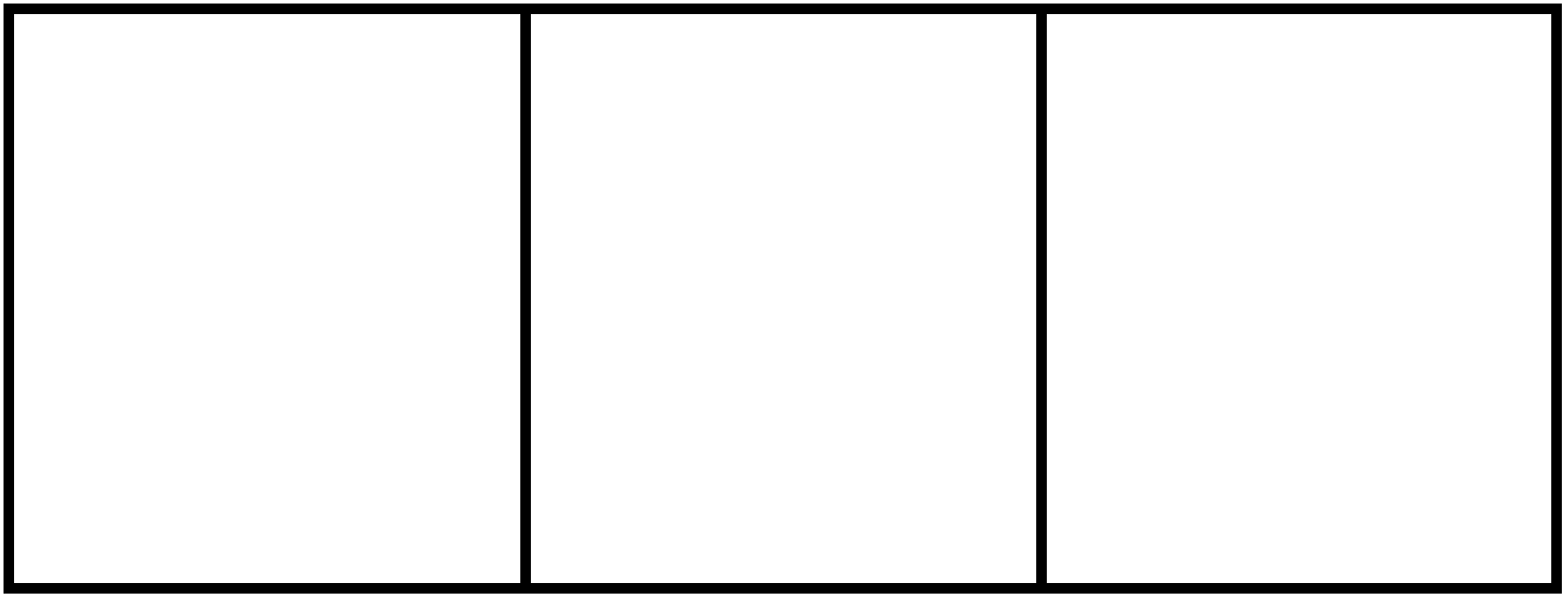
**Advanced**: Create a sculpture with a specific number of connected pieces (5+), then write a 2–3 sentence description of what it is and how it was built.

## Closing & Celebration (5 min)

1. Celebrate how extraordinary the stories and sculptures are.
2. Reinforce the feeling word: "Let's say our final feeling word one last time: PROUD. Because each of you took something ordinary and made it extraordinary. That is what Rabbit does. That is what you do." Tell a friend, "I am proud of you!"

Sound (Elkonin) Box Mats





Happy



# Sleepy



# Angry



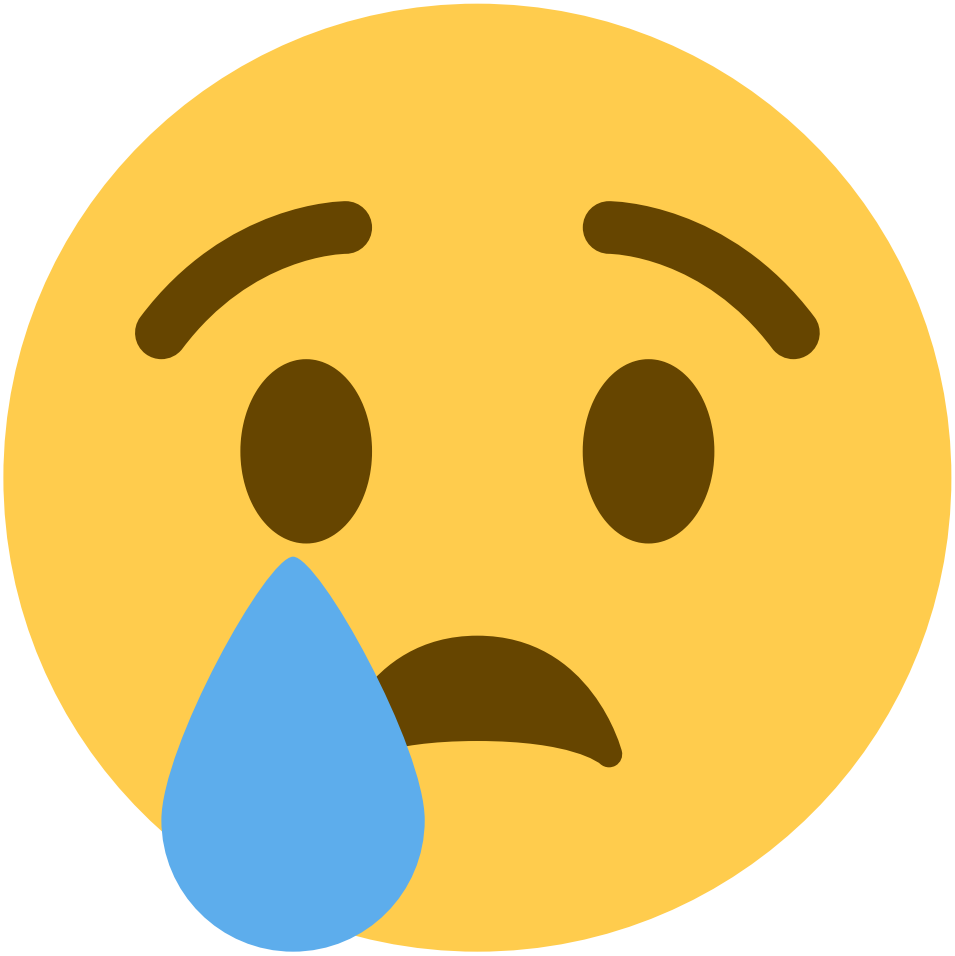
# Sick



# Nervous



# Sad



# Scared



# Silly



# Frustrated



# Excited



# Calm



# Afraid



# Confused



# Caring



## Day of the Week:




## Date

## What will I do today?

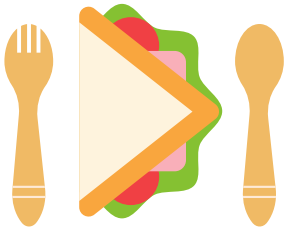
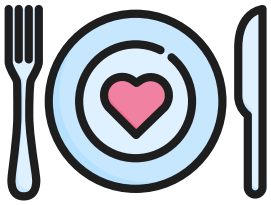
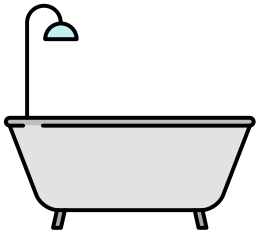
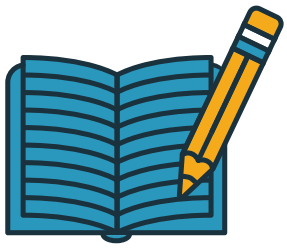
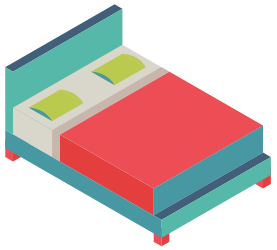
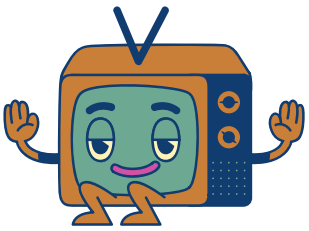
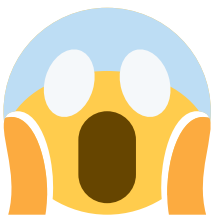
Cut and paste at least 4 pictures of what you will do today. Glue them in the order that you will complete them.

1 2 3 4

## How am I feeling?

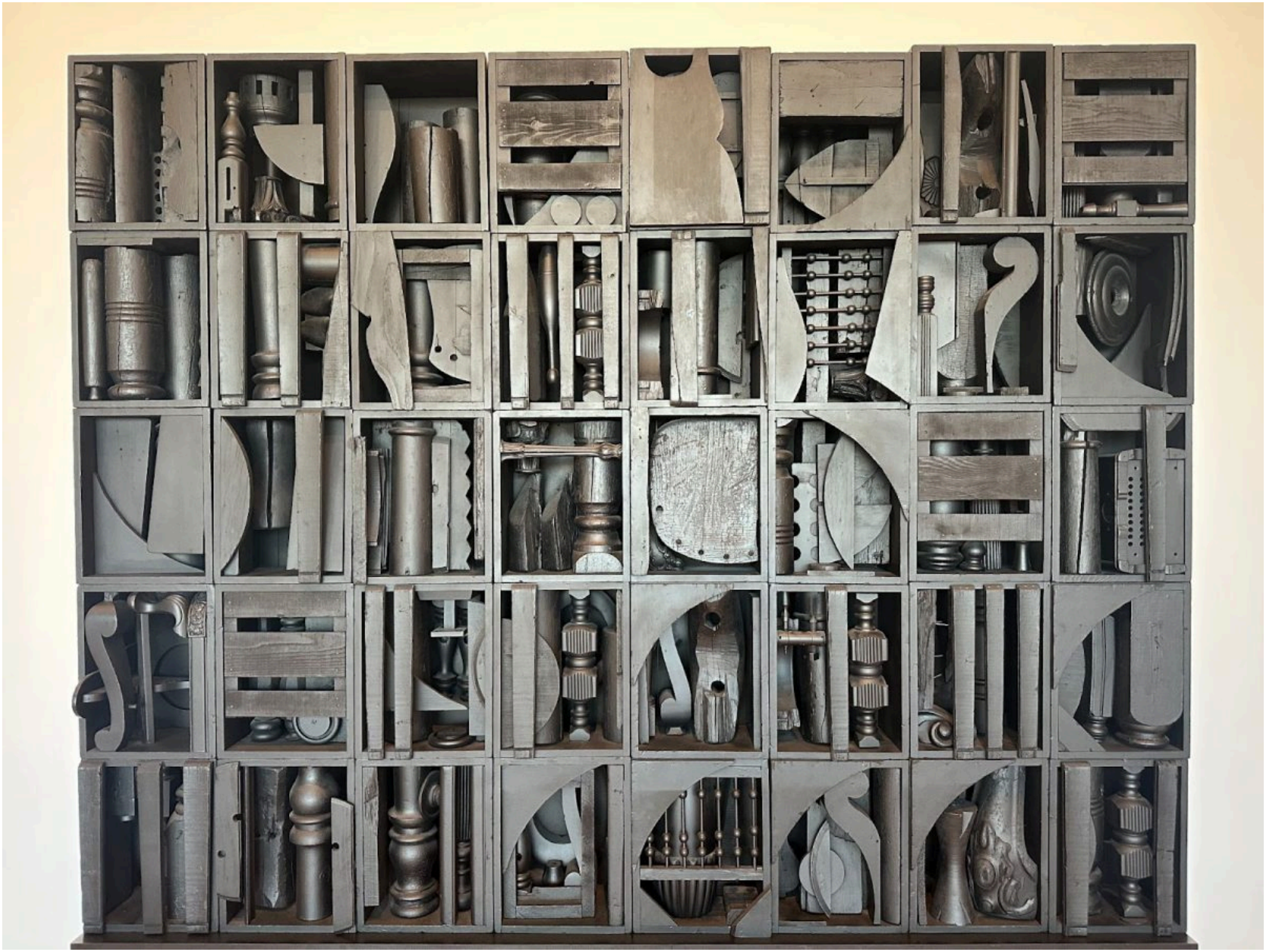
Cut and paste the feeling faces you are feeling right now.

## How am I feeling?

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  Brush Teeth |  Eat Breakfast |  Eat Lunch |  Eat Dinner |  Shower or Bath |
|  Read |  School |  Homework |  Exercise |  Get ready for bed |
|  Watch TV |  Do Your Chores |  Wake Up |  Play with friends or family |  Relax |
| | | | | |
|  Happy |  Sleepy |  Angry |  Sick |  Nervous |
|  Sad |  Scared |  Silly |  Frustrated |  Excited |

**Cut out each of the schedule squares and the feelings and emotions. Use these to complete your daily reflection. Use the blank boxes to create your own!**

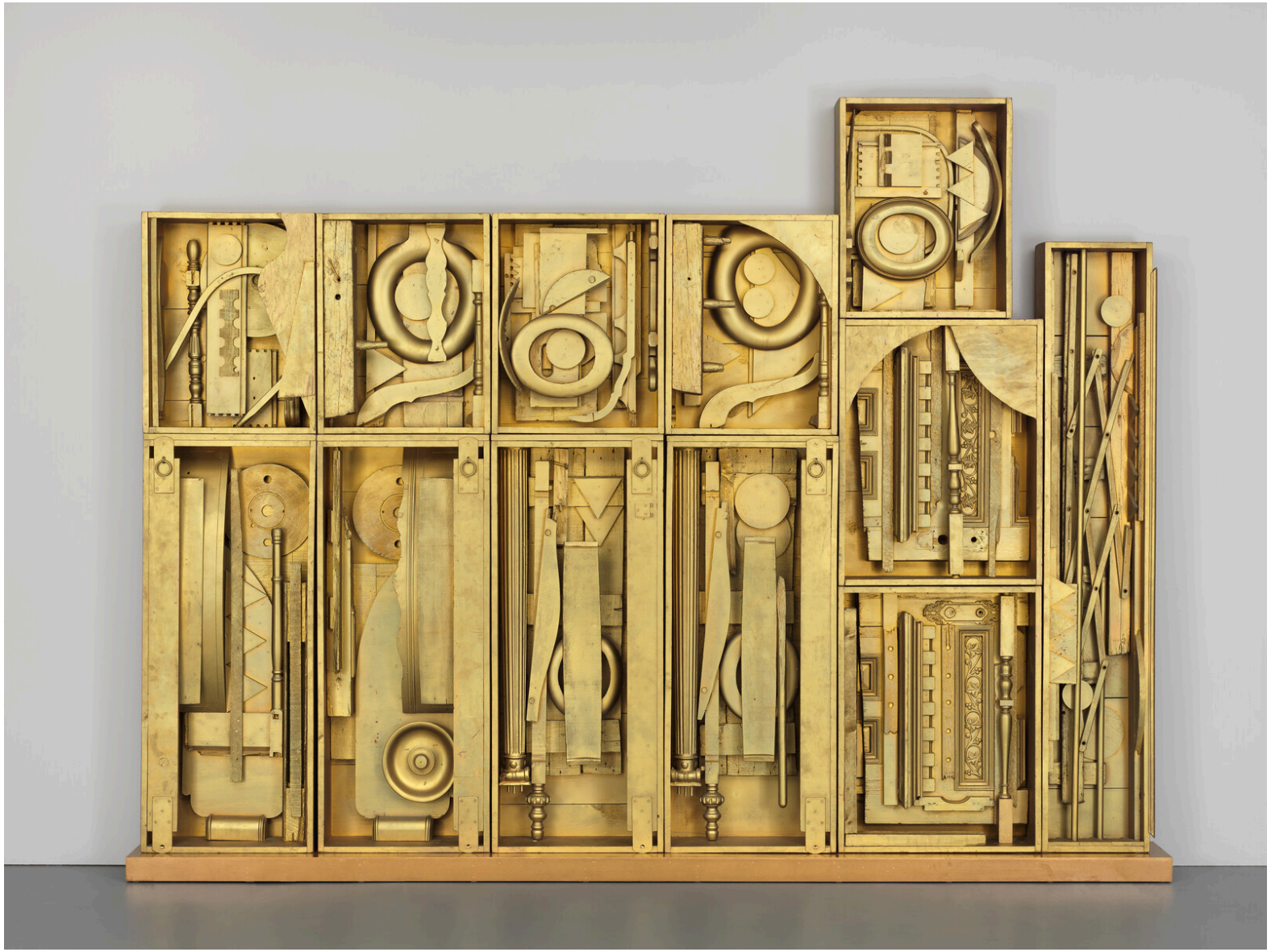
**The Black Chord by Louise Nevelson**



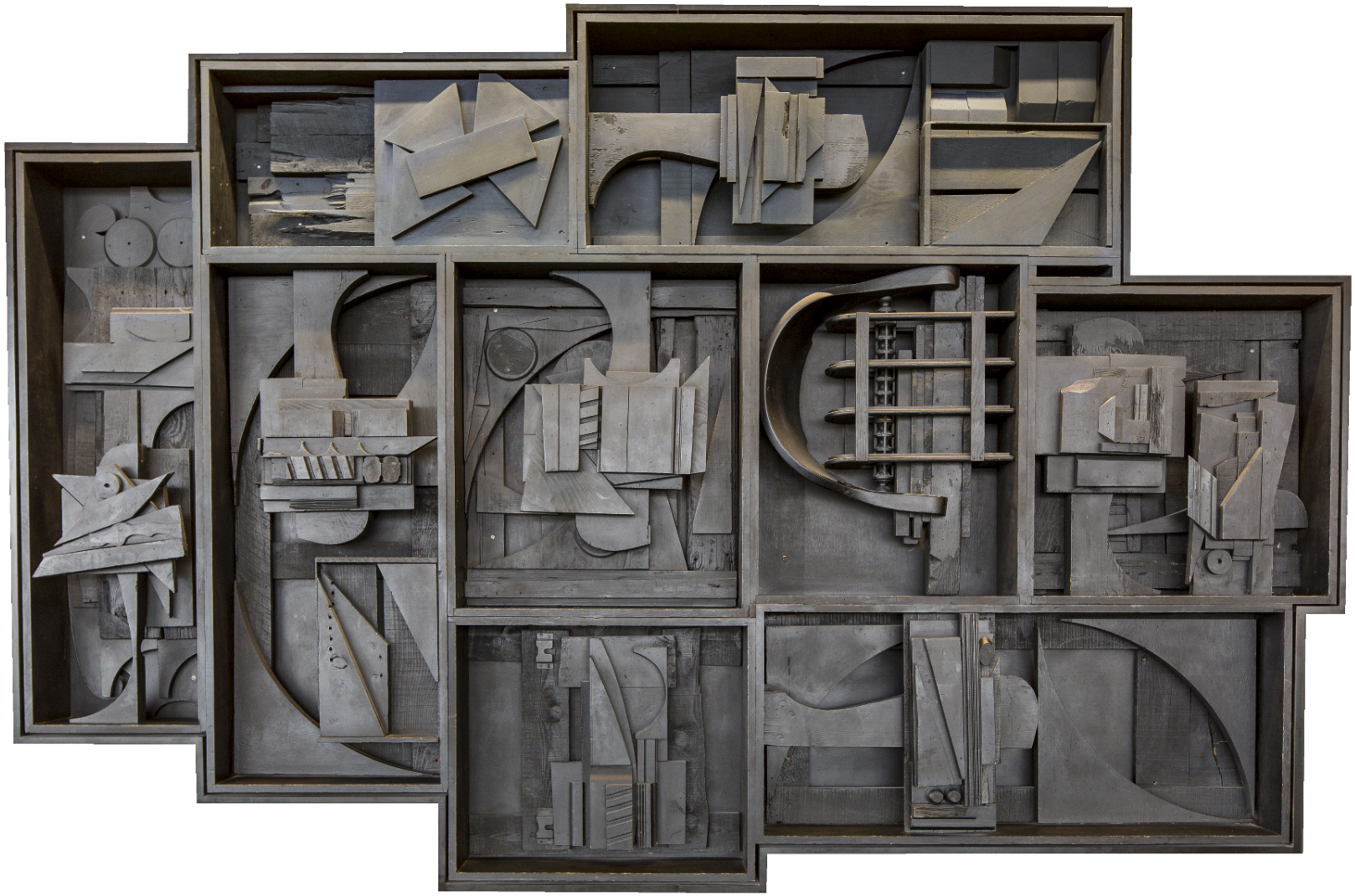
**Cascade VII by Louise Nevelson**



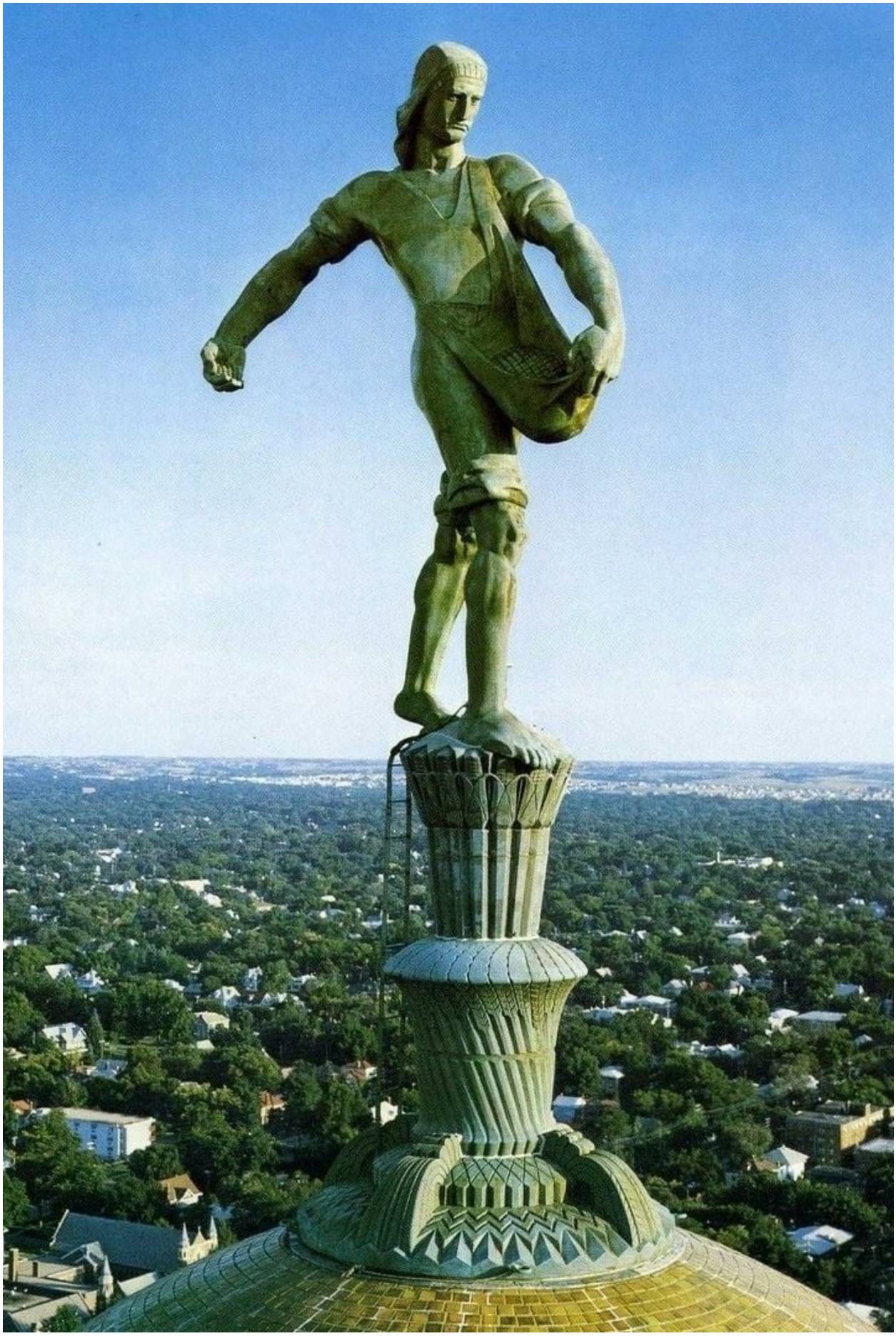
**Royal Tide II by Louise Nevelson**



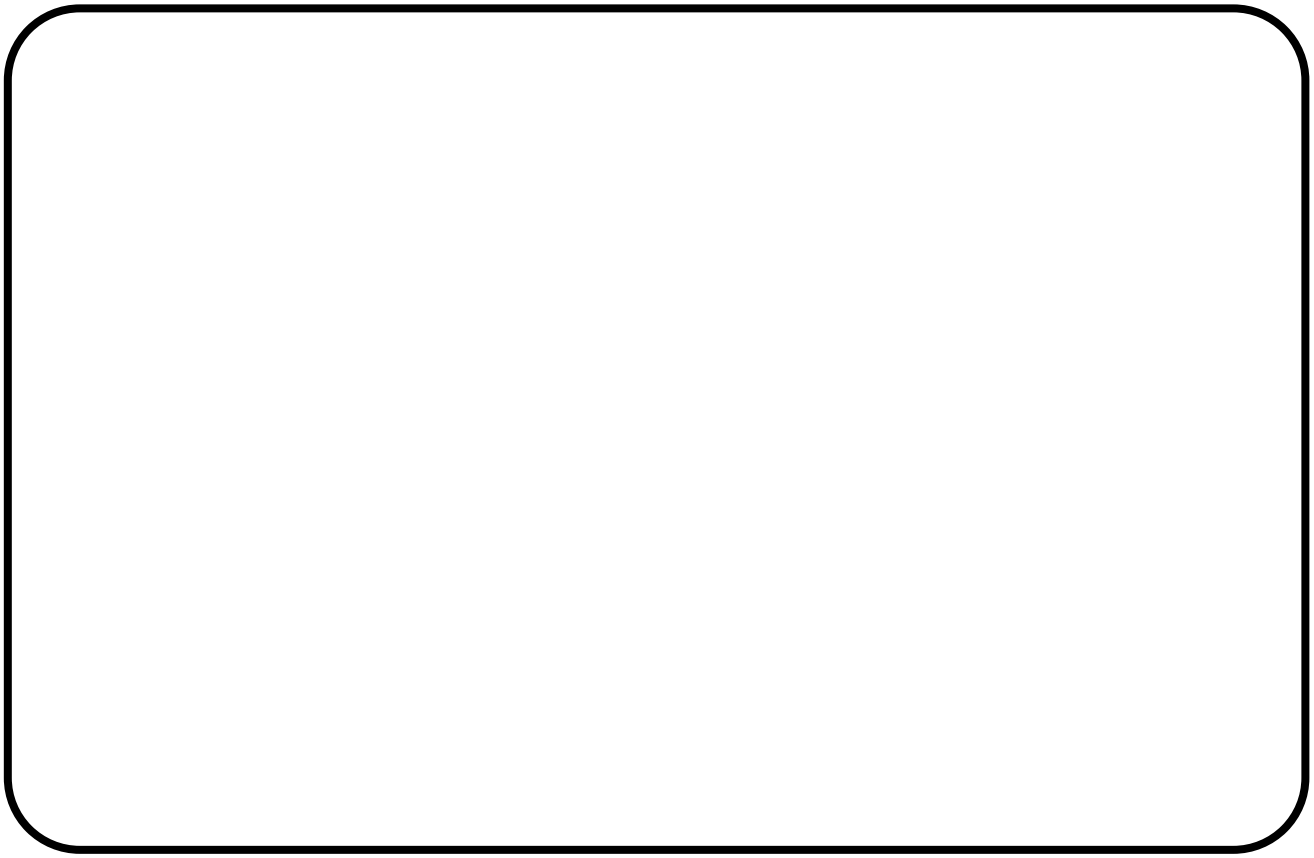
**Night Flight #1 by Louise Nevelson**



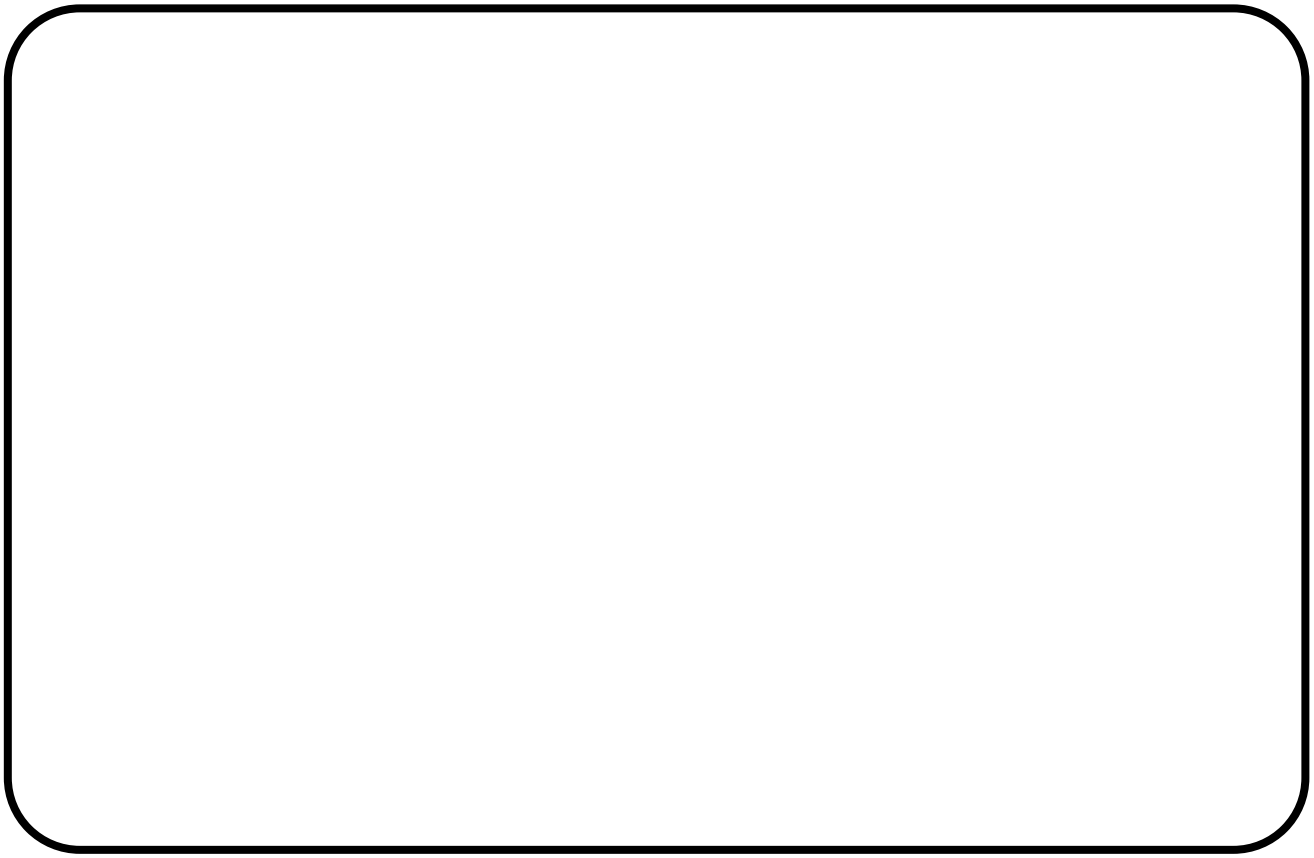




# NOT A _____

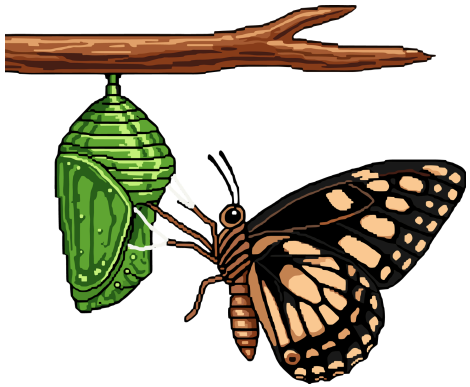


# NOT A _____



It's not a

It's a



TRANSFORM



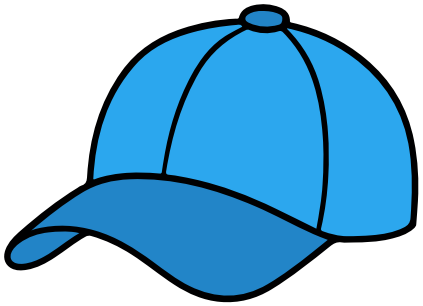
INDIGNANT



IMAGINE



BEYOND

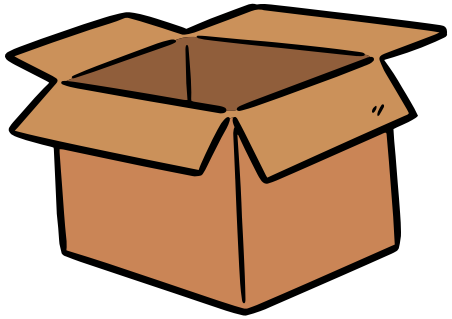


ORDINARY



MAGNIFICENT

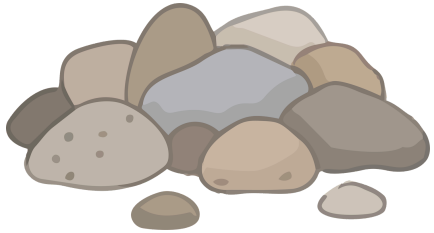
Vocabulary Cards - Not a Box



BOX



FOX



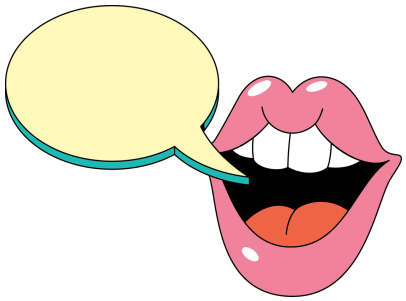
ROCKS



LOCKS



SOCKS



TALKS