

HOME SCHOOL HELPER

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Envelope Holder A Woodshop Project for the Homeschool

Woodworking is a popular hobby, but it's also useful in home maintenance and is an integral part of some vocations.

These are good reasons for homeschool students (both boys and girls) to build a basic woodworking project, such as an envelope holder—plus you may be able to count the project for elective credit. In addition to the materials and tools listed in this article's sidebar (see p. 6), one essential resource is a person who has basic woodworking skills and tools. The instructor (we'll call him "Dad" in this article) makes adjustments to the plan as needed; he demonstrates the safe use of each tool, requires hearing and eye protection, ensures proper ventilation for staining

and finishing, and enforces "shop clean-up."

Dad begins by giving the student the plan drawing and previewing the instructions with him. Dad should explain and demonstrate how to use the tools, but the actual work is to be done by the student. Also, Dad should explain what his grading criteria will be (if the project is for a grade) before starting.

1. Select the wood

- a. The wood from which the three main pieces will be cut should be an easy-to-

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work, inexpensive species such as pine or poplar. This piece should be larger (longer, wider, and thicker) than all the final dimensions because the student will use the tools to work the wood to its final dimensions. If a planer is used, consider the minimum length of wood that can pass through it.

- b. The piece from which the thin piece will be cut can be the same or a darker species. Likewise, this piece should be larger than the final dimensions and be long enough to plane.

2. Plane

Plane both pieces of wood to their final thicknesses ($\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{1}{8}$ ").

3. Measure, mark, and cut

- a. All measurements must be marked accurately. Also, don't measure and mark all pieces at the same time from the same piece of wood prior to cutting—because the saw blade will subtract width with each cut.
- b. For the front and back pieces, the grain should be vertical as viewed from the front of the final product. For the spacer piece, the grain should

be horizontal when viewed from the front. The grain orientation is critical in the spacer piece because screwing into end grain results in a weak attachment that's prone to slip.

- c. Use a combination square and pencil to measure and mark a line for the vertical height of the back piece, then rip-cut (using either a table or hand saw) the wood to this height. If you use a table saw, rather than marking the wood, the student will measure and set the width on the table saw.
- d. Use a combination square and pencil to measure and mark a line for the

horizontal width of the back piece, then cross-cut the wood to this width.

- e. Repeat steps 3c and 3d for the front piece.
- f. Use a combination square and pencil to measure and mark lines for the length and width of the spacer piece and cut the piece.

4. Measure, mark, and cut the arcs

- a. Use a combination square and pencil to draw straight lines diagonally from corner to corner on the front and back pieces. From the top of these two pieces, measure in $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the corners on the diagonal lines and make marks. Set a compass to a radius of $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Use the marks as the center points to draw the arcs across the top corners of the front and back pieces.
- b. Use a coping or band saw to cut the top corners of the front and back pieces following the arc lines.

5. Measure, mark, and drill the screw holes

- a. Use a combination square and pencil to draw a straight line, parallel to the bottom, on the front and back pieces, $\frac{3}{4}$ " inch up from the bottom edges. Measure $\frac{3}{4}$ " in from each side along this line and make a mark. These marks should be made on the surfaces that will face outward in the finished product.
- b. Hold the wood in a vice and drill $\frac{1}{8}$ "-diameter holes through the wood at the marks. Be careful to drill the holes perpendicularly to the pieces. Change drill bits (let the student learn

(continued on p. 6)

Intended age: middle school (grades 6-8)

Time requirements: at least four sessions; total shop time is about eight hours

Goals

The student will:

1. Read and follow a plan drawing.
2. Demonstrate the proper, safe use of common woodworking tools.
3. Demonstrate measuring, assembling, and finishing skills.

Record Keeping

To document this project for elective credit, include the following in your record:

1. Time the student spent in the woodshop working on the project and receiving instruction
2. A list of the tools used by the student (see sidebar on p. 6)
3. A photo of the completed project
4. The grading criteria and grade

2007 Newbery Award Winner Book Review

The Higher Power of Lucky

The Higher Power of Lucky by Susan Patron received the 2007 Newbery Award. Mrs. Patron is a long-time children's librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library and the author of several books for young people. She surely should have been aware of the stir this book could cause.

A number of professional and consumer reviews alike have focused on the use of an anatomically correct word not typically spoken aloud in polite company—a concept grandmothers once referred to as “decorum” and certainly a fair topic for discussion. Rather than joining that debate here, however, this review will look more to the forest than the trees, at the larger story, which should be just as important for parents and teachers to consider, if not more so.

Ten-year-old Lucky Trimble is the plucky star of this bittersweet survival story, and her backstory is both complex and critical to understanding why this child is on a solitary quest to find her own Higher Power.¹

Lucky's father was once married to a French lady named Brigitte and then divorced. Later he was married to an American artist named Lucille and then divorced, but after Lucky was born. When Lucky was eight, her mother Lucille was accidentally electrocuted

following a desert rainstorm, and Lucky's father in absentia contacted ex-wife Brigitte in France to come to America and serve temporarily as Lucky's Guardian. Apparently the idea of *his* caring for Lucky was inconvenient, and so two years later Brigitte is still watching over Lucky in Hard Pan, California, population 43. Now Lucky carries a survival kit backpack daily and prepares herself to be left once more, feeling certain that Brigitte will soon tire of being Guardian and will return to her beloved France. The themes of loss and abandonment have begun.



What follows is a story of Lucky and her friends, ten-year-old Lincoln Clinton Carter Kennedy, Presidential wannabe and “knot tyer” extraordinaire, and five-year-old motherless Miles, who lives with his grandmother. They share childhood adventures in much the same way as do Ramona Quimby and her friends on Klickitat Street.

There is gentle humor as Lincoln uses Lucky’s marker to add a colon to the road sign “Slow Children at Play” so that it more accurately reads “Slow: Children . . .” There is blunt honesty as Lucky acknowledges that her own active meanness gland kicks in when Miles tries her patience. There is poignant emotion when it falls to Lucky to determine what to do with her own mother’s ashes and when to run away from Brigitte before Brigitte can run away from her.

Misguided and childish logic leads Lucky to three “signs” that affirm her decision to run away. Her plan goes awry when her meanness gland unloads once again on Miles, and he too runs away, ending up near the dugout where she plans to hide.

Mrs. Patron’s writing style is easy and accessible. She shows that she knows the kind of story elements that will appeal to her young audience, including the use of the debated anatomical term that, like it or not, carries a “forbidden fruit” appeal for elementary school children. Without a doubt this is a fresh take on the old survival story.

But the themes, oh, her themes. Abandonment, self-sufficiency, Higher Powers (any kind will do, thank you very much) drive the story forward and yet without lasting hope. Brigitte will stay. Lucky is capable of taking care of both herself and Miles in the dust storm, and thankfully she can put away her survival backpack . . . for now. But in the midst of the

A Higher Power can never replace The Higher Power.

“happily ever after” ending there remains the bittersweet echo of words written in chapter twelve of the book: “. . . even if you carry a survival kit around with you at all times, it won’t guarantee you’ll survive. No kit in the world can protect you from all the possible bad things.”²

That statement is so very true, and it is true because *A Higher Power* can never replace *The Higher Power* Who alone gives hope and help to His children. Debate individual words if you please, but step back for a broader view as well; for whether you look at the forest or the trees, these literary woods contain some difficult places that are due some thoughtful consideration.

Nancy Lohr is Acquisitions Editor for BJU Press JourneyForth Books.

¹The author capitalizes “Guardian” and “Higher Power” throughout the book, so this review has followed her convention.

²Susan Patron, *The Higher Power of Lucky* (New York: Atheneum, 2006), 80.

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(continued from p. 3)

Tools

- Combination square
- Drawing compass
- Drill or drill press
- Drill bits: $\frac{1}{8}$ " bit and countersink bit
- Hearing protection
- Latex gloves
- Paint brushes (3)
- Pencil
- Plane or planer
- Safety goggles
- Sandpaper (medium and fine grit)
- Saws (hand saw or table saw; band saw or coping saw)
- Scissors

- Screwdriver (or screw drive bit for drill)
- Spring clamp
- Wood chisel or utility knife
- Wood file
- Workbench with vice

Materials

- Finish (polyurethane semigloss)
- Screws (four #10, Phillips or straight)
- Stain (two shades, one darker than the other)
- Wood (pine or poplar; 1 piece, approx. 12" x 4" x $\frac{3}{4}$ ")
- Wood (pine, poplar, cedar, cherry, walnut, or oak; 1 piece, approx. 3" x 3" x $\frac{3}{4}$ ")
- Wood glue

how to do this) to a countersink drill bit and widen the top of each hole to accept a screw head. Be sure to demonstrate how to get the depth of the countersink correct.

- Use a combination square and pencil to mark corresponding drill holes in each long edge of the spacer piece. The marks should be centered in the thickness of the wood and $\frac{3}{4}$ " in from the ends. Hold the spacer piece in a vice and drill $\frac{1}{8}$ "-diameter holes through the marks to a depth of approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Getting the position of these holes to align with the corresponding holes in the front and back pieces can be difficult for middle school students. Alternatively, Dad may recommend clamping the front and back pieces against the spacer and drilling through the first holes as guides.

6. Mark and cut the thin piece

- Cut out the paper design of the overlapping hearts with scissors, place it on the thin piece of wood, and with a pencil trace the outline of

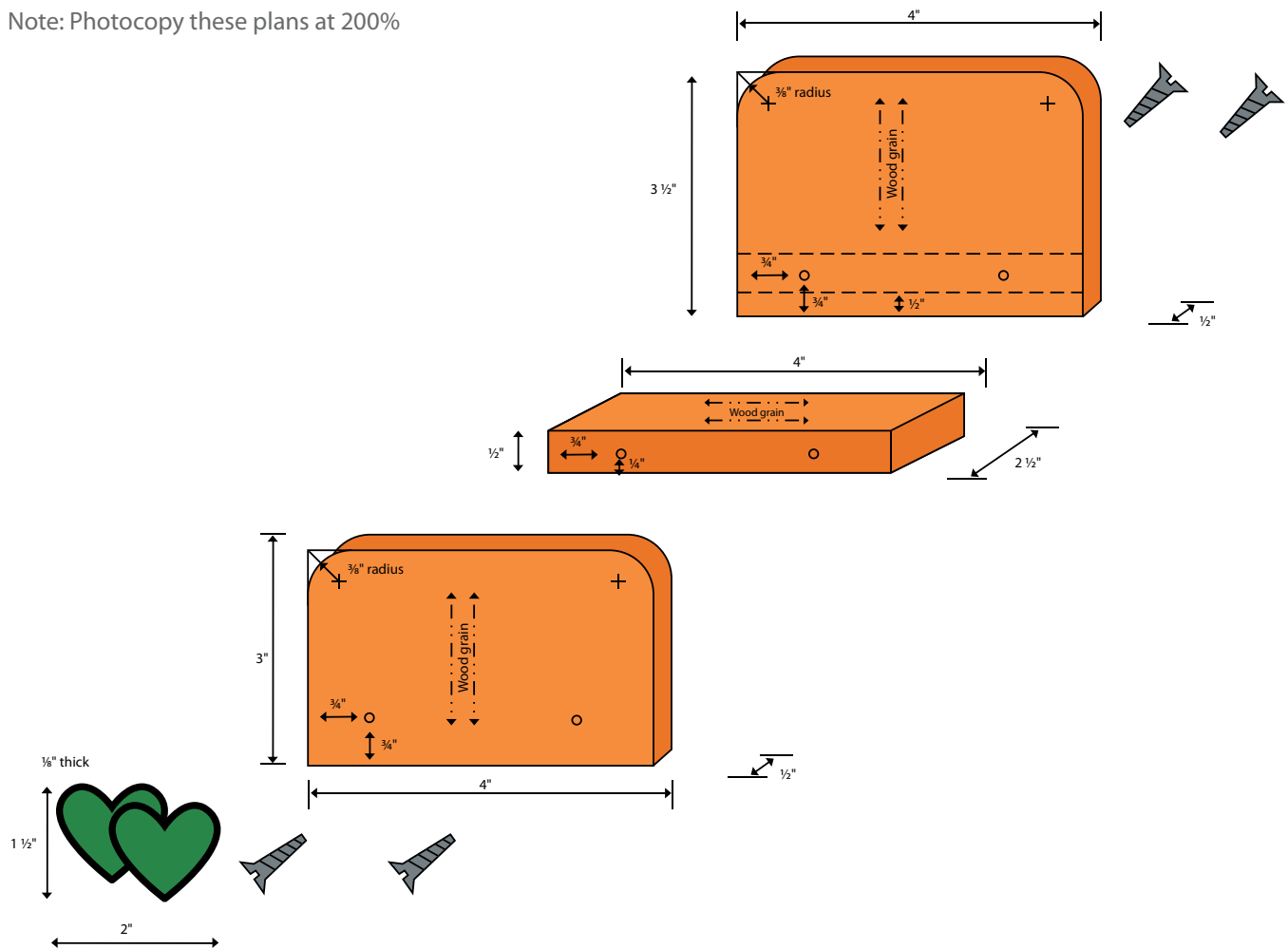
the heart onto the wood. Use a coping or band saw to cut out the design. The design of the thin piece can be altered to whatever the student wants (cross, car, animal, etc.) with Dad's approval.

- Where the hearts overlap in the design, use a wood chisel or utility knife to carve the outline of one heart over the other.

7. File and sand

- If the edges of the front, back, and spacer pieces are greatly uneven, file flat across the edges with a wood file. Be careful; end grain can chip easily, especially if you press down on the corners of the wood with the file.
- The student should hand sand only, wrapping sandpaper around a block of scrap wood. Sand the edges and faces of all pieces *except* the overlapping hearts piece. Sand only the front surface of this piece, and sand the edges of this piece only if they are very rough to avoid rounding the edges.

Note: Photocopy these plans at 200%



c. Sand in the direction of the wood grain, first with medium and then with fine grit sandpaper.

heads will be flush with or slightly below the surface of the wood.

8. Stain (optional)

Let the student open the stain can, stir, and clean up. Have him stain the front, back, and spacer pieces one shade and the thin hearts piece another. Follow the manufacturer's directions on the stain containers.

9. Assemble

a. After the stain is dry, screw the front and back pieces to the spacer piece. The faces having the countersunk holes are the exterior faces. The heads of the screws should be tightened to a snug fit. If done properly, the screw

b. Apply a thin coat of wood glue to the back (unsanded) side of the thin hearts piece, and position it on the center of the front piece. Use a spring clamp to hold it in place while the glue dries overnight.

10. Finish (optional)

Following the manufacturer's directions, apply a thin coat of polyurethane semigloss finish to the assembled project. Allow it to dry, sand lightly with fine sandpaper, and apply a second coat. Avoid thick coats, which can create runs and drips.

Ray Anderson taught woodshop for thirty-three years. David Anderson, Ray's son, is a former science author at BJU Press. Both enjoy recreational woodworking.



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What's New!

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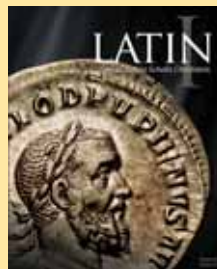
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