

An Art and Writing Book Project

for Classrooms and Families

Based on the book **On the Day You Were Born**

Activity designed by Author & Illustrator

Debra Frasier

www.debrafrasier.com

“On the Day I Was Born”



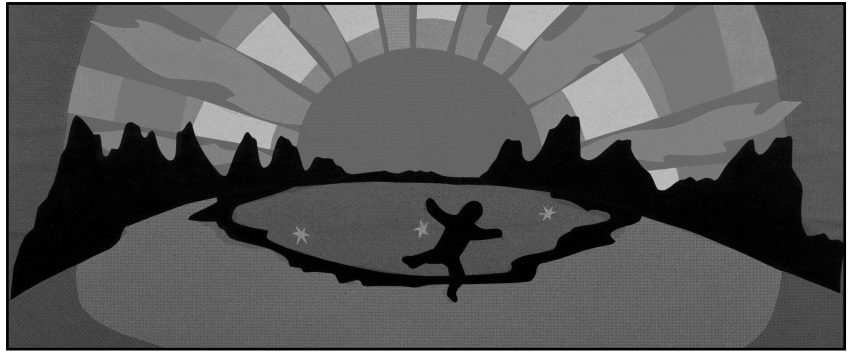
Tested with hundreds of elementary students.

This project can be made as individual pages or posters, or as a full book. It has been broken into five sessions, four writing and illustrating lessons and one book construction session. You may divide the activities into as many sessions as needed. Visit debrafrasier.com for a short video introduction to this project, free pdf of this guide, and a sample of the booklet pages. Post your class project photos on the **On the Day You Were Born** Facebook page!

"On the Day I Was Born"
An Art and Writing Book Project

Designed for classrooms and families
by author and illustrator, Debra Frasier,
and based on her book,
On the Day You Were Born

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1991/2012



Preparation:

Read *On the Day You Were Born*, written and illustrated by Debra Frasier. Show the paper cut illustration style. Gather as many cut paper illustration book samples you can find. Find a cut paper bibliography at www.debrafrasier.com along with a slide show of sample student booklets.

Supplies for the full book:

Each student will need three sheets of white drawing paper cut 6" x 18"
(Simply cut a standard 12" x 18" sheet in half, lengthwise) This will create twelve folded page surfaces.

One sheet of colored construction paper, cut 6" x 18", for endpapers.

One sheet of cardstock cut 6" x 18", for cover

A variety of construction papers cut to different sizes for making the paper cut illustrations. For classrooms these papers can be organized on a library cart for easy transport. Pre-cutting the colors into small, medium, and large offerings greatly reduces waste, as does setting up a scrap box for EACH color. (Use cardboard beverage trays from the grocery store.)

Also, cut a supply of rectangles that will serve as the background pages, 5 ½ " x 8 ½ " in a variety of colors. (Blues, browns, and greens are the most popular choices. Black for the opening deep space page is often requested.) This slightly smaller (than the paper page size) trim will help the backgrounds easily fit the page space. Display these pre-cut backgrounds separately as they are reserved *for backgrounds only* and are not to be used for paper cut illustrations.

Optional: A "Name Page" and World map copied for each participant. (See back of this booklet, directions in Session Five)

Each student will need: Scissors, glue stick, pencil, fine tip marker for writing final draft text in booklets, student photo for the Author Biography, notebook for rough drafts (and if preferred, lined white paper for writing, cutting to size, and gluing text blocks. Some students must have lines to feel comfortable, others can write directly on the book's pages). Include six paper clips for laying out the book before gluing, one quart-sized resealable plastic bag for storage of project between sessions, labeled with student name.

Final assembly: one long-reach stapler OR embroidery needle and 18" length of yarn for each booklet.

Session One

Before beginning students should be familiar with *On the Day You Were Born*, by Debra Frasier



The Earth from Space

Let's start with a view of the Earth from the very widest possible view on the day you were born. In your imagination, place your viewpoint above the Earth, deep in space, in the darkness, looking back at our shining planet. What did it look like on the day you were born? What was it doing? What was it thinking? What was happening in the water? On the land? What did the Earth look like from space on the day you were born?

Take time to answer each question. Keep answers simple but suggest using words that describe color and action. Add any imagined sounds.

Want to create a dramatic beginning to the project? Hang an inflatable Earth "ball" from the ceiling or set a globe on a high stool. Set it spinning. Dim lights. Announce: "The Earth is silently spinning at 1045 mph when measured at the equator." Aim a flashlight at the Earth. Pose the questions and write in the semi-darkness. The finished writing should be short and could begin with...*On the day I was born...*

Session Two

What time of day were you born?



Morning? Afternoon? Night? (Interview parents, check birth certificate, and if no one knows, *pick the time you arrived* in your family's hands...)

Post three large sheets of paper around the room or lay on separate areas. Label one paper: *Morning*. Another: *Afternoon*. The last: *Night*. Have participants brainstorm what is happening in the world at each time of day. Pay particular attention to the senses if ideas flag—what do you hear? see? smell? Include details from various viewpoints: close to the Earth, about bush high, about tree top high, in the wild sky. Use these lists to help write a description of the *time of day* you were born.

Participants might begin...

It was ... (afternoon), OR... In the (night)...

After discussing the lists, make an illustration using cut paper shapes that shows what it looked like on the hour of the day you were born. Sometimes it is easier to make the illustration first and then write about the picture. Return to the brainstorming lists to inspire illustration ideas. OR: Make a window frame, add curtains. Show the view outside and paste the paper cut out behind the window frame.

Session Three

In what season did you arrive?

Winter? Spring? Summer? Fall? What causes the seasonal changes in the weather? Discuss how the seasons are caused by the Earth's annual circle around the sun, and how position and tilt affect temperature.

This page will be a double-paged spread where the image and text run all the way across two pages.

First, make a list of ACTIONS that happen in your season of birth. What is particular to your season? Think inside and outside. (For example: Apples drop in the fall, leaves spin, blankets fluffed, rakes pulled, hats found, nuts gathered...)

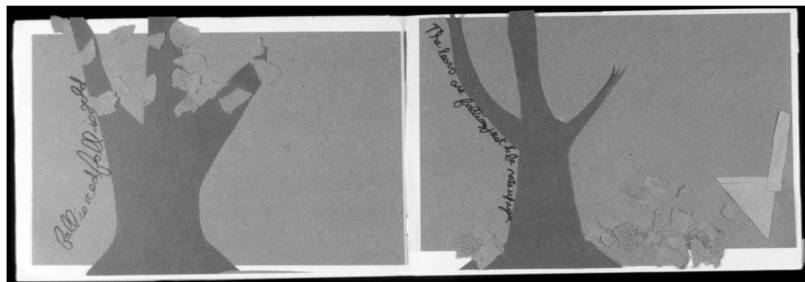
This poem will serve as a model for our writing effort:

Summer is golden,
Summer is green,
The freshly cut grass.
Down, down, down we go,
from the peak of the hill,
ROLLING.

By Gillian Sellers, Age 9, England, *from MIRACLES, Poems of the English Speaking World*, by Richard Lewis

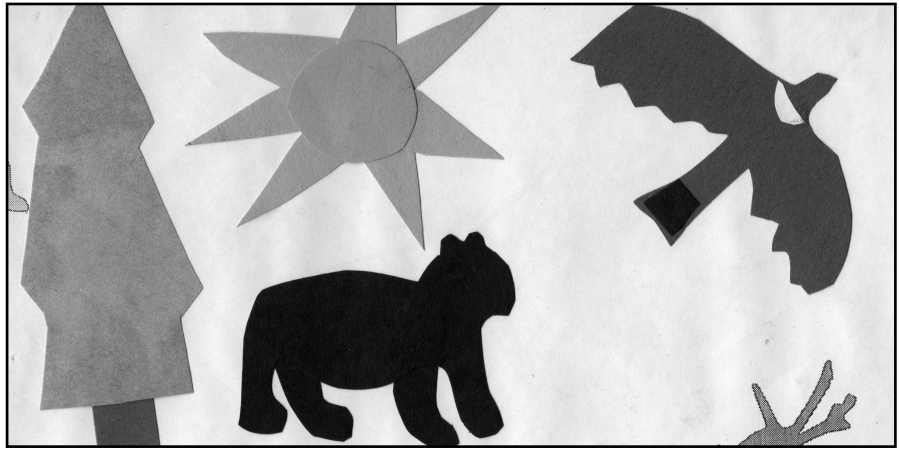
Use the model poem as the structure for the following prompts: Write something about the color of your season. Next, describe something you could see in your season. Next, write about an ACTION that happens in your season. Check your list! Keep it short. Simple is fine. Go back and read what you have written. See if there is something to add. You might want to add this line somewhere: (start? middle? end?)

I was born in _____ (your season).



Next, select two background pieces (5 ½ " x 8 ½"). Glue both to one side of a 6" by 18" folded book page. On these backgrounds cut and lay out paper shapes that show the action you have described. CUT these paper shapes, no pencil drawing first! This is important as you can cut much more than you can draw. (Hint: lay out cut pieces first, no gluing until all parts are cut. This way parts can be adjusted to show more motion until the arrangement is just right. Finally, glue when satisfied.) Next, write the words to your modeled poem throughout the page. (Write lightly with pencil first, then trace with black marker.) If you are making the entire book project this will be the centerfold of the book.

Session Four



The animals welcome you!

Let's include animals in your welcome. Divide the class in half, one LAND team and one SEA team. Gather each group around a large sheet of paper. Select a recorder who can write quickly. In a limited time (five minutes?) one half the class dictates animals of the sea to the recorder who scribbles large and quickly. The other half brainstorms animals of the land. Let this get a little wild. Work on a chalkboard if you prefer. Use a timer or buzzer so the ending is abrupt.

Read over all of the animals slowly.

Each person selects two animals they feel drawn to from *each* list. Write all four on a sheet of notebook paper. Keep selections private. Next select TWO that could best welcome you to a particular place on Earth, like this:

"Welcome to the deep ocean," said the blue whale.
"Welcome to the washing waves," said the ghost crab.
"Welcome to the rocky reefs," said the red lobster.

Choose a place that your animal would actually know something about, the more specific, the better.

"Welcome to the sharp cliffs," said the red tailed hawk.
"Welcome to the muddy Earth," said the glowworm.
"Welcome to the green forests," said the Siberian tiger.

Try to use adjectives to describe the place of the animals as in "sharp," "muddy," and "green," above.

Rewrite the animal welcomes, one on each book page. Using colored construction paper, cut an active animal to go with each welcome. At the very close of the book add the sentence found in the closing of *On the Day You Were Born*:

"We are so glad you've come!"

Session Five

Assembling Your Book



You will need a total of three 6" x 18" pages. (You may already have glued the double page spread describing the season you were born. Use this as the top piece in the stack as it will be in the center of the book.) Each white page will need a nice crisp fold in the middle. Open and stack all three sheets. You will now have twelve surfaces to work on with the double page "season" page on top.

When laying out the book pages it is often wise to resist gluing parts until the pages are completed. Paper clip the art and text to the proper page, gluing only after the book's order has been checked. The birth information sheet can be used as an extra page to fill in for a student who has missed a class or is not writing along with each illustration. Should you have a student who writes more than can fit on a page try layering the text, attaching only at the top so the upper layer can be raised to read the lower, glued text. Or, you can add extra pages. Remember that every additional large white sheet, when folded, adds *four* new pages in the finished book.

Title Page: the first page

What will you call your book? *On the Day I Was Born* is one possibility, followed by your birthdate, your name, and the name of your press. Your press is your private publishing label and should be something you know or like. Some small press name examples include: North Point Press, Three Rivers Press, Milkweed Editions (another name for Press), Brown Bear Press, Greywolf Press, Roaring Brook Press, Blue Blanket Press (the press of a young student who love a blue blanket as a child). Think of things, animals, or places on the land.

Dedication Page: the second page

Most books include a dedication note. This is most often a page where the book is given, in spirit, to someone who is particularly important to this specific book. It can be dedicated to one, two, or any number of people, or an animal, or a place. Take this very seriously. Who you dedicate a book to is a great honor. Maybe you will want to add a small picture to this page so the readers have some idea who or what you mean. This is not necessary. Some books have an image on this page and some do not.

PAPER CLIP YOUR PICTURES TO THE NEXT PAGES:

Depending on how many of the page suggestions you have finished, your book will now include a page for *The Earth from Space*, *Time of Day You Were Born*, *Season You Arrived* (the double page spread in the middle), and *The Animal Welcomes*. On the following pages add these optional items: arrival information half sheet, world map and author biography with photo. (See next page.)

Session Five —continued

Assembling your book:



Author's Biography

It is customary to add an author/illustrator biography, with photograph, at the back of the book. Study examples in published books. Often hobbies, interests, travels, family names, pets, and place of residence are mentioned.

Endpapers

End papers are an optional addition to the booklet. Choose a plain piece of colored construction paper, 6" x 18", fold in half, and wrap around the folded collected white pages. Look at an array of endpapers from published picture books for examples. Think of the endpapers as the entrance-way to the book itself. Where do you want the reader to travel in preparation for your book's opening lines? Maybe it is simply a single color. *On the Day You Were Born* uses dark blue with stars to set the stage for the story unfolding in deep space.

Cover

Select a cardstock sheet, fold in half, smoothing crease firmly. Wrap around the outside of the finished book interior. What image would best describe and entice readers to pick up your book? Maybe there is a picture from the inside that can be enlarged or repeated for the cover? Maybe an entirely new picture can be made from cut paper? Use paper cut outs for the picture and a black marker for the title and author's name. Use full name, both first and last.

Assembly

When each page is glued in place, staple or stitch your book together. Stapling will require a long-reach stapler. (Lay book open, face down, stapler on outside, to keep smooth section of staple on the fold of the outer spine.)

Stitching requires an embroidery needle and an 18-inch length of yarn or string. Make three evenly spaced holes with the needle. Enter middle hole from the outside, travel to the top hole (from the inside center of book), come back into the bottom hole, travel to the middle hole (again from the inside center) and come up on the outside spine. Tie ends around outside yarn. Trim. Add tassel if desired. See www.debrafrasier.com for a demonstration.

Reconvene the classroom circle, dim the lights, have each person read their "Animal Welcome" page or throw a class Birthday Celebration and invite parents. Read Debra Frasier's companion book, *A Birthday Cake Is No Ordinary Cake* to see how this sequel answers the question: *What happens next?*

Congratulations!

Name _____

Born _____
(date)

Time of Birth _____ Circle one: DAY NIGHT

Place _____
(city and state)

Country _____

Continent _____

Planet _____

Fill out the above blanks. Add a cut paper illustration? Cut around line and add as a page in your book.



Color the map and clearly mark you place of birth. Cut and add to your book.