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She handed  
COMPANY over  
the keys.  
to the  
circus.

# ALTERED VINTAGE GOLDEN BOOK

by Colleen Attara

I consider myself a treasure hunter and I have built a career on rethinking the pieces that are left behind. There is something about the pages of a book that inspire and prompt me in ways an empty page does not. The delicate pages of a vintage Golden Book, read so many times by a parent to a child, provided the perfect canvas to reflect and process my relationship with my son. He is 22 years old and finding his own way, as I trust and give him the time and space to do that. The childhood pictures and words became prompts to push me creatively along. These pages provided space to remember him and to question if there was anything he needed me to say that I left out along the way. It felt really good to share this book with him after it was done.

The aged pages of this book presented a beautiful challenge, as they were fragile and tender, much like relationships themselves. I reinforced each tear with masking tape and watercolor. This provided a beautiful way to build up these old pages in layers with edges and color. Each page was made stronger to hold the truths I had to share along with questions and possibilities. Repairing these pages as I went was a big part of the process.

By visually creating surfaces and layers, I am encouraged to spill my words and heart on these pages. One of my best-selling cards and prints came from the words in this book. When we allow ourselves to play, our creativity ripples through all areas of our life. ✦



## SUPPLIES

- Awl
- Basic sewing supplies
- Blender marker: colorless (Chartpak)
- Crackle paste: (Golden)
- Decorative tape\*
- Decoupage medium: (Plaid - Mod Podge)
- Ephemera: maps; letters; postcards; postage stamps
- Fabric scraps
- Feathers
- Gesso: white\*
- Images: color or black-&-white, laser printed
- Masking tape (optional)
- Metal embellishments
- Old credit card
- Old film negatives
- Packing tape: clear
- Pigment sticks: (Faber-Castell - Gelatos)\*
- Pin
- Pencils
- Permanent marker: fine-tipped (Sharpie)
- Plastic sleeves
- Sandpaper
- Sewing machine
- Shallow pan w/ warm water
- Sponge (optional)
- Stronghold adhesive: super glue (Gorilla)
- Twine\*
- Vellum: 30-lb.
- Vintage book: (Little Golden Books)
- Watercolors\*



## TECHNIQUE

Start working on the front and back cover. Open the book so you can see both sides. If the cover is shiny at all, lightly sand over it with sandpaper. Look at the covers and decide what visuals/words you want to keep. Scrape gesso over the cover using an old credit card. This is a great way to move paint, as it applies it in thin layers and dries quickly. Highlight certain images on the cover that you wish to keep. Add bits of old letters and notes to the cover with decoupage medium. Stick a vintage pin into the side of the top of the book and attach threads for a cascading effect. Add words that are meaningful to you, if desired. If you don't like how something turns out, you can always layer paper over it. Getting our thoughts out onto paper adds more than a layer — the words add energy and pull our thoughts onto other pages.



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Apply watercolors and pigment sticks to the front and back cover. Scribble with the pigment sticks, add drops of water, and use your finger to move the color around, adding depth and interest. Use crackle paste for a distressed look. To create a closure for the book, use vintage pieces of metal and fabric or string. Adhere an old metal spoon to the cover with stronghold adhesive, and use an awl to make holes for attaching twine.

Cover the inside pages of the book with gesso, watercolor paint, decorative tapes, threads, and vellum; sew some of them with a sewing machine. When looking at each page, decide which images or words to keep on the pages, and then apply gesso to any spots you don't mind covered. If necessary, use masking tape to reinforce any weak spots on the pages. ⇨





Apply color with pigment sticks and water droplets, using your finger to move the color around, and then apply another layer of gesso. Write random thoughts or words with a pencil.

For an interesting technique, try incorporating tape or photo transfers, which add translucent layers to the pages. Place clear packing tape over magazine photos or words you wish to capture. Cut around the image and soak it in warm water for 5–10 minutes. Take out the tape, and gently rub the paper off of the back, using a sponge if necessary.

Apply the transfer to the pages, using a thin layer of gel medium if necessary. To do a photo transfer, make copies of an image on a laser printer (must be a laser printer to work). Place the image facedown on the surface and go over it thoroughly with a colorless blender marker. Then burnish the image onto the paper with an old credit card.

Add stitches as desired. When adding stitches onto the pages, gently pull the book away from the sewing machine, creating the long threads. Use the thread to tie floating feathers to the pages, and pull the thread and use small pieces of decorative tape to create direction on the pages. You can also add hand stitching to create the same effects.

## TIPS

- I love to use decorative tape on my pages to add color and patterns, but I only use pieces that are torn, as parts of patterns put together are so much more interesting than the whole.
- I often create tape transfers from patterns in a magazine. I then gently tear the transfer into strips and add them to the pages to add interest and color. You can also create your own pattern on a tape transfer by cutting various pieces of color, words, or patterns from magazines and putting them on the tape before you soak it.
- Try laying leftover threads over your pages to add texture.

Colleen Attara teaches intimate altered book workshops on her process and approach in her cottage studio in Yardley, Pennsylvania, located in beautiful Bucks County. Her card line is sold in hundreds of stores across the country. Find out more about Colleen on her website at [colleenattara.com](http://colleenattara.com) or say hello at [colleen@colleenattara.com](mailto:colleen@colleenattara.com).