



Carrying My Story

UConn 4-H STEM Lab

Let's talk about sustainability. **Sustainability** is when we use things that are not harmful to the environment and can be used more than once. The bag you will create through this activity can be used repeatedly to carry many different things. This durable bag is made from canvas which can be washed and is sturdy enough for use many times.

What are some ways to plan to enjoy your story bag once you've finished decorating it?

Supplies and Tools

Canvas tote bag

Accrylic paint set and paint brushes

Piece of cardboard and black marker

Piece of paper, pencil and a paper towel



Activity Steps

Notes

Visuals

1. To start, think about what design you would like on your bag. Think about things you can do to help protect the planet? Create a sketch of the artwork you would like on your bag on the paper in your kit with a pencil.



2. Lay your bag out on a flat surface and place the piece of cardboard inside the bag. This will prevent your drawing from going through to the other side of the bag. Next, take the drawing you made on the paper and transfer it to the front of your bag.



3. Take your black marker and trace the design you just created on your bag. Once this is finished you can begin painting your design. Be sure you are painting over the cardboard inside your bag.



4. If your paint is going on too thick you can use a few drops of water to thin it out enough to paint on the front of the bag. When finished, be sure to close up your paints.



5. Once you are done painting, leave your bag on a flat surface until the paint has fully dried. Once the paint is dry, you can remove the cardboard from the center of the bag and use your new tote.



Bonus Activity

Home Sustainability Audit: Take a walk through your house and look for ways that you can conserve energy and live more sustainably. Here are some examples:

- **Reuse** - Find new use for older items around the house. What are some things around your house that can be used more than one time? Does your family have reusable shopping bags? Make a list.
- **Recycle** - Does your town have a recycling program? If so, what items can you place in your recycle bins? Do you save old soda bottles so you can return them to the store later for the deposit? Are there items that you don't use anymore that you could take to Good Will or have a yard sale? Check with your town for a list of items that can be recycled. I bet there are more than you think.
- **Reduce** - What are some things that you can use less of to protect the environment? Maybe turn off the water while you brush your teeth, turn off lights when you leave a room, or adjust the thermostat so that you are not using so much energy to heat or cool your house. Take a few minutes to make a list of simple steps that your family can take to cut down on the things that stress the environment.
- **Sustainable Lifestyle** - Create a simple vegetable garden. You don't need much space. You can plant in a raised bed, 5 gallon bucket or window box. When you do need to buy, try to buy produce from local vendors at farmer's markets or local stores. Consider composting kitchen scraps. Donate clothes that don't fit anymore to other families in need in your area.

By practicing some of these simple steps, YOU can make a big difference in helping to make the world around you more sustainable now and in the future.

Activity adapted from "Ecology Crafts for Kids" by Bobbe Needham, Sterling Publishing Inc, 1999



We want to know what you thought of this activity. Please take a few minutes to complete the short survey. You can access it by the QR code on the left or going to [s.uconn.edu/4hstem2026](https://uconn.edu/4hstem2026).

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