STORY STONES GUIDE

HOW TO MAKE AND WAYS TO USE THEM

IN THIS GUIDE, YOU WILL LEARN:

- What are Story Stones
- Interview with Laura Kane, Alleluia Rocks - Story Stones Artist
- Ways to Use Story Stones with your Kids
- Why You Should Consider Using Story Stones
- How To Make Story Stones
WHAT ARE STORY STONES?

Story stones is an interactive way of creative play for children. These simple painted stones promote active learning with the added bonus changing the way we teach and play with our kids. Images, letters, and/or numbers are painted on small stones for storytelling and learning activities.

LAURA KANE, STORY STONE ARTIST
ALLELUIA ROCKS

I had the opportunity to talk with Laura Kane founder of Alleluia Rocks about how her rock painting journey led her to making story stones for family and friends to opening a very successful Etsy store selling her popular story stones. She is a talented artist that is changing the way we teach and play with our kids.
LAURA:
"I am a medical librarian by profession, but I have always been interested in crafting and artwork. I went to a Fine Arts Magnet school in Augusta, Georgia during high school. I veered away from an arts background for the sake of practicality, but throughout my professional career I continued to pursue various forms of art. This included clay sculpting, scrapbooking, and paper crafting. A few years ago a coworker showed me a few rocks that she had painted. At around the same time, I heard about a phenomenon called the Kindness Rocks movement (I wrote a blog post about it here: https://www.alleluiarocks.com/blog-1/2018/7/28/a-national-phenomenon-the-kindness-rocks-movement). I tried my hand at painting a few rocks, and I was immediately hooked! There was something so satisfying about painting on this medium, but it was hard to explain. I could paint the same image on paper, but the process of painting on the rock was more rewarding. I began to build a collection of hand-painted rocks."
FOR SOME PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH STORY STONES, CAN YOU EXPLAIN ITS PURPOSE AND HOW IT'S USED WITH CHILDREN?

LAURA:

"I have a son with autism. He is completely nonverbal, and manifests many of the typical symptoms of the condition, including difficulty with Pretend Play. This is hard to grasp since most of us “played pretend” throughout our childhoods. I wanted to create something for my rock shop that would help therapists work with children who have autism. I decided that Story Stones, which have been around for centuries, would be perfect. These are sets of rocks or pebbles that allow someone to tell a story in his or her own words. My Story Stones have been a great success. They are used by parents, therapists, and educators for a variety of purposes, including: early literacy, pretend play, manual dexterity (fine motor skills), social skills, and for just plain fun! I have many different sets, including nursery rhymes, animals, numbers, seasons of the year, and holiday sets such as the Nativity, Thanksgiving, and Easter Story Stones."
**WHAT'S YOUR WORKSPACE SETUP LIKE?**

**LAURA:**

"My "workshop" is actually one end of my master bedroom! I am lucky in that the room is huge so I have enough space to make it work. I have a work table, a supply cabinet, several small tables that I use for drying rocks, and large bins that hold my "raw" stones. Happily, I have a television in the room so I can listen to my favorite programs while I paint! The laundry room is right near the master bedroom, and I use the utility sink in there to clean my rocks. I use a walk-in attic space off the master bedroom to spray the acrylic sealant at the end of my process. This is not ideal, but at least the space is ventilated and I can close the door to keep the smell at bay. If I ever win the lottery, I will build a true workshop for Alleluia Rocks! In the meantime, this setup works."

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**WALK ME THROUGH YOUR ROCK PAINTING PROCESS?**

**LAURA:**

"Now that my shop is so busy (I get several orders a day, and many more during holidays), my work process is dictated by the orders I am fulfilling on any given day. I begin with prepping my stones, which includes cleaning them and painting them with the base color of paint. Sometimes the base coat requires several layers, and I find it hard to be patient and wait for the paint to dry! I then do a pencil sketch of the design, and begin painting. Once the paint is dry I usually like to outline my designs in black acrylic to make them “pop.” This is my signature style. Once the design is finished and dry, I spray them with a water-resistant acrylic sealant to protect them and to give them a shiny glaze."
WHAT’S YOUR BEST TIME-SAVING SHORT-CUT OR ROCK PAINTING HACK?

LAURA:

"I mentioned that I am often impatient for paint to dry. Sometimes I use a hair dryer to speed up the process. Also, if there is a design I use a lot, I will create a template using tracing paper and then transfer the image to a rock using transfer paper. This saves a lot of time. I also keep a 3-ring binder with color printouts of my designs so that I can refer to them as orders arrive (I paint most things “to order” because I can’t keep much inventory on hand.)"
WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE TOOLS AND SUPPLIES TO USE WHEN CREATING THESE BEAUTIFUL INSPIRATIONAL ROCKS?

LAURA:
"Sadly, I don’t live in an area that has beautiful, smooth rocks that are idea for painting. I therefore have to buy them. I get them from landscaping suppliers and online suppliers. I have often had to “think outside of the box” to get the perfect stone for a project! I use acrylic paints with paint brushes, and I use acrylic pens as well. My favorite brand of acrylic paint pen is Posca, which I order from Amazon (they come from Japan, I think). Other paint pens smear when you apply sealant, and they also have terrible chemical smells. The Posca pens don’t smell, and they don’t smear as much as other pens. I use Triple Thick spray as the sealant. I tried a variety of brush-on sealants but they take too long to dry (also the process of brushing on a sealant can cause smears). I prefer the sprays."

BESIDES ACRYLIC, ARE THERE OTHER MEDIUMS THAT YOU LIKE TO WORK WITH?

LAURA:
"I have used watercolors in the past (on watercolor paper), but I find that medium very unforgiving. You can’t easily fix a mistake with watercolors. With acrylics, you can paint over a mistake and start again. I have often re-painted a rock because I tend to be a perfectionist. If it’s not perfect, I re-apply the background color and start again. I also like that acrylics are water-soluble and easy to clean up."
**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO ADD THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO READERS AND IF THERE ARE NEW THINGS HAPPENING WITH ALLELUIA ROCKS?**

**LAURA:**
"I am happy to report that just last week I opened my standalone online shop for orders. This was a big step. I still have my Etsy shop, but I’m hoping my website will be a success as well. I have gotten one order so far, and that’s a start!"

**WHERE CAN PEOPLE FIND YOUR ROCK ART?**

**LAURA:**
My website is called Alleluia Rocks and can be found here: https://www.alleluiarocks.com/

My Etsy shop link is: https://www.etsy.com/shop/AlleluiaRocks

I add several new listings each week, so there is always something new. Also, I’m always happy to take custom orders and love to hear from customers!"
7 WAYS TO USE STORY STONES

1. Make story stones of your child’s favorite book and have an interactive read-a-long with your child.

2. Enjoy an outside scavenger hunt, making up a story along the way.

3. Fun matching, sorting, pattern play, spelling, and math skills activity.

4. Pretend play with food story stones.

5. Use in group settings to create fun stories, skits, or songs.

6. Encourage good behavior and use story stones to communicate feelings.

7. Create storytelling themes: sea life, jungle animals, farm, transportation, outer space, holidays stones so much more!

Check out these videos for how to use story stones:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmOXCJGeiHA
https://youtu.be/Dvh_ihM9r1w
WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER USING STORY STONES

- Promotes Critical Thinking
- Open-ended Play
- Great Sensory Tool
- Encourages Creative Thinking and Pretend Play
- Hands on Learning
- Supports Physical and Social Emotional Development
- Teaches Math, Science, and Language Skills
- Encourages Literacy with Interactive Learning
- Fun Arts & Craft Project

HOW TO MAKE STORY STONES

SUPPLY LIST

- Small flat rocks
- Acrylic paint
- Paint brush
- Water in Jar
- Paint Pens * optional
- Sealer

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Pick a theme for your story stones.
2. Paint or use paint pens to draw your theme onto the rocks. Let dry completely.
3. Seal rocks with a spray sealer to protect them from scratches and nicks.
4. Let the fun begin!

ALTERNATIVE TO PAINTING

Another method is decoupageing. Find and cut out small images on paper and brush on mod podge to decoupage the paper to the rocks.
That's All Folks!
Hopefully you enjoyed reading this guide and is excited to try out some of the ways to use story stones. I enjoy putting it together look forward to adding more story stone ideas over time.

A Special Thanks...
To Laura for sharing your rock painting journey with us. Be sure to check out her website and Etsy store.

Here's What To Do Next
Send me a message to rockpaintingguide@gmail.com to let me know what you think of this guide.
Follow me on Instagram @rockpaintingguide and join our Facebook Group where I share helpful rock painting tips & more!