The Paper Bag Neighborhood

This project illustrates two of the basic rules of boredom busting: it has a simple design that requires almost no instruction, and each child can put his own creative twist on the idea. The buildings can be purely imaginative — a fantasy house, say — or based on your actual town or neighborhood (making it a fun project for a classroom, troop, or church group).

MATERIALS
- Large paper grocery bags (2 per building)
- Markers and crayons
- Newspaper
- Glue stick and/or double-sided tape
- Colored construction paper and poster board
- Old magazines and catalogs for cutting out images
- Toilet paper tubes

WHAT TO DO
1. Give each child two flattened grocery bags. (If your bags have logos printed on the sides, you can create a plain surface by taping a brown paper sheet over the housefront or by carefully cutting apart the bag, turning it inside out, and taping it back together.)
2. Have the kids decorate one of their bags with markers and crayons, drawing windows and doors, coloring in bricks or clapboards, and adding distinctive touches like cutout flower boxes and creeping ivy.

3. When the basic drawing and coloring are complete, stuff the second grocery bag with crumpled newspaper. Now open the decorated bag and slide it on top to create a block with four sides and a closed top and bottom.

4. Help the crafters cut out, fold, and glue or tape in place shutters, doors, and stairs from colored paper. Add pictures of people, pets, and other images cut from magazines.

5. Top off the house by cutting out a poster-board roof and gluing or taping it in place. For a crowning touch, add a chimney fashioned out of construction paper or a toilet paper tube.