Mini-Books, Activities, and Games

Using the Mini-Books
Mini-books are a powerful tool for second-language literacy development. They are patterned so that students know what to expect, provide strong visual cues that correspond directly to the text, and allow for creativity and a sense of satisfaction.

How to make the mini-books:
1. Make a double-sided copy of the mini-book pages for each student.
2. Have students cut along the dotted lines and put the pages in order, placing page 3 behind the title page.
3. Fold the pages in half along the solid lines.
4. Make sure the book pages are in order, then staple the book along the spine.
5. Invite students to complete their mini-books with crayons, pens, or pencils.

Note: To make the mini-books for “How Many?” (pages 33–34) and “Food Friends” (pages 47–48), make a single-sided copy of the pages for each student. Have students cut apart the panels and place the pages in order.

How to use the mini-books:
• Work one-on-one. Sit with the student and read together, pointing to each word as you say it. Point to the pictures that correspond to the text, too. After repeated readings, the student may be able to read the books independently.

• As part of a listening center. Second-language learners can tape themselves reading the book (or you might tape yourself or another student). Afterwards, students can listen to the tape as often as they like. This helps students who have not yet begun speaking in English, as well as auditory learners. The combined auditory and visual input (the tape and the book) gives students two entry points into English.

• Put students in the role of leader. Once students have mastered the text in a book, they might read to younger students who share the same first language. They might even take the book home and teach new words to their families, especially younger siblings.

• Teach English concepts of print. Some languages don’t share the same left-to-right, top-to-bottom directionality of English writing. Use the mini-books to help students understand and create English books, teaching words such as front cover and back cover, left and right, top and bottom, and beginning and end.

• Build word-recognition and grammar skills. Write all the text on index cards, one word or sentence per card. Children can reorder the cards as they compare them to their mini-books. This builds sight-word recognition, awareness of sentence structure, and visual memory.

• Teach phonics in context. Use the text in the books to teach sound–symbol correspondence and build awareness of the sounds of English: “Red starts with R” [point to the r].
All About Me

Being able to share basic autobiographical information, refer to physical characteristics, and express personal likes and dislikes are all important for second-language learners.

MAKE A MINI-BOOK
All About Me. Invite students to bring in photos of themselves and help them make the “All About Me” mini-book (pages 39–40). Students can interview a friend and make another book based on them. Other mini-book ideas include “My Life Story,” which would include stories that reflect important events in the students’ life, or “My Home Country,” in which students can use maps and photos.

ART
Self-Portraits. Invite students to complete the “Parts of the Body” sheet (page 38). Next, have students take turns tracing each other on large pieces of butcher paper. Students can then cut out the outlines of their bodies and draw life-size self-portraits, labeling each body part. Introduce more advanced vocabulary, such as eyelash, eyebrow, chin, and forehead.

CLASSROOM FUN
Simon Says. Playing games that require non-verbal responses allows students to demonstrate comprehension without having to speak. You might integrate numbers into the game as well (e.g., “Simon says, ‘Show me four fingers.’”).

LISTENING CENTER
Have students read their “All About Me” mini-books into a tape recorder and listen to it again and again. If they are not speaking yet, read it for them so that they may listen and internalize the language patterns.

WORD PLAY
Share idioms related to body parts with more advanced students. They might write them on the corresponding body part of their life-size self-portraits.

• Butterflies in my stomach
• Big head
• I’m all ears
• Keep a straight face
• Green thumb
• Two left feet
• Knock-kneed
• Heart of gold
• On your toes
• Head and shoulders above the rest
• Cost an arm and a leg
• Apple of my eye
• See eye to eye

HOME CONNECTION
Encourage students to share their mini-books with their families. Together, they might make an “All About My Family” book.

BOOK LINKS
Two Eyes, a Nose and a Mouth by Roberta Grobel Intrater (Scholastic, 2000). Photos of men, women, and children from all over the world, along with simple rhyming text, teach the parts of a face.

The Human Body: A First Discovery Book by Sylviane Perols, Gallimard Jeunesse (Scholastic, 1996). This interactive book with a magic paper flashlight is appropriate for older readers who are ready to explore the human body in detail.
Draw yourself.
Copy the words.

Parts of the Body

Head
Hair
Eye
Nose
Mouth
Teeth
Ear
Neck
Hand
Arm
Leg
Foot
ALL ABOUT ME

(Glue your photo here.)

I am from _________.

Nice to meet you!

(Draw yourself again.)

This is my family.

(Draw your family here.)
I'm in grade _______.

I am _____ years old.

I live at ____________________________  
(street)  
(city, state)

Hello! My name is ___________.

I drew myself here.

I drew your house, apartment, or street.

I drew your class or classroom.

Add candles to your cake.