

Inspiring Our Community to Explore, Discover, & Connect



# READER

Monthly Newsletter of Ventura County Library

April 2026



*Season*



*Adventures*

# *A Message From* **NANCY SCHRAM**

Ventura County Library Director

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April has arrived and with it comes a new season of new adventures at Ventura County Library!

We're proud to celebrate the opening of the Next Chapter Library at the Juvenile Facilities, made possible through our wonderful partnership with the Ventura County Probation Agency. This library reflects our commitment to ensuring books and learning reach every corner of our community.

April is also a month rich with celebration. As we honor Earth Day, our branches are filled with wonderful reads and activities for all ages to connect with and appreciate our planet. Whether you're a nature enthusiast or just getting started, there's something for everyone.

And for the word lovers among us– National Poetry Month is here! We invite you to discover the beauty and power of poetry through our collections, and don't miss the fun poetry activity featured in this very newsletter.

There truly is something for everyone this April. Thank you for being part of the Ventura County Library community. We're so glad you're here!



*Warmly,*

**Nancy Schram**  
Ventura County  
Library Director



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# Next Chapter Library

A Dedicated Space for Incarcerated Youth to Learn, Read, and Grow



Ventura County celebrated the opening of the Next Chapter Library on March 26, 2026, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony that drew County and community leaders together to mark a milestone in public service.

Located within the Juvenile Facilities campus in Oxnard, the Next Chapter Library is an innovative partnership between the Ventura County Probation Agency and Ventura County Library that brings tailored library services directly to youth under custodial supervision.

“This is the place where the incarcerated youth are going to come and they’re going to read books and they’re going to be transported to all sorts of places

outside the walls of this facility,” said Ventura County Library Director, Nancy Schram.

The dedicated space provides individualized reading support and a thoughtfully curated collection of over 800 books spanning a wide range of academic levels and personal interests. The library also expands access to books and culturally relevant materials that reflect the lives and experiences of the youth it serves.

The partnership reflects a forward-thinking approach to public service grounded in research showing that strong literacy skills are linked to improved academic achievement, employability, and reduced recidivism.

“Expanding access to books, learning opportunities, and literacy support for youth in our care reflects the fundamental belief that education is transformative,” said Chief Ron Miller of the Ventura County Probation Agency.

The Next Chapter Library stands as a powerful example of what collaboration can accomplish, ensuring every young person has the tools and encouragement to begin writing their next chapter.

For more information on the Next Chapter Library, visit our website at [Library.VenturaCounty.gov](http://Library.VenturaCounty.gov).

# Staff

## Highlight

"I'M HUMBLLED TO BE  
A PART OF SUCH A  
SUPPORTIVE AND  
COLLABORATIVE  
TEAM"



ANTONIO

**Antonio Apodaca** is the Education, Literacy, and Outreach Manager at Ventura County Library. Antonio oversees all adult literacy activities, including managing key partnerships such as our recent collaboration with the Ventura County Probation Department. He is supported by a dedicated team whose passion and commitment make the Adult Literacy programs possible. Meet a few of the talented individuals who work alongside Antonio to make a difference in our community.



GLORIA

"We hope having this inspiring library and literacy support will help the inmates write their own great story."

-**Gloria Morgan**, Literacy Coordinator, VCPA Juvenile Facilities Next Chapter Library

"My job gives me the opportunity to contribute to my community by helping others improve their lives while allowing me, as a retiree, to use my experience in education on a flexible schedule"

-**Judy Perkins**,  
Career Online High School Coordinator

JUDY



SCOTT

"I really like it when the youth come in and they may be projecting an image and keeping a distance from the [library] space but then they see a book they like and their eyes light up."

-**Scott Blanchard**, Library Technician II,  
VCPA Juvenile Facilities  
Next Chapter Library

"I love connecting adult learners to the resources and tools we offer. Whether someone is learning English, earning a diploma, or searching for a job, I'm ready to help them succeed with their goals."

-**Anastasia Hernandez**, Library  
Technician I, READ Adult Literacy Program



ANASTASIA



ALLAN

"Watching the youth pick up a book that they never would have picked up before and then going from *reluctant* reader to *regular* reader is something that gives this job purpose."

-**Allan Balangu**, Librarian, VCPA Juvenile  
Facilities Next Chapter Library



## E.P. Foster Library Update

### **THE MOBILE LIBRARY HAS YOU COVERED** **Mondays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM**

E.P. Foster Library is officially closed to the public, and our staff is busy packing up books and materials to be sent to storage ahead of the renovation process. Please note that book drops at E.P. Foster will not be monitored. All books should be returned to any other VCL library branch. If you're in the area, the three nearby Ventura locations are happy to assist: Hill Road Library, Avenue Library, and Saticoy Library.

The good news: library services will continue to be within reach! Beginning this month, the Ventura County Mobile Library will stop at the front of E.P. Foster Library every Monday from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, ready to help patrons with all their library needs. We look forward to seeing you there!



Photo taken  
**03/26/26**

# COMMUNITY

# Chronicles



The Rotary Club of Ventura brought its commitment to "positive peace" to Ventura County Library during the month of March. Rather than viewing peace simply as the absence of conflict, Rotarians focus on strengthening communities by tackling root causes like poverty, lack of education, and limited access to opportunity.

In partnership with Ventura County Library, the club featured peace-themed book displays at the E.P. Foster Library branch. Select branches also offered peace dove origami craft sessions with take-home kits-- a fun, family-friendly way to engage with the theme. Visitors of all ages, including teenagers like Sophia Patterson, joined in on the fun, carefully folding colored sheets to create origami peace doves. "I like making peace doves," said Sophia.

**"I like making peace doves"**

*-Sophia Patterson*



From Left to Right: Ned Branch, Nancy Schram, Youth Service Director Ken Leandro, Peace Chair Madhu Bajaj, President Saurabh Bajaj, Rotarian Vicky Erickson and guest.

The Rotary Club of Ventura also made a generous \$1,500 donation to Ventura County Library in support of the initiative, a wonderful reflection of their dedication to community investment.

Peace Builder Chair Madhu Bajaj, who spearheaded the initiative, said it best: "My hope is that community members will engage in incredible conversations about what peace means to them and take action to promote positive peace."



# ReadSquared

## Introducing ReadSquared:

### Your New Home for Reading Activities

Ventura County Library is excited to announce that we are transitioning to ReadSquared as our new reading activities tracking platform. Families who have participated in our programs in the past may remember our using Beanstack.

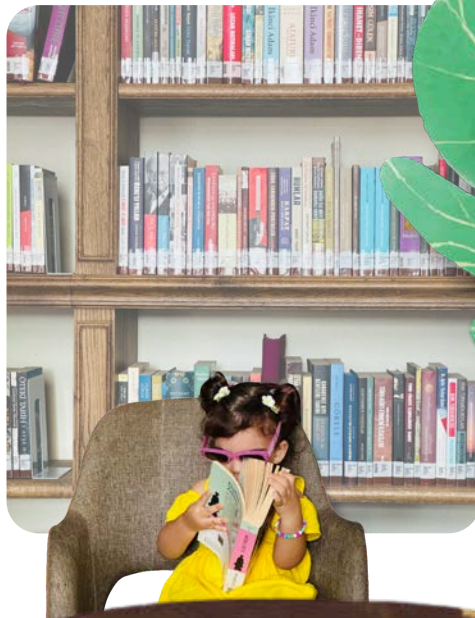


## ReadSquared is our exciting new hub for encouraging and tracking reading at home!

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR MORE DETAILS IN THE COMING WEEKS. WE CAN'T WAIT TO READ ALONG WITH YOU!

So what is ReadSquared? Think of it as your personal reading headquarters. Built with ideas from over 1,400 library professionals nationwide, it helps libraries create fun reading programs for every season of the year. And it's not just about books— you can track all kinds of activities, complete challenges, and collect cool online badges as you go.

Whether you're curling up with a book at home or exploring other learning activities, ReadSquared makes it easy to track your progress and stay motivated.



Plant a seed, read





# How Ventura County Library Cultivates Growth Through Plants and Learning

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**Earth Day is April 22**

At Ventura County Library, our love of plants and connection to nature have always been part of our story and that love takes a different, unique shape at each branch.

At Albert H. Soliz Library, succulents bring quiet resilience to the outdoor patio space, while

Saticoy Library blooms with flower beds and thriving tomato plants. At Ojai Library, colorful chandelier plants add a touch of the unexpected. But perhaps the most exciting highlight is the demonstration garden at our Oak View Library branch, a vibrant, hands-on space where learning comes to life.



The garden thrives under the careful stewardship of Sharon Dykstra, Oak View Library's branch manager, whose dedication has transformed it into a wonderful experience for visitors of all ages.

"We love it when visitors discover new plants or new varieties of plants they've never seen before," says Sharon. "The visitor favorite this season is our Thai basil...it tastes very different from Italian and Greek varieties. People say the aroma reminds them of Pad Thai and Pho."

The garden, located on the campus of the Oak View Resource Center, invites visitors to explore



**OAK VIEW LIBRARY**  
555 Mahoney Avenue  
Oak View, CA 93022

**Hours**  
M-Th: 1pm - 6pm  
Sa: 10am - 2pm  
Closed Fridays & Sundays

gardening up close. A hydroponic tower thrives inside the library branch, while the outdoor garden features fragrant and richly flavored vegetables, herbs, and plants including Blueberry Ruffle Lavender, Strawberry Mint, Pineapple Sage, and Lemon Balm.

**"We love it when visitors discover new plants or new varieties of plants they've never seen before"**

**-Sharon Dykstra**

Every plant in the garden is edible, a thoughtful touch that lets curious kids explore freely and safely. And the garden's role goes well beyond what meets the eye.

Far from just a pretty space, the Oak View Library garden plays an active role in programming.

Funded through the California State Library's "Lunch at the Library" program, students

regularly participate in cooking classes where they harvest fresh herbs directly from the garden and use them as ingredients. It's a full-circle experience that connects nature, nutrition, and hands-on learning in a meaningful way.

Of course, bringing that experience to patrons takes real dedication from the Oak View Library team.

"Prep and planting seasons require the most time - several hours with a mix of staff, volunteer and visitor participation," explains Sharon. "Watering, weeding, and harvesting generally is a two-three hour per week commitment. Everyone helps along."



# From Branch to Branch

A Living Collection

Mixed succulents at Albert H. Soliz Library's outdoor patio



Kalanchoe Delagoensis "Chandelier Plant" at Ojai Library's Secret Garden



Tomato plants in Saticoy Library's outdoor flower beds



Hydroponic garden inside Avenue Library



# Types of Poetry

There are many different types of poems, each with its own unique form and style. Below are a few of the most common types, along with photos of poets who have written works in each tradition.

## Sonnet

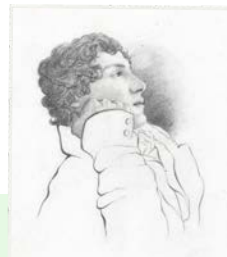
A 14-line poem with a specific rhyme scheme and structure.



William Shakespeare



Elizabeth Barrett Browning



John Keats



Matsuo Bashō



Kaga no Chiyo



Kobayashi Issa

## Haiku

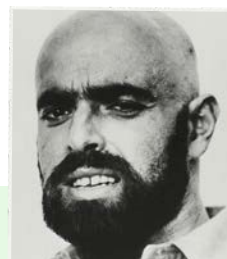
A Japanese poem with three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables.



Edward Lear



Ogden Nash



Shel Silverstein

## Limerick

A humorous poem with five lines and a specific rhyme scheme.



Maya Angelou



Hilda Doolittle



Walt Whitman

## Free verse

Poetry that does not follow a strict rhyme scheme or meter.

## Narrative

A poem that tells a story.



Geoffrey Chaucer



Edgar Allan Poe

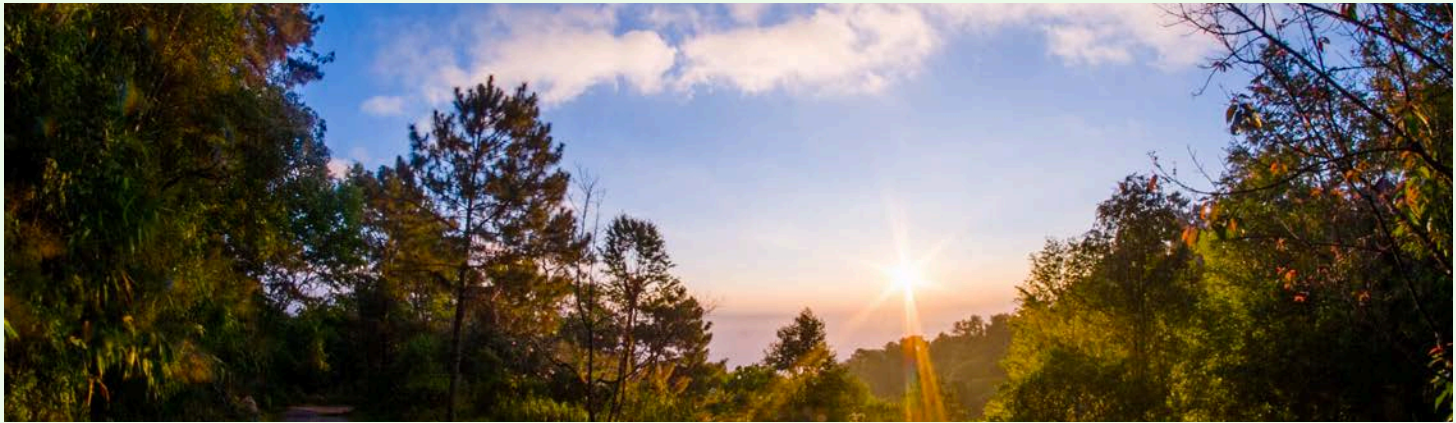


Robert Frost

# Guess the Poet

## Word Scramble

ANSWERS ON PAGE 13



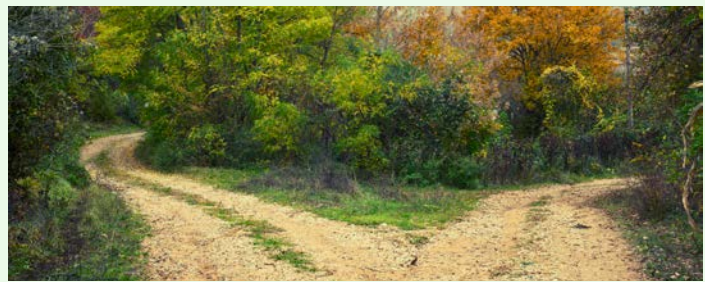
Hint: Rise

**LGAUANEYOAM:** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_



Hint: Verona

**KMHRISALEELSPAWEIE**



Hint: Yellow Wood

**RTOBTROFSR**



Hint: Count the Ways

**GOZABTIBRIELAHNWBTTNR**



Hint: Nevermore

**EGALEELDONAPR**

# St. Patrick's Day with Our English Conversation Group



Oak Park Library Branch Manager **Mia Lopez** knows how to make every moment festive and memorable!



The Ventura County Library's Adult Literacy English Conversation Group had a festive and productive session in March as participants celebrated St. Patrick's Day with a fun reading and craft activity. The luck of the Irish was in the air as group members came together to enjoy a St. Patrick's Day-themed reading, followed by a hands-on craft activity at Oak Park Library. These types of engaging, themed sessions give participants a natural and enjoyable opportunity to communicate in English— asking questions, sharing ideas, and working through instructions together, all while building their confidence and language skills. It's moments like these that remind us why community-centered learning matters, and why Ventura County Library is the perfect place for it.

**Interested in joining the Adult Literacy English Conversation Group?**  
 Contact Anastasia Hernandez at (805) 212-9388 or visit [Library.VenturaCounty.gov](http://Library.VenturaCounty.gov).

*Guess the Poet*  
 ANSWER KEY

Still I Rise by Maya Angelou	
Sonnet 43 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning	The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost
Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare	The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe

# EVENTS to BOOKMARK!

in celebration of

# NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

## NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK APRIL 19-25



Each year, National Library Week recognizes the vital contributions libraries and their staff make to individuals and communities alike. First observed in 1957, this tradition encourages people across the U.S. to engage with their local libraries and take advantage of the resources they offer.

### NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

### SCAVENGER HUNT

OJAI LIBRARY



Celebrate National Library Week at the Ojai Library all week long starting April 19th. Earn a special prize when you complete the scavenger hunt!

## APRIL 21

HILL ROAD LIBRARY  
4:30 - 5:45PM

### *Nostalgia Gardening*

Journey back through the seasons of your life in this heartwarming class featuring cottage garden favorites, and beloved blooms that graced our grandparents' yards. Learn the elements of the gardening style called "Nostalgia Gardening," with examples both old and new.



## APRIL 22

9:00AM - 11:00AM

### VISIT THE MOBILE LIBRARY AT VENTURA BOTANICAL GARDENS



### *Celebrate Earth Day*

Home to over 120,000 plants representing the five Mediterranean climate zones of the world, the Ventura Botanical Gardens is a must-see. We hope to see you there!

## APRIL 22



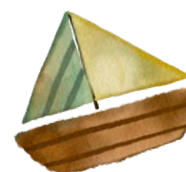
### EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

RAY D. PRUETER LIBRARY/  
2:00PM - 4:00PM

Join us for an Earth Day 2026 celebration featuring crafts, games, temporary tattoos, a photo booth, and much more!

## APRIL 24

WATER SCIENCE EVENT  
ALBERT SOLIZ LIBRARY/ 4PM



Presented By:  
Pathways for  
Science.

Join us to try our salt water experiment and build a foil boat! Designed for children of all ages.

## APRIL 25

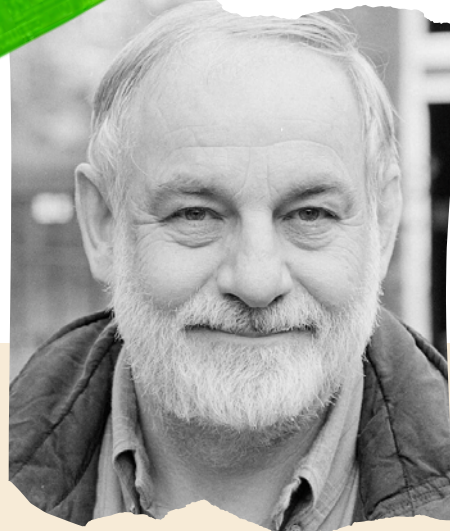
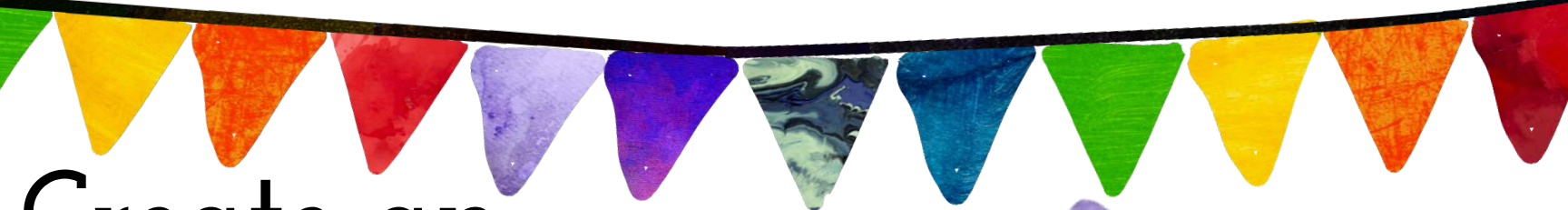
SISTERS IN CRIME  
OAK PARK LIBRARY/ 1-2:30PM

Writing Wrongs: An Inside Look at Crime Fiction. Adults are welcome to this author talk program featuring mystery writers: Judith Ayn, Sheila Lowe, and Deanna Nese.

Create an

# ERIC CARLE

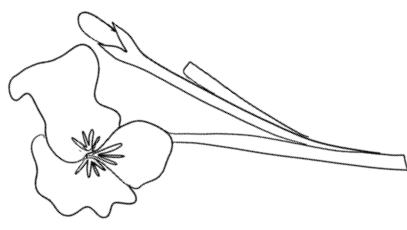
## Inspired Collage



Supplies  
Scissors  
Glue

### Instructions

1. Draw something



2. Cut it apart



3. Trace onto colored paper



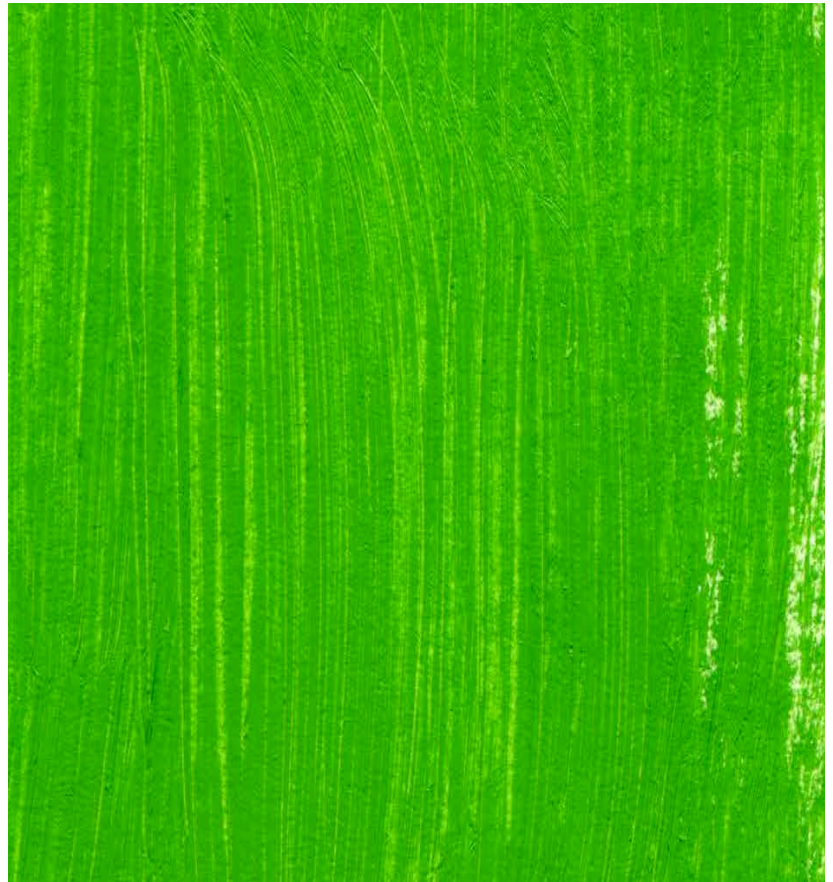
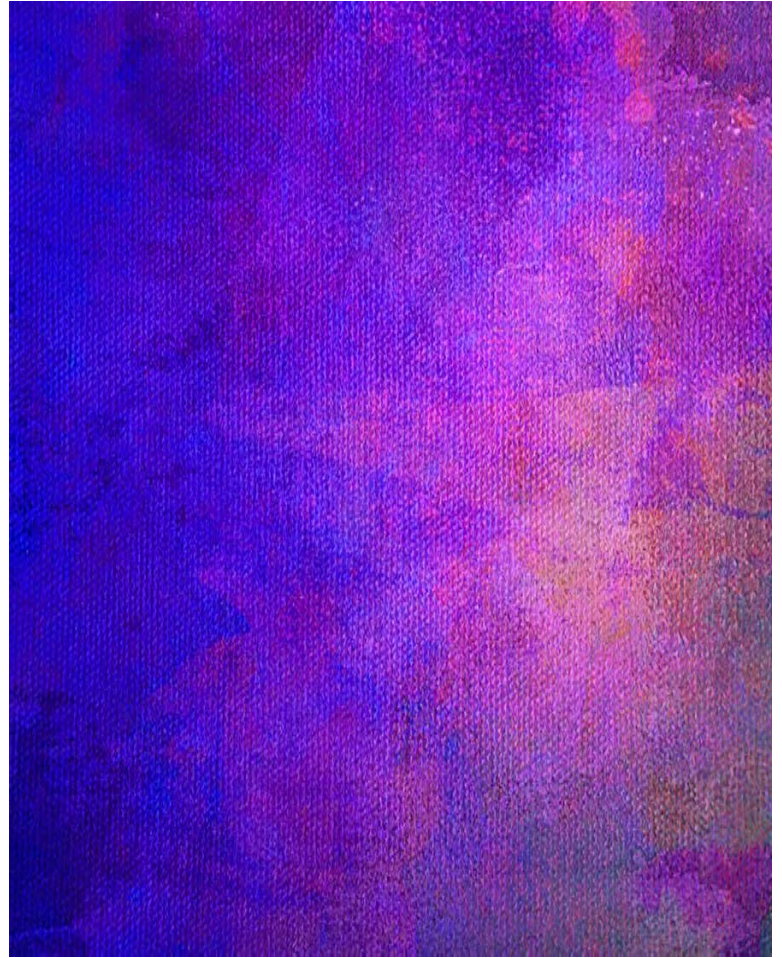
4. Glue back together on another sheet of paper



Carle painted tissue paper in bright colors to make fun patterns for his collages. Each piece was a mini masterpiece he used to create art!

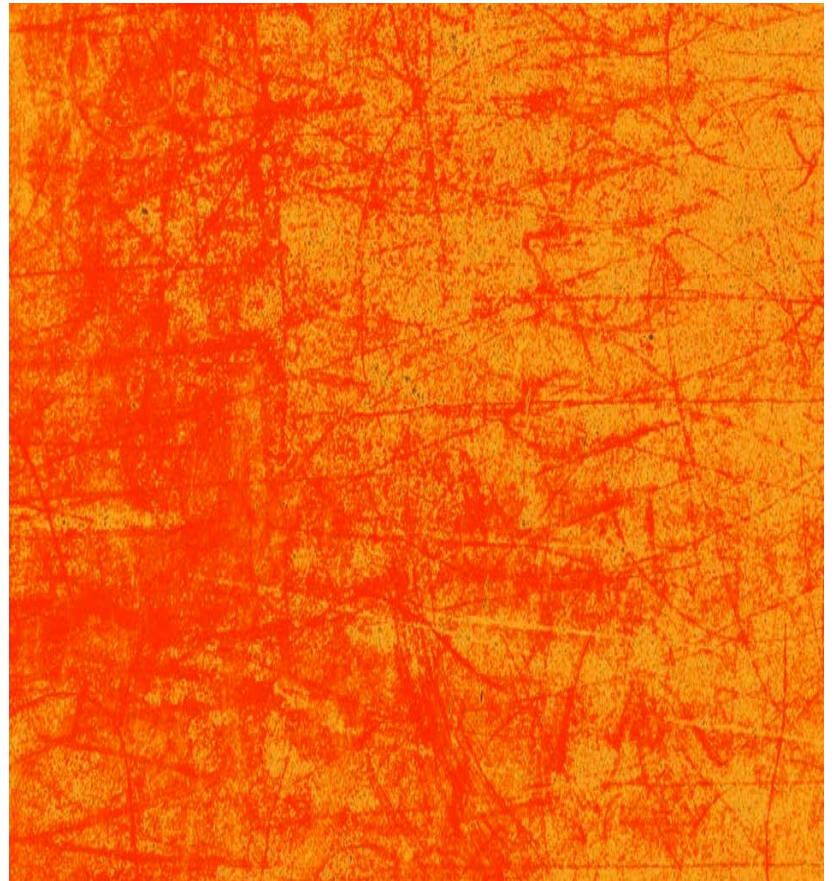
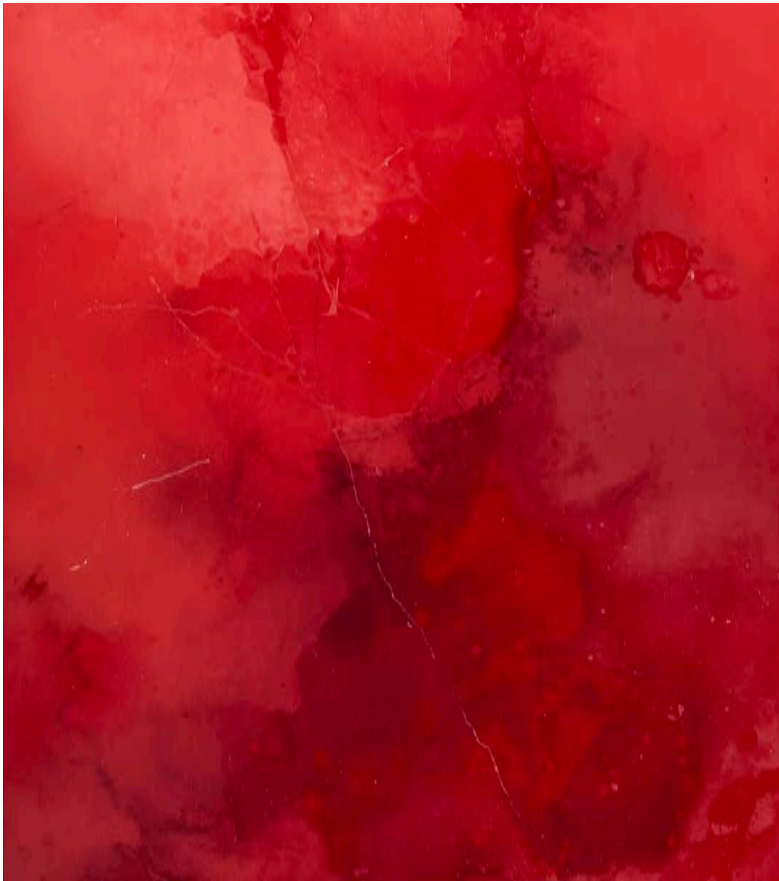
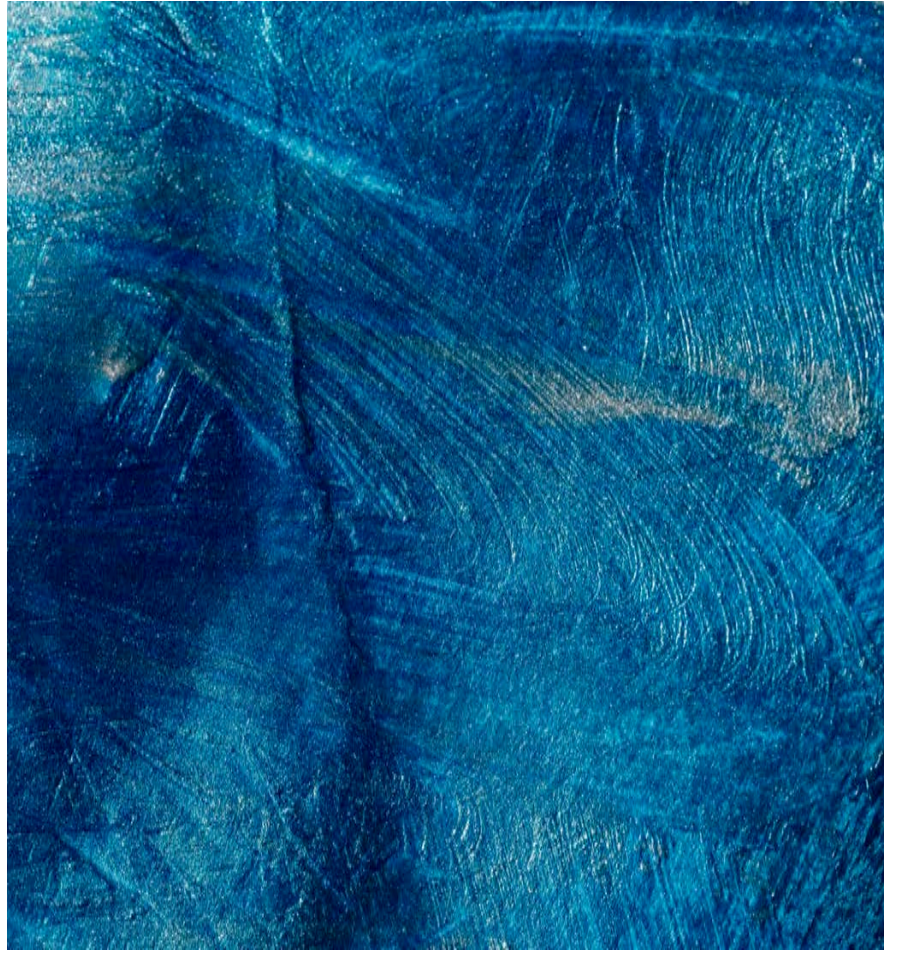
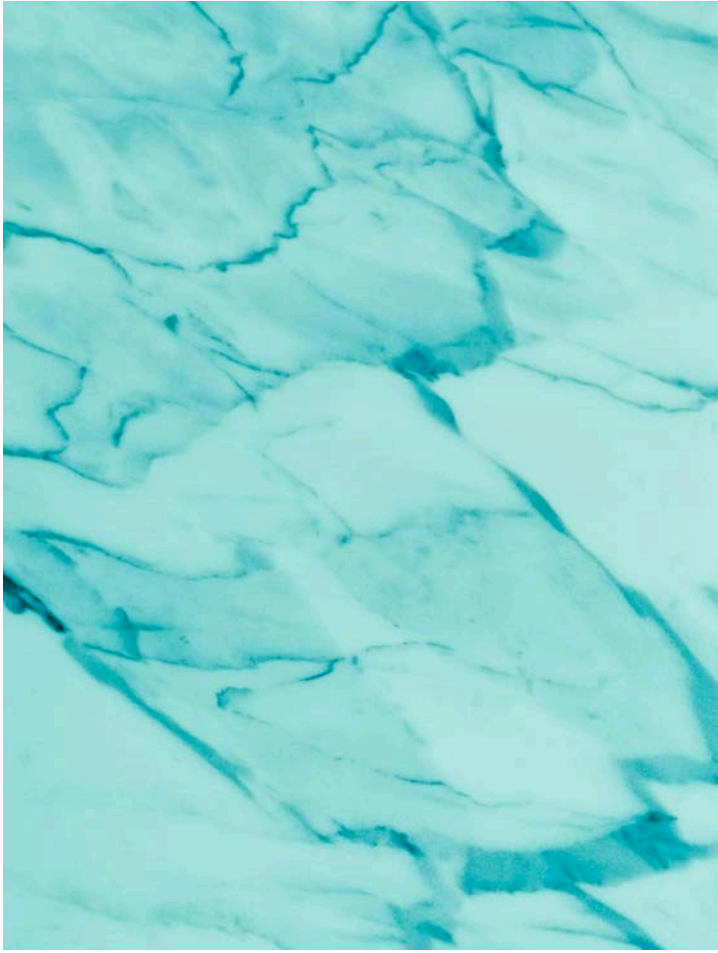


# Papers to try



or create your own by coloring white paper

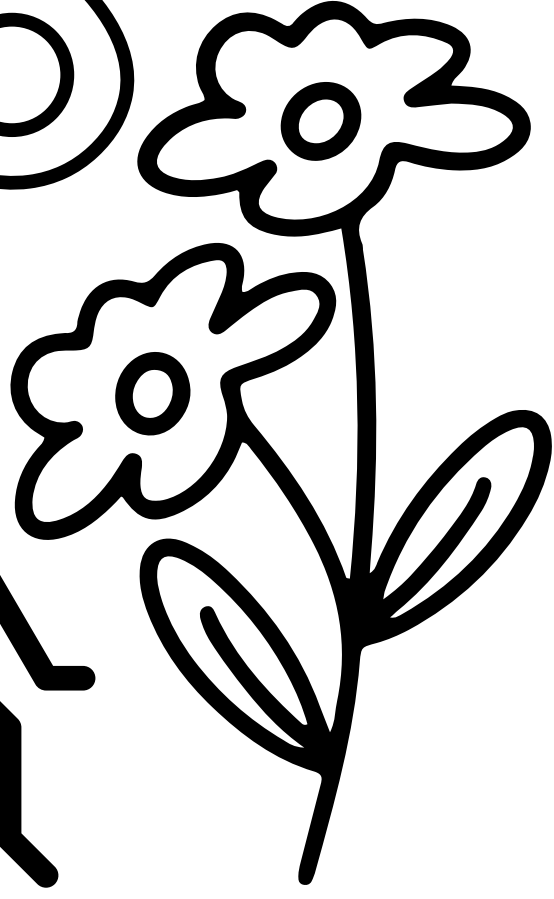
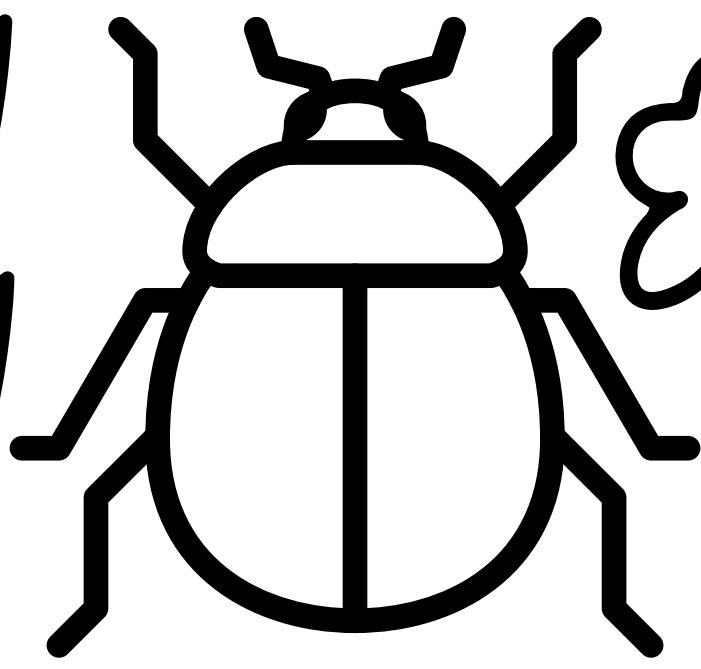
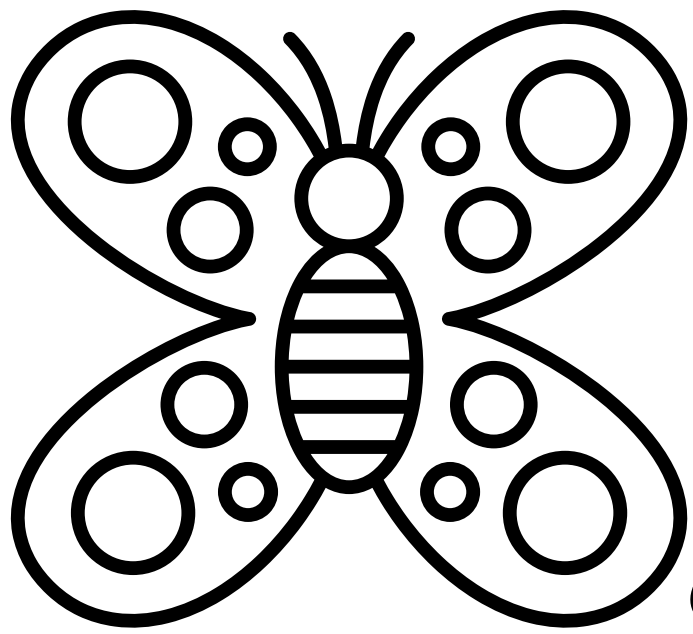
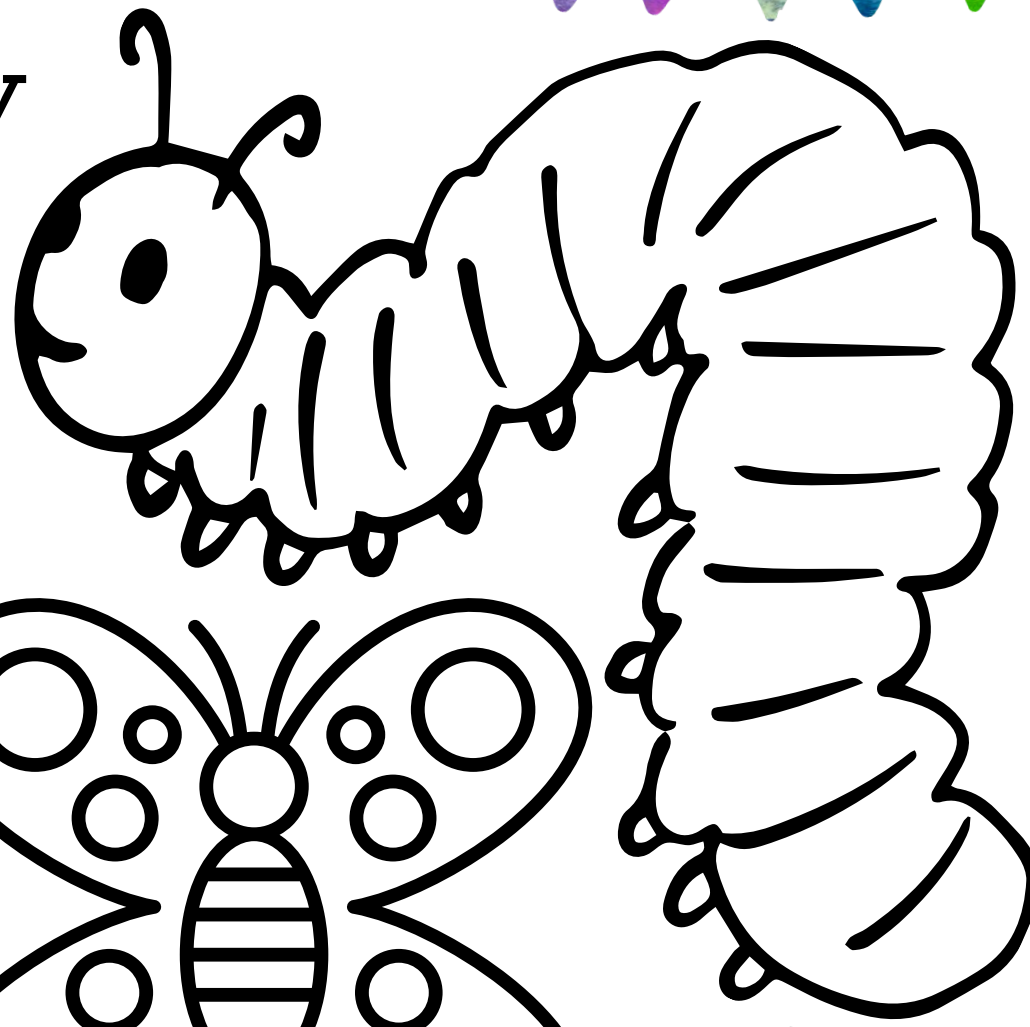
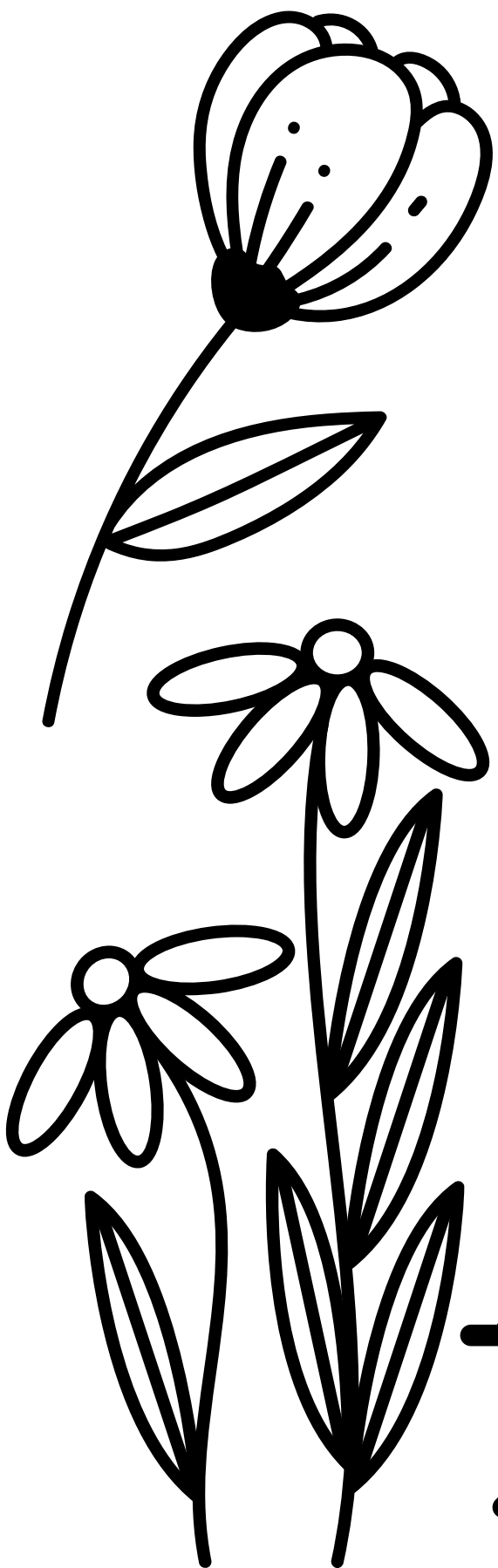
# Papers to try



or create your own by coloring white paper



templates to try



or draw your own



**COUNTY** *of* **VENTURA**  
Library

# CONTACT US



**(805) 626-READ**



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