

BUILDING A TURTLE

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The fiberglass that veterinarians use to patch
real turtles dropped off cliffs,
hit by cars, or cracked by hammer-swinging boys,
makes a good shell. With enough skill,

you can carve a shell from wood, or sculpt one
out of stone. *Papier maché* spares the turtle
heavy lifting, but dissolves in rain.

Paint the shell as you see fit; carve it

with stars, diamonds, naked girls; it's *your*
turtle. Use braided wire, jointed dowels,
or rubber for the legs and tail. Glued-on
sunflower seeds make first-rate scales;

or try sequins, for a country-western feel.

Goose-neck lamp-metal works for turtles, too.

The tube holds batteries to light the eyes—
brown for female, orange for male. The head

can be wood, metal, or plastic, as long
as the beak takes an edge, and the jaw moves.

Screw or super-glue the head into the neck.

(A pink eraser-slice makes a good tongue.)

Fill the shell with something light—crumpled
newsprint, spun fiberglass—held in by soft
leather or plastic that mimics wrinkled skin.
Instilling life is trickier. Turtles struck

by lightning may “go Frankenstein.”
Jesus succeeded by commanding, “Crawl!”
(Try it yourself. You never know . . .)
The surest bet is to submerge your turtle

in water like what sloshed in ancient seas.
Cover with a dome that lets in sun
and cosmic rays. Wait in a comfortable place.
“Slow as a turtle,” people say.