Creative Marbles

Supplies and Tools

brushes
decoupage medium
hot glue and hot-glue gun (optional) *or*
    beading/jewelry glue
pencils or pens
small scissors (1 for each participant)
Styrofoam trays

Materials

cork (optional)
craft marbles (these come in
    various sizes)
felt (optional)
magnets (optional)
paint (optional)
paper scrap
pin backs (optional)

Step 1: Cutting Your Pictures

Looking through the paper scrap, find words or pictures that will fit the flat side of the marbles. If you're having trouble, leaf through the scrap until you find a page that jumps out at you. Then just pass a blank marble over the page until you find something that works.

Once you've chosen a word or picture, place a marble over the item and trace around it with your pencil. Then lift the marble and use the scissors to cut around the pencil line. If your cutout doesn't match perfectly, don't worry. You can trim it later.

Put your picture under your marble, move it to your tray, and continue looking for more pictures until you have something for each of your marbles.

Here are some design tips:

When using comic books, remember that word balloons can make excellent marbles.
The finished marbles look better when the entire flat surface on the bottom of the marble is taken up by an image.
If you have a cool picture that's too big for your marble, use just a piece of that image.

Sometimes just a pattern or texture will make a great image.

Step 2: Decoupaging

This step can get kind of messy, so be prepared to get glue on your hands.

Once you have all your pictures or words cut out, you'll want to have your decoupage medium and brush handy. Brush a light coat of decoupage medium onto the flat surface of the marble. Place the picture *with the side you want showing facing into the decoupage medium*. (It will dry clear, so don't worry.) Press your picture firmly into place, and then brush another light coat of decoupage medium onto the back of the picture. If paper is hanging slightly over the edge of the marble, run your finger around it and press it up around the marble. If you have a lot of overhang, you may want to leave it and trim later.

As you decoupage each marble, place it onto your tray *upside down* to dry. When all your marbles are decoupaged, leave them to dry for at least twenty minutes.

Step 3: Finishing

If you plan to use your marbles as tokens and don't want to add felt to the back, then you are done as soon as your marbles dry. However, even if you just want the marbles to be set out for your teens to play with, they'll last a lot longer and have a more finished appearance if you felt or paint the back.

Before adding whatever backing you've chosen, check each marble and clean up any stray glue spots on the faces or use your scissors to trim away any overhanging edges.

Painting the back of the marbles is the easiest and most straightforward finish. You may want to do this even if you plan to add a pin back or magnet. Color doesn't necessarily matter, but remember that the paint will show through any uncovered places on the back of your marble.

If you're planning to use your marbles as tokens, it's a good idea to felt the back of the marbles so they're less likely to damage tables or other library furniture. Measure the felt the same way you measured the pictures, tracing around the marble with a pencil or pen and cutting on the line. Use hot glue to glue the felt to the back of the marble. This may require more supervision of the group as they use the hot-glue gun. White glue will also work, but because the felt is quite porous, it will take some time to dry completely.

Adding a magnet or pin back is as easy as dabbing a drop of hot glue onto the back of the marble and placing the magnet or pin back in place. Again, using the hot-glue gun may require more direct supervision of your group. Other glues, such as jewelry glue, will work as well. If you prefer not to use a hot-glue gun, check your local craft shop or art supply store for other options.