Craft and Creativity

Textiles in Elementary Grades

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Craftsmanship: Learning to use materials skillfully

- The word “craft” is derived from an Old English word meaning “skill in planning, making, and executing.” Critical thinking, the creative process, and skill with materials are all part of craftsmanship.
- We believe that students are more prepared to be creative once they have developed skills through guided exploration. Improvement and mastery are achieved through repeated practice of skills.
- The transference of learned skills to new situations demonstrates an individual’s internalization of those skills. This transference is the difference between applying skills and creating art.

Creativity: Applying skills with originality

- We structure our lessons so that art activities are open-ended and solutions are divergent. In this way, each student’s work is personal and unique.
- When given free time and materials, students easily apply their new skills with originality and confidence. They are authentically engaged in personalized learning.

“Creativity is intelligence having fun.” -Albert Einstein
Second Grade Sewing

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Background

I often connect literature to art activities for this young group of emerging readers. We looked at *Nursery Rhymes*, by Louise Shrigley. This is a great book to refer to because of its short, familiar nursery rhymes, as well as the simplicity of the illustrations which mimic sewing.

Vocabulary

- **sewing**  Using needle and thread to stitch together two pieces of fabric.
- **stitches**  (We focused on the backstitch.)
Materials

Newsprint, pencils, scissors, embroidery needles, thread, various colors of felt fabric.

Activity

On day one, we read *Nursery Rhymes*, by Louise Shrigley and looked at the illustrations. Students brainstormed about images they would want to draw and eventually sew. We learned how to thread a needle and practiced sewing the backstitch on newsprint.

On days two, three and four students drew their images on newsprint and then used permanent markers on the newsprint to section off where they would cut the various parts of their pattern. Next, they stapled the pattern pieces to various pieces of fabric and cut the fabric. Students were asked to choose a background fabric for their work. We discussed high contrast and low contrast for background choices. Once all the cut pieces were stapled on the felt background, students were able to sew the work. Needles were kept in brown craft paper when not in use.

Assessment

- Did the student draw and cut out a pattern for his/her work on newsprint?
- Did the student learn to thread a needle, stitch, and sew?
- Did the student share supplies?
- Was the student helpful to his/her peers?
- Did the student demonstrate originality in design or production?
- Did the student demonstrate skill with the materials or an effort in the process?

Extensions

- Write/type an original nursery rhyme for your sewn illustration.

Greer, Dog with Collar, 2016  
Meghan, Baby in Cradle, 2016  
Gillis, Orange Cat, 2016
Cute Monsters

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Background

Art Toys began in Japan but are popular with collectors worldwide. They look like traditional toys, such as action figures and stuffed animals, but frequently their appearances poke fun at the values of sweetness and innocence represented by traditional toys. Sometimes they look scary and are intended for adults or older children. Often, though, Art Toys are weird but cute, appealing to all ages. An example is Ugly Dolls, a brand of cartoonish plush toys whose creators say, “In the ‘uglyverse’, ‘ugly’ means unique and special, something that we should be celebrating, that which makes us different.”

Vocabulary

- **sewing**: using needle and thread to stitch together two pieces of fabric
- **embroidery**: decorative stitching
- **appliqué**: attaching a fabric shape onto a larger piece of fabric
- **textile**: something made from cloth or made by sewing, knitting, weaving, etc.

Materials

Examples of Ugly Dolls; 9x12 drawing paper; pencils; scissors; felt; embroidery thread; chenille needles; needle threaders; thimbles; buttons; polyester fiberfill; tags with ties; safety pins

Activity

1. Before beginning the Cute Monster, each student learns to thread a needle, sew two pieces of felt together, and sew on a button.
2. After looking at Ugly Dolls, sketch ideas for original Cute Monsters.
3. Draw one design full size on 9x12 paper (opt: fold paper to make the sides match).
4. Cut out the design and trace it on two pieces of felt (front and back of CM).
1. Cut out the design and trace it on two pieces of felt (front and back of CM).
2. Embroider and sew on face (buttons make great eyes) to the front before sewing front and back together!
3. Sew front and back together, leaving a couple of inches open for stuffing.
4. Stuff fiberfill into appendages with a stylus or chopstick; then fill the body, but do not over-stuff, which pulls at the stitches.
5. Sew the opening closed.
6. Make a tag that tells, on one side, the name of the artist and, on the other side, the name of the Cute Monster. Attach with string and a safety pin.

**Assessment**

- Did the student complete the project?
- Did the student learn to thread a needle, stitch, and sew on a button?
- Did the student demonstrate originality in design or production?
- Did the student demonstrate skill with the materials or effort in the process?

**Extensions**

- Sew accessories for your CM, such as toys, a book, a bed, its own Cute Monster...
- Draw the CM in a scene, perhaps with a friend’s CM.
- Write a story about your CM, perhaps an adventure or a biography.
- Write a “scientific” paper about your CM, with measurements and information about its habitat, food, and behaviors.
Weaving on Cardboard Looms

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Background

Weaving is one of the oldest examples of human technology – some artifacts have been dated to about 30,000 BC. Shelters, clothing, baskets, sleeping mats, and blankets have been made throughout the world and throughout the ages using plant fibers and animal hair. In many cultures, such as Europe in the Middle Ages, weaving was a major art form. During the nineteenth century, large mechanical looms located in factories replaced hand-weaving in homes and small businesses. European and American society was transformed by this Industrial Revolution. In the 20th century the Arts and Crafts movement renewed appreciation for handmade crafts, including weaving. Today it is practiced as a hobby and an art form.

Vocabulary

- weaving: interlocking up-and-down fibers with side-to-side fibers
- loom: whatever warp yarn is attached to that keeps it in place for weaving
- warp: yarn that is attached to a loom for weaving
- weft: yarn that is passed through the warp yarn to make a weaving
- textile: something made from cloth or made by sewing, knitting, weaving, etc.

Wavy lines (thinnest stripes)  Diagonal lines  Pick & pick (vertical lines)
**Materials**

Cardboard looms, yarn, 6” and 3” plastic tapestry needles, scissors, tape, examples of weaving, book: *The Goat in the Rug* by Martin Link

**Activity**

7. Attach warp yarn to cardboard looms, taping the ends of the yarn to the middle of the back of the loom. Keep yarn tight.
8. Choose a set of colors. Measure and cut the first color.
9. Thread the yarn through the eye of the needle. Fold the end of the yarn to fit it in.
10. Plain weave the first color. Leave tails sticking out (about 2”). Keep the sides straight.
11. Use at least two other weaving patterns, such as wavy lines, dots, or diagonals, etc.
12. Remove from the loom by cutting the warp yarns right across the middle of the back of the loom. This will leave several inches of warp yarn on each end of the weaving.
13. Tie knots to hold the weaving together and create fringe. Trim the fringe to make even.
14. Deal with the tails. Hide them in the weaving or tape them to the back. Ta-da!

**Extensions**

- Fold weaving in half and sew the sides together to make a pouch. Add a braided or finger-woven strap to turn it into a bag or purse.
- Fold weaving so that one side is longer. Sew the sides together and turn the leftover part of the weaving down over the shorter side. Add a button to close it. No buttonhole will be needed – just push through the weaving!

**Assessment**

- Did the student complete the project?
- Did the student learn to attach warp to a loom, weave at least three patterns, and finish the weaving by making fringe?
- Did the student demonstrate originality in design or production?
- Did the student demonstrate skill with the materials or effort in the process?