

Burlap Weaving Gone Wild

(art + history; art + science)

What are you wearing? What covers your floor and furniture? FABRIC! Fabric is cloth made with interlacing strands of fiber. Fabrics vary in their origins, textures, weights and other characteristics.

Burlap is coarse, heavy and plainly woven from hemp or jute. It is too rough to use for clothing but perfect for rugs and packaging. It's weave is loose and fun to use as a flexible base and as a substitute for a loom in this lesson.

Fabrics woven for clothing are linen, cotton, silk and polyester. Linen is made from flax. Soft fibers attached to a seed of the cotton plant are used in cotton fabric. Silk is a protein produced by insect larva. Polyester cloth is a chemical compound based on a group of polymers for fabric and plastic cloth. Clothing fibers are tightly woven and can be woven again if divided into strips and restructured. Discuss wool and alpaca with students.

In this lesson plan strands of coarse hemp are removed from the burlap cloth and other materials are added to create designs with more color and texture. Create a funky weaving project you would not wear but hang as an art piece.



Grade Levels 5-12

Process

1. Select a size for the weaving. A yard of materials can be divided into two pieces 18" x 36" or four pieces 18" x 18". To cut a perfect piece measure desired length then pull a thread out horizontally. Cut on that line. Burlap's loose weave unravels easily and cut pieces need to be secured on the cut edge. Hand stitch to secure the cut edge with sewing needle and thread. This should be the bottom of the weaving. The bottom cut edge of the burlap can be taped instead of stitched. This will hold until the weaving is done. This technique is a good rule for dividing any piece of fabric. See step 4 for finishing ideas.

NOTE: If dividing a tightly woven fabric like artist canvas, snip the salvage on one side and tear across to the opposite salvage.



Process continued

2. Open up the weaving in areas by pulling out horizontal threads. Leave at least three strands together between open areas. Vary the width of the areas so Twisteez wires can be threaded through horizontally and vertically. Save the loose threads for Step 4.
3. When weaving with the Twisteez, leave two inches to the left of the burlap before starting the weaving process. It is not necessary to measure each section unless the desired effect is geometric. Stop in areas to add buttons and beads. They can be used to mark the end or to emphasize a shift in direction.
4. Make tassels to finish the bottom edge if desired. Cut the burlap strings saved from earlier into eight inch sections. Fold them into U shape and sew to the bottom edge evenly every two or three inches. Add buttons and beads where the tassels are attached.

Materials

Snippy Scissors (57040-2009), one per student

Burlap (63202-8036), 1 yard brown, cut into 18" x 36" (half) or 18" x 18" (fourths)

Twisteez (33407-1050), 50 piece pkg, approximately 10 per 18" x 36" piece or 5 per 18" x 18" piece

Distribute beads throughout classroom:

E-Beads (60726-1000)

Assorted Plastic Beads (60716-1005)

Assorted Metallized Beads (60776-1001)

Pony Beads

Silver (60771-9330) and Gold (60771-9010)

Craft Buttons (61495-1001)

Blick All-Use Masking Tape (23006-1001), 1"

Options

- Add cut out fabric to the weaving and use Twisteez to hold it on.
- Add ribbon or yarn at the bottom instead of tassels.

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National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

5-8

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

5-8

Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

9-12

Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

5-8

Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

9-12

Students compare the materials, technologies, media, and processes of the visual arts with those of other arts disciplines as they are used in creation and types of analysis