

# Native American Burlap Weaving

(art + history; art + social studies)

Weaving and textile arts were an important part of Native American Culture. Baskets, blankets, tapestries and clothing were carefully crafted with skills passed down from generation to generation.

The Navajo used a vertical, wooden frame loom long before the arrival of Europeans. They used a shuttle to weave colored threads into geometric designs.

Weaving was a spiritual art — they believed that the weaving techniques were given to them by Spider Woman, a Navajo deity.

Students will use the coarse, open weave of burlap as a substitute for a loom in this lesson plan. Patterns are created with colored yarn and string, and beads and feathers may be added for decoration.

**Grade Levels** 3-6

## Preparation

1. View examples of Navajo weavings and other Native American textiles featuring patterned colors.

## Process

1. Each student begins by gluing their piece of burlap to the center of the dowel rod. Tape the ends of the dowel to the work surface if possible - it will make weaving easier by keeping the burlap flat.
2. Remove some of the burlap fibers to create areas in which to weave.
3. Vertical strings in a weaving are called warp strings, and the horizontal strings that weave in and out horizontally are called weft strings. Students weave the open areas of their burlap, creating one of the following patterns, or making their own:

**Horizontal stripes:** Simple in and out weave, change colors after 5 passes

**Checked pattern:** use 4 pieces of yarn to weave over 4 warps, under 4 warps.

**Wrapped warps:** build vertical stripes by wrapping yarn around 2-3 warps.

Students must use a variety of techniques, and come up with one of their own.



## Materials

**Natural Burlap** (63202-1436), 36" wide, cut to 12" x 10" pieces, need one piece per student

**Classroom Yarn Assortment** (65208-1005)

**Maysville Cotton Warp**, assorted colors (62800-)

**Wooden Dowel Rods**, 3/8" x 12" (60448-3812), package of 12, need one per student

**Tonic Studios® Kids' Scissors** (57150-4005), need one per student

**Blick Multi-Purpose White Glue** (23872-1065), 8-oz bottles, share one bottle between two students

**#13 Blunt Tapestry Needles** (65104-1009), package of 12, need one per student

Optional

**Assorted Macramé Beads** (60709-1000)

**Natural Feather Assortment** (61432-1005)

## Process, continued

4. To finish weaving, create fringe on the edges by removing more burlap fibers. Tie on cotton warp to make colorful fringe. Attach beads or feathers.
5. Tie yarn to either end of the dowel rod to create a hanger.

### Lesson Plan Idea and Artwork submitted by Anne Pietropola, Mechanicsburg, PA

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## National Standards

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

**K-4** Students know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes

**5-8** Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices

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

**K-4** Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

**5-8** Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts