Kyrgyz Felting!
Shyrdak
Rove to felttable wool
Art Project
Kyrgyz Felting

Teacher: Katie Schuler  
School: Sherwood MS  
Grade Level: 8th  
Length of Class Period: 49 minutes  
Number of Students: 30  
Length of Unit: about 2 weeks

Focus: In this lesson, I will introduce students to the history, cultural impact and utilization of felt in the Kyrgyz nomadic communities. Students will use knowledge to create their own modern day felt.

Ohio Academic Content Standards Addressed by this Unit

- **Enduring Understandings** - Personal Choice and Vision, Critical & Creative Thinking, Authentic Application and Collaboration
  - **Progress Point** - A, B, C, D, E
- **Perceiving/Knowing** - 2PE, 4PE, 5PE, 6PE
- **Producing/Performing** - 1PR, 2PR, 3PR, 4PR, 5PR
- **Responding/Reflecting** - 1RE, 2RE, 5RE, 6RE


Performance-Based Objectives

- Students will be able to correctly define and describe felt and the traditional process of Kyrgyz production.
- Students will understand how the use of felt impacted the communities throughout history and how they market their artwork today.
- Students will develop their own dyed felted artworks and turn them into a useful product of their choosing.

Vocabulary

- **Kyrgyz** - a member of an indigenous people of central Asia, living chiefly in Kyrgyzstan
- **Felt** - a kind of cloth made by rolling and pressing wool or another suitable textile accompanied by the application of moisture or heat, which causes the constituent fibers to mat together to create a smooth surface.
- **Dye** - a natural or synthetic substance used to add a color to or change the color of something.
- **Wool** - the fine soft curly or wavy hair forming the coat of a sheep, goat, or similar animal, esp. when shorn and prepared for use in making cloth or yarn
- **Shear** - to cut the wool off a sheep or other animal
- **Nomad** - Mobile pastoralists (a member of a people having no permanent abode, and who travel from place to place to find fresh pasture for their livestock.)
- **Shyrdak** - a stitched, colorful felt floor- or wall-covering, usually handmade in Central Asia
Teacher Resources:
- Online/Book resources at end of lesson
- Movie
  - Kyrgyz Felting Traditions by: Liba Brent
- Teacher Examples
  - Variety of thickness, designs and patterns

Student Supplies
- Wool
- Dye-variety of options
- Fabric to roll wool on
- Soap
- Sponge
- Needle/thread

Teaching/Introduction

- What is the “Silk Road”?
- Why is it important to cultural exchange in the world?
- Why is it important to art?
  - Persian Miniatures
  - Silks
  - **Felts**
  - Islamic Tiles
  - Bronze/Ceramic pieces

Kyrgyz Felts

- In the past-
  - Nomadic/Pastoral-what does that mean?
  - Dark sheep-coarser and native to area
  - White sheep introduced by Soviets
    - Finer
    - Scarves/hats
  - Use
    - Adorn yurts-warmth
    - Saddle Blankets
    - Appliquéd decorative imagery
    - Clothing
    - Carpets/Blankets
    - If they used these initially for warmth and practical application-is it an artwork?
  - Gender Roles
    - Man herds sheep year-round
    - Women process and create products

- Process of traditional felting in Kyrgyzstan
  - Shear sheep
  - Wool is beaten with flexible wooden sticks
  - Beaten along the line of the fiber and aids in the removal of dirt between the fibers. The result is a coarser wool than one gets from carding
  - The mother felt is rolled out onto the field and used as a base for the new felt
  - Beaten wool is now placed on the mother felt in such a way as to have the fibers relatively parallel
  - The best wool is laid out first and denoted the “right” side of the new felt
  - After the layers are laid out, soapy warm water is spread out over the wool in small drops. Wool swells and overlays. Soap replaces natural oils that have been washed off and intertwine. A large pole is then places across one end of the new felt. Both the new wool and the mother felt are then rolled up tightly around the pole
  - Wet hides are wrapped around the felt and then the whole thing is tightened with rope.

- Images of example artworks
- The whole thing is then dragged behind a horse for several hours
- The wool is inspected for weak areas and patched with more wool.
Watch Movie-Kyrgyz Felting Traditions

- What is happening now?
  - Felt Arts Studio-groups of women
  - Wool is sorted by color and coarseness
  - Some herders paint their sheep-has to be cut off
  - Carding machine-need electricity-machines draw men into felt making
  - Dyeing felt
    - Dye-check hue against samples
    - Roll it up and squish/roll
  - Cut into traditional patterns and sewn up-embroidery threads-spin their own thread
    - Souvenirs
    - Rugs
    - Slippers
    - Scarves with wool designs on silk
    - Toys/dolls
  - Traditional designs or modern designs from the capital city
    - Modern-inspired by contemporary art and fashion
  - Organizations that help partner women in remote areas to make a living-Kokza (fair trade?)
  - Training women to make things that would appeal to western consumer.

Artmaking!

- Research traditional patterns and motifs (Shyrdak)
  - Natural shapes inspired by mountains, matterhorn and birds
- Use these to inspire modern day wool pieces
- Can be an art piece or something useful
- Sketch and defend/describe your idea
- Begin felting process
- Dyeing process
- Make a hat/yurt/bag/scarf/wallet/pouch
  - Patterns are provided
- Student reflection and critique/share
**Book Resources and Thesis Example**

5000 Years of Textiles. Edited by Jennifer Harris

Narodnoe dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo kazakhov by: Orazbaeva, Nataliә Andreevna

(In Russian, but it has great pictures of felts!)

Nomadic Felts by: Stephanie Bunn

Teaching Tradition: Investigating potential teaching tools for the preservation of Kyrgyz textiles traditions.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Textiles at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. By: Jennifer Rosenthal 2010

**Interesting Links and Articles:**


https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shyrdak

http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200906/shyrdak.and.the.art.of.felt.htm

https://museum.gwu.edu/textile-museum

http://guides.libraries.indiana.edu/c.php?g=199627


https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/explore/collections/master/sub/1253103133/?lng=en
Reflection

What went well in the lesson?

Plans to improve the delivery of instruction