

Art Activity

Make your own weaving



Grade Level: All

Collection: Pre-Columbian Art

Culture/Region: The Andes

Subject Area: Fine Arts, Visual Arts

Activity Type: Hands-On Activity

Description: Create your own weaving inspired by textiles of the Andes!



Weaving Traditions in the Andes

The Andes is the longest series of mountains in the world; spanning over 5,500 miles it is the main mountain system in South America. The Andes extend through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and part of Venezuela.

Weaving has been an important aspect of communication between Andean cultures for centuries. Andean textiles have been preserved for over 5,000 years as they have been used for both decorative and functional purposes. Traditional designs known as “Pallay” in Quechua and other garments were used as markers of identity and social status, while others served as a covering for sacred burial rituals. Peruvians used feathers in their designs and spun wool (from llamas, alpacas, and sheep) into yarn that was used to create the textiles. In Peru, prior to Spanish conquest in 1532, designs woven into fabric were an essential element of ritual, social status, and trade. Today textiles remain widely regarded across the region and around the world.

Now it's your turn to create your own weaving inspired by textiles of the Andes!

Materials

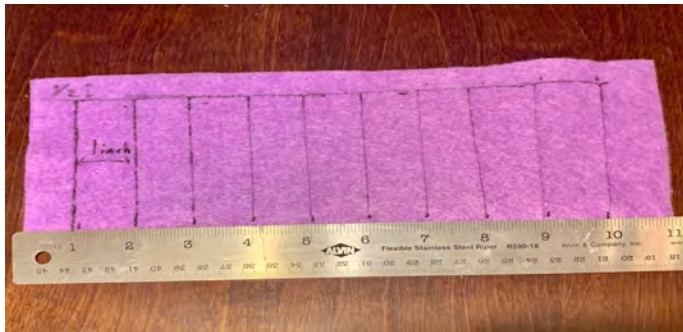
- Felt (cut to 8" x 11")
- Cardstock
- Stapler
- Yarn
- Ruler (or any straight edge)
- Pen or Pencil
- **Optional:** If you do not have felt, feel free to use cardstock or a cut down paper grocery bag instead. Swap out yarn for strips of different recycled materials like newspaper, magazine pages, plastic bags, or old t-shirts. You could also explore using other materials - the possibilities are endless!

Creating your own weaving:

1. Fold your felt in half horizontally (like a hot-dog bun).



2. Using a ruler (or any straight edge) and pencil, draw about ten (10) vertical lines up from the folded edge. Space your lines about an inch apart from each other. Make sure to stop your line before you reach the very top of the felt.



3. Starting from the folded edge, use scissors to cut the felt along the pencil lines. Make sure you do not cut all the way to the top of the felt.



4. Open the felt sheet. **Optional:** if you want to make your felt a bit more sturdy, you can back it with a sheet of cardstock. Center your felt on the card stock and staple each corner of the felt to the sheet of cardstock.



5. Select your yarn or other weaving materials. You will need approximately twenty strips for your weaving.



6. Weave the first piece of yarn (or other material) through the felt using the under-over weaving technique called *the Plain Weave*:

- a. First, start by pulling a piece of yarn under the first cut felt strip and then weave the yarn over the next felt strip and back under the next strip.
- b. Continue this pattern until you have gone “under” and “over” each cut felt strip.
- c. Once you reach the end of the row, push the yarn down to the bottom of the felt so that it is pressed evenly at the bottom.



Under, then over, weaving pattern



Over, then under, weaving pattern

7. Select another piece of yarn and repeat this over-under weaving technique (also known as *Plain Weave*). Make sure you alternate whether you first start over or under. Continue this weaving technique until you use all the yarn. Make sure to push the yarn to the bottom of the felt after completing each row.

8. Once you are finished weaving, tie the loose ends of the yarn together so that your weaving stays secure.

9. Cut any excess yarn from the knots, and remove the staples from the corners, separating the felt from the card stock.



Optional: Try using different recycled materials to weave with instead of yarn. Do you have old t-shirts that you can cut into thin strips? Or, perhaps, you have newspapers, magazines, tissue paper, or ribbons that you can use! The options are endless.

Explore and enjoy the many ways you can use or display your woven textile!

Be Inspired by Works in VMFA's collection!



Tabard, AD 400 - 700

Unidentified Nazca Artist

South Coast, Peru, Andean, South America

Feathers on cotton

Pre-Columbian Art, 60.44.3

Perhaps considered the most precious luxury item by Ancient Andean cultures, this masterpiece of featherwork is one of only three Nazca tabards known to exist. The name tabard applies to this garment because it was designed to hang straight down from the bearer's shoulders and was not tied or sewn at the sides, which allowed the feathers to hang freely and catch the light.

The feathers come from tropical Amazonian birds but the exact species of each feather is yet to be determined. Based on other known examples of Nazca and Wari featherworks, however, the blue and yellow feathers are probably from the macaw and the coral-colored feathers from the flamingo.

The imagery on the tabard is generally understood to be a pair of supernatural creatures with feline fangs and claws on the front of the garment. The other forms depicted are most likely marine creatures, resembling sea animals also seen on Nazca ceramics.



Poncho, ca. AD 900

Unidentified Tiwanaku Artist

South Central Highlands, Peru or

Bolivia, Andean, South America

Wool and cotton

Pre-Columbian Art

61.32

Woven wool and cotton ponchos such as this example were worn with pride as a sign of high social and economic status. Images of stylized birds arranged in repeated bands not only created a pleasing visual effect but symbolically associated the wearer with the supernatural powers of flight and transcendence.