

Teachers' Notes: Constructing with Fabric & Fibre

by Una Kelly

Follow-on Activities

Infants

Explore the possibilities of fabric and fibre as media for imaginative expression (curriculum page 23)

Children are asked to look at the opening section of the video, where animals create structures, bird's nests, etc. Young children can choose an animal and using their imaginations, recreate that animal or creatures structure in 3D as seen in the video, using available fibres and string. It is not intended that infants would stitch, but rather glue, tape or wrap structures together. This could be done working in pairs.

First and Second Classes

Make small inventive pieces with fabric and fibre (curriculum page 40)

This age group will enjoy decorating a small piece of fabric; hessian is perfect, about A4 size or smaller. It may be pre-dyed with cold-water dyes. Look at the opening sequence of the video about kites, floating clouds, and spider's webs. Stop the video at a part you choose. Print off this section. Look carefully at the lines in the image. Make your own drawing of this. Now decorate your hessian, based loosely on this image, using whatever available fibres to hand, wool, twine, and florist ribbon. Children of this age can easily use a tapestry needle to gain great control of fibre and create a wonderful inventive piece. Mount on black paper and display. Talk about it, as you saw on the video.

Third and Fourth Classes

Make soft toys emphasising individuality and variety (curriculum page 58)

Older children could select a scene from the opening sequence of the video about floating objects, balloons, clouds, wasps, bees, or whatever springs to mind. Let the children choose their own object. The idea is to create a 3D stuffed or padded object made from fabric and fibre based on an object selected from the video. Use any off-cuts of fabric, and introduce the idea of first making a paper pattern, then using it to cut out the shape in fabric, always placing the paper pattern as close to the edge of the fabric as possible to avoid wastage. At this age, children would be encouraged to begin to stitch the soft-toy objects together, however simply. They could be hung as mobiles for display.

Fifth and Sixth Classes

Make simple character toys (curriculum page 76)

Look at the section of the video showing puppets. Look at the detailing, in the faces and their clothes. Make your own hand puppet and dress it in clothes to match. Now create a theatre for your puppets, using card, fabric and any available

materials for decoration. To add the final touch, get together, write a play and put on a performance.

Skills Section

- Stages involved in creating a puppet based on crumpled up newspaper and masking tape.
 - Construction of head
 - Adding on features
 - Cutting out fabric body
 - Cutting out hands
 - Painting the head
 - Adding fibre hair
 - Adding the final decorative elements
 - Puppet on the hand in motion

- Stages in wrapping fabric with bailing twine or vice versa, plus examples of finished abstract pieces
- Simple knots stage by stage, double knot, joining two pieces of fibre together.

ICT Possibilities

1) Wrap up game: Take a line for a walk on screen. Now click on the 'wrapper' icon and see the line drawing become bound in coils of wool. Add colour. Rotate the coiled creation to see what it looks like from different angles. Can you see the shadow it would create? Press the shadow icon to see.

2) Christo game: Select a famous world landmark, the Eiffel Tower, now wrap it up in Christo fashion.

3) Unravel and knit game: Select a knitted garment. Press the unravel button and drag the mouse to unravel the knitted garment wherever you wish. Now fill in the holes with different knitted patterns from the 20 patterns available. Now design your own knitted garment.

4) Shadow puppet game: Manipulate shadow 2D puppets on screen to tell a story of your creation. Print out the key stages in the story sequence. Display your creation.

Relevant Artists

1. Cathy Prendergast
2. Alice Maher
3. Cathy Owens
4. Alanna O'Kelly
5. Magdalena Abakanowicz
6. Christo
7. Andy Warhol, floating clouds