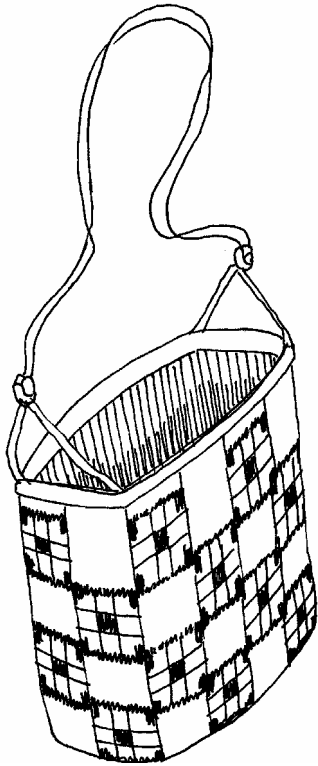


CHAPTER 3 — Yakima Root Bag

Background: The women of the Yakima nation carried root bags when they gathered camas in the spring. Their root bags were made of decorated leather.

Decoration was an important and practical art form among Native American cultures in the Pacific Northwest. Most of the designs applied to useful objects like bowls, robes, and blankets were simplified or stylized and sometimes distorted. The Indians decorated masks that they wore during ceremonies and carved totem poles with the same stylized designs.

Designs familiar today are the raven and sea hawk of the Haida as are those designs on the totem poles of the Kwakiutl and the blankets of the Chilkat.



Materials

- 9- by 12-inch graph paper
- Sheets of drawing paper
- Ruler
- Pencil and erasers
- Colored pens or pencils
- Crayons
- Heavy brown-paper grocery bag
- Scraps of colored paper
- Glue (Tacky glue available in craft shops works best)

Planning

- Find pictures that show Native American basket or bead patterns. Select simple geometric designs with bold patterns and contrasting colors. Interesting shapes are zigzags, diamonds, squares, crosses, or Xs, for example.

Procedure

Initial preparation

- Set up all the supplies the students will need in one central location, such as on a long table or a couple desks in the classroom.
- Be prepared to talk about positive and negative shapes and warm (red, orange, yellow) and cool (green, blue, purple) colors.

Carry out the exercise

Tell the students that they're going to make a root bag from a grocery bag. Ask them to

- Select a design and practice drawing the design on paper.
- When they are ready, draw the design on a strip of graph paper and repeat the design until they cover the graph paper.
- Color the design.
- Draw and color as many strips as they want to glue to the paper bag.

- Arrange the strips on the grocery bag. Suggest to them that they can arrange the strips to form another design like a diamond or a square or they can line up several strips of paper. They can add a different design like a raven in the center of the bag.
- Glue the designed strips to the bag.
- Layer and glue strips of colored paper around the designs. The goal of layering is to ensure that an observer would see patterns, colors, textures, and creative ideas neatly carried through and not see glue or staples.
- Decorate both sides of the bag, if they wish.

Extensions

Display the bags on a wall or bulletin board.

Make a bracelet with the strips of graph paper using the same or similar designs.

