

Bead Weaving on a Loom

Objective: students will be able to describe the process of weaving and demonstrate how Native Americans and others wove beads on a loom to create long, narrow bands such as hair ties and bracelets. They will produce a patterned beaded band influenced by their visual study of Native American geometric patterns in their Web and print resources. They can discuss how the use of color, shape, and value in Native American beading has changed through the years because of the influence of other cultures.

Grade Levels: Grades 5-7th

Time Required: Several class periods (or use of free time)

Materials:

Purchased bead looms or

To make a loom (see instructions below):

Cardboard cut to loom pattern, craft knife, wood glue, pins
2 wide round-headed ½" screws



Beading supplies;

Scissors

Seed or pony beads (larger beads for younger students)

Linen or nylon thread

Needle

Bead patterns

(Graph paper or online interactive bead pattern makers)

Motivation:

Beads have been used by many cultures, including Native American, for thousands of years. A defining moment in Native American cultures came upon their exposure to European glass beads in the seventeenth century – they were ready to use, rich in color, hard and durable, and could be traded for with pelts. Native Americans became very interested in obtaining glass beads. They used the beads to decorate clothing, vessels, tools, and weapons. Seed beads adorned bags, moccasins, hair ties, and other garments. When tourist trade increased after 1900, Native Americans created beaded items especially for this market. Patterns reflected the styles of the time as well as traditional designs. Beading has enjoyed a revival in the crafts in recent years. There are ample selections of beads and other supplies available in local craft stores at moderate prices. Online resources will give students background information and activities with which to learn about Native American beadwork.

Web Resources: http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer
http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/post/htmls/te_trade.html
NativeTech Bead Work information and interactive bead pattern maker
<http://www.nativetech.org/beadwork/beadgraph/index.html>

<http://www.nativetech.org/beadwork/>

Print Resources:

Barth, Georg and Holm, Bill (1993). *Native American Beadwork: Traditional Beading Techniques for Modern-Day Beadweavers*. Schneider Publications.

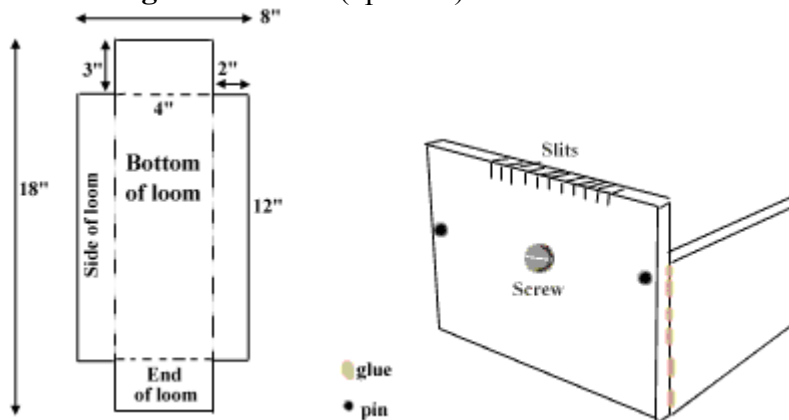
Dean, David (2002). *Beading in the Native American Tradition*. Interweave Press.

Goodhue, Horace (1989). *Indian Beadweaving Patterns*. Bead Craft.

Orchard, William (2002). *Native American Beadwork*. Dover.

Procedure:

Constructing a bead loom (optional):



The diagram shows a piece of heavy corrugated cardboard that has been cut into a cross-shape with the dimensions labeled. The dotted lines represent scoring lines made with a craft knife half-way through the cardboard so that the flaps can fold upward to form the sides and ends of the loom. Apply wood glue (stronger than white glue) to the ends of the sides. Press the ends of the loom over the glued edges. Thrust a sewing pin through the each edge of the loom ends so that it plunges through the glue and into the loom side. This will prevent it popping apart. Use the craft knife to cut 1/8" deep (and 3/16" evenly spaced) slits across the top of the loom ends for the beading thread to be placed. Poke a hole about 1 1/4" below the center of the slits and screw in the half-inch screw to serve as the anchor on each end for the beading thread (leaving about 1/8" of the screw shank showing).

Designing a Pattern: After looking at examples of Native American geometric bead designs in books and online, students can use graph paper or an online interactive to draw or color their bead pattern. It should measure about a 1-1 1/2" wide and about 8" or less (measure the write) long. A patch could be made instead of a bracelet and be square in shape. (Project size may be determined by student capabilities, time constraints, and costs.)

Threading the loom: unroll two or three yards of beading thread from the spool. Wrap one end of the thread around one of the screws on the loom a couple of times. While holding it tight, slide the long end of the thread through a center slit, wind it around the opposite screw, return it through the opposite center slit, etc., (keeping the tension even)

until the thread has gone through all the slits needed (one more than the number of beads wide your design is). Cut and tie off the thread on the nearest screw.



Commercial Loom with Seed Beads

Use your needle to pick up the first row of beads from your containers of beads (use a muffin tin or water color pan to separate colors). Follow the color sequence of your pattern. When the beads are all on the needle, slip them down the thread to the bottom, snug against the beading threads. Pass the need UNDER all the warp threads. Hold the beads while you slip each one into lace between successive warp threads. Then pass the needle through the beads from the opposite direction but this time ABOVE all the warp threads. This will lock the beads into place for Row One.

Repeat this sequence for each row. As you near the end of your thread, run it through the bead row an extra (3rd) time and cut it off. Start the next thread by threading it through the same row (4th time) to anchor it, then continue as before. To tie off, leave enough of the warp thread to be able to tie them into a fringe or tuck them into the columns of beads. They could also be folded back and hidden inside a felt backing cut to size and glued or sewed on.

Assessment:

Weaving Techniques: bead pattern should be like the drawn or colored pattern source; beads rows should be even and straight

History: Students will relate how they made their object using the tools, how their design is Native American-inspired, and how Native Americans would have used their object.

Bead Weaving (also see online diagrams for instructions):

Cut off a one-yard length of beading thread. Thread one end through the eye of your needle. Pull the thread through until the length is almost halved (you will adjust as you bead). Tie the long end of your thread to the outside warp thread on the loom (which side depends on whether you are left- or right-handed), leaving at least an inch or two of the end hanging (you will tuck it through the first row of beads later).

Home-made Loom with Pony Beads



Illinois State Board of Education Goals and Standards Addressed:

Visual Arts: 25.B.2 Understand how elements and principles combine within an art form to express ideas.

26.A.2f Understand the artistic processes of printmaking, weaving, photography and sculpture

26.A.3e Describe how the choices of tools/technologies and processes are used to create specific effects in the arts.

27.B.2 Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.

27.B.3 Know and describe how artists and their works shape culture and increase understanding of societies, past and present.

Social Science:

18.C.2 Describe how changes in production (e.g., hunting and gathering, agricultural, industrial) and population caused changes in social systems.