

NW Coastal Button Blanket Art Literacy Project

Inspired by NW Coastal Native People

Students will create felt and button blanket piece in the style of NW Coastal People.

“Women of the different nations would transform those ordinary looking blankets into those gorgeous ceremonial capes or robes by applying a crest surrounded by a frame, both of contrasting color to the blanket (if the blanket was blue, the crest and frame would often be red for example). Oftentimes, they would apply the family crest to the blanket, leading to many different blankets across the nations. At first dentalium shells (tooth/tusk) were often used to line the crest or the frame, making it visible from a distance. Abalone shells were also used, as they reflected light when dancers danced around a fire for example. When they began trading with the fur traders, other materials such as pearl buttons began to be used. Today, you will see button blankets with shell buttons, plastic buttons (at times) and even beads. They are considered west coast regalia. They are worn only on special occasions.” Tony Tate, <http://traditionalnativehealing.com/west-coast-button-blankets-gorgeous-and-meaningful>

Supplies:

Red and black felt pieces	Scissors
Colorful plastic buttons	Glue
Foam shapes	Animal & shape templates (in binder)
Blank sticker for name	Pencil/pen

Setup notes

Cover desks with a placemat or newspaper. (optional)

The Project

- Write name on sticker and apply to back of red felt
- *Older grades only:* Use template to trace around animal shape on black felt using chalk; cut out animal shape (for younger grades this step should be completed ahead of time)
- Glue the animal shape onto red felt piece (for younger grades this step may be completed ahead of time)
- Cut shapes out of foam (students may choose to draw/trace & cut NW Coastal symbols) or use precut foam shapes/scraps
- Glue foam shapes and buttons onto the animal shape to create desired design

Clean up & Display

- Wipe up any glue from the desks.
- Mount artwork onto construction paper and add a label with the student's info. Hang on the Art Lit board or where the teacher wants the artwork displayed.

Tips

Encourage students to use enough glue, particularly if they are using several buttons

The Art Lit team at Byrom created this project! Thank you!!