

# Navajo Inspired Woven Bags

## Exploring Navajo Weaving Tradition



**GRADE LEVEL: 6TH-12TH**

### **OBJECTIVE:**

- To introduce students to the art and cultural significance of Navajo weaving.
- To teach basic weaving techniques and patterns inspired by Navajo designs.
- To encourage appreciation for cultural heritage and creativity.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Cardboard looms 12"x5" for cell phone case; 9.75"x13" for book/iPad bag (pre-made or students can create their own)
- Yarn in various colors
- Thin cotton string for warp thread
- Scissors
- Weaving needles or large blunt needles
- Assorted large buttons (optional)
- clipboard to make handles (optional)
- Crochet needle to help pull ends through when finished.
- Printed images of Navajo textiles for reference
- White paper or grid paper and colored pencils for designing patterns
- History books or online resources about Navajo weaving

### **LESSON PLAN**

#### ***Introduction***

1. Begin by discussing the importance of textiles in various cultures, and introduce the Navajo weaving tradition.
2. Show images of Navajo textiles and briefly explain their cultural significance and historical context.
3. Cultural Context

4. Provide a brief overview of the Navajo people, their history, and their relationship with weaving.
5. Discuss how materials were sourced and dyed traditionally, emphasizing the natural elements used.

### ***Designing Patterns***

1. Distribute white paper or grid paper and colored pencils to students.
2. Encourage students to create their own simple weaving patterns inspired by Navajo designs. Emphasize the use of geometric shapes and symmetry. Students can create a single tapestry or woven bag.

### ***Setting Up the Loom***

1. Explain the parts of the cardboard loom and demonstrate how to set it up.
2. Assist students in attaching the warp (vertical) threads to the loom, emphasizing the importance of even tension.

### ***Weaving Techniques***

1. Demonstrate basic weaving techniques such as the “over and under” pattern.
2. Guide students through weaving their chosen colors, showing them how to create shapes and patterns.
3. Encourage experimentation with different colors and textures to replicate the richness of Navajo textiles.
4. Provide hand outs with illustrations of various weaving techniques for students to use. Provide demonstration as needed.
5. Demonstrate how to get weaving off of loom and create finishing touches

### ***Bag Techniques***

1. Demonstrate how to weave around the entire loom.
2. Discuss and demonstrate various weaving patterns and techniques.
3. Demonstrate how to tie off ends and make finishing touches to the edge and for strap.

### ***Reflection and Discussion***

1. Once students have woven a small section, gather them for a reflection on their experiences.
2. Discuss challenges faced, favorite parts of the process, and how they incorporated Navajo-inspired patterns.

### ***Closure***

1. Conclude by highlighting the importance of preserving cultural traditions and creativity.
2. Showcase students’ woven pieces and let them share their designs and what they learned.
3. Homework/Extension:
4. Encourage students to research more about Navajo weaving at home and share their findings in the next class.
5. Have students continue weaving their pieces as a longer-term project, experimenting with more complex patterns.

### ***Assessment:***

- Students’ understanding of Navajo weaving and its cultural significance can be assessed through class participation and discussions.
- Evaluate the creativity and effort put into their weaving patterns and designs.
- Peer assessment could be incorporated, where students provide feedback on each other’s projects.
- Note: This lesson plan can be adapted for different grade levels and adjusted based on the available time and resources. It’s important to approach cultural topics with sensitivity and respect, ensuring that the focus is on appreciation and learning rather than appropriation.

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### **Resources**

Davidson, B., and Biddle P., The Magazine Antiques, Object lesson: The Warp, Weft, What, and Why of Navajo Weavings, September 10, 2021

<https://www.themagazineantiques.com/article/object-lesson-the-warp-weft-what-and-why-of-navajo-weavings/>

My videos on how to make this bag

How to Weave a Bag part 1

<https://youtu.be/MxVAvq8jssw>

How to Weave a Bag part 2

Student Examples

