

# Felt Bags (art + math, art + social studies)

The history of bags, pouches and purses spans the entire globe, encompassing practically every civilization. Bags have been a staple accessory in most cultures - to keep money, food and other everyday necessities close at hand. In western cultures, purses and pouches were first worn by men as a status symbol and have developed into a fashion accessory that will often surpass clothing in careful design and aesthetics.

For centuries, craftsmen in Tibetan cultures have been making colorful bags and clothing from wool that has been boiled and pressed into a fabric known as felt. Felt is still made by hand in traditional methods in many parts of the world.

This lesson plan can be linked with Asian studies or with other cultural studies. It incorporates classroom-friendly acrylic felt and basic sewing/assemblage skills that can be adjusted for various age levels. Measuring and weaving will require students to use their knowledge of math skills

## Grade Levels 3-8

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. / as needed.*



## Process for Woven Felt Bag, example upper right side of page, Grades 5-8

1. Using a pencil, measure 1" from all sides of a piece of felt and mark with a dot in 2 places. Draw a line between the dots with the ruler.
2. Mark 1" dots on the short side of the piece of felt, along the 1" line. Join the dots, so there will be seven vertical lines running from within the 1" border. Using scissors, cut along each of these lines - do not cut into the border!
3. Repeat steps one and two on a second piece of felt. Use the same color felt.
4. Cut 3/4" wide x 12" long strips of other colors of felt. Beginning in the lower left hand corner, weave the strip under the first cut on the felt, over the next and continue. Push the strip down snugly to the bottom and repeat with the next color strip. Repeat until the side is filled

## Materials

**Acrylic Felt**, (63201-1003), 100 piece package of assorted colors, need at least three pieces per student. Also, assorted colors **Felt by the yard** (63201-), need one 3" wide x 36" long piece per student for a bag strap

**Blick White Glue** (23872-1065), share six 8-oz bottles across classroom

**Tonic® Kush-Grip Scissors** (57150-1085), need one per student

**Embroidery Floss**, assorted colors (63100-1009), share one 24-skein package across classroom

**Blick Economy Graphite Pencil** (20302-2009), box of 12, need one per student

**Alvin® 12" Non-Skid Ruler** (55632-1012), need one per student

**Trait-Tex® Cotton Warp**, (65211-1475) 800-yd cone, need approximately 40" per student

Optional Materials for embellishment

**Indian Seed Beads** (60725-1000)

**Opaque E-Beads** (60726-1000)

**Pony Beads** (60704-1002)

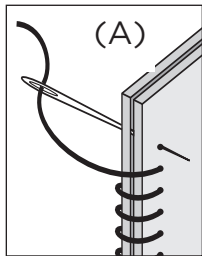
**Craft Button Assortment** (61495-1001)

Plastic Straws

## Process for Woven Felt Bag, continued

with woven felt. Repeat this step on the second 9 x 12 piece.

- When both sides are woven, place on top each other with pencil lines on the inside. Glue both sides and bottom 1/2" all the way around. Use dots of glue on all loose felt strips. Allow to dry.
- Cut a 3" wide strip of felt from a 36" long piece for the shoulder strap. Fold in half lengthwise. Whip stitch the outside edge with embroidery thread (whip stitch is sewing through the felt and around the edge, back through the felt, see (A)). Repeat stitch at 1/4" intervals until the 36 inches is complete.
- Attach each end to top corners of the bag and secure with stitches. Add a button to cover the stitches.



- Fold the felt into the envelope shape again, glue the front and back (the larger pieces) together on the edges. Hold down for a minute to secure. The flap section can be left square, rounded or cut to a point. Hang beads or buttons on the edge to weight down the flap.
- Cut a plastic straw to 4-1/2" long. Glue it on the fold between the flap and the back. Use it as a channel for stringing the 40" length of cotton warp. Leave equal lengths on both sides.
- Thread on the beads. Leave 3" on each end and secure the ends in a knot.

### Options

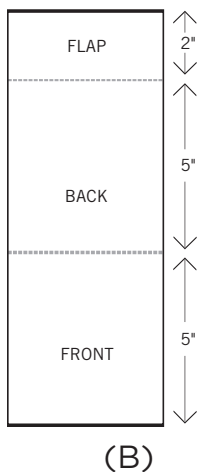
- Stitch the sides with colorful thread.
- Use ribbon or yarn for the strap.

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## Process for Mini Felt Bag, example above, Grades 3-6

- Cut a piece of felt in half lengthwise, to make 2 pieces size 4-1/2" wide x 12" long.
- Fold each piece into an envelope shape, as shown in (B). Notice which portions of the felt will form the front, back and flap of the bag.
- Lay the felt down flat again and embellish with felt shapes, buttons, beads and colorful stitches. Allow glue to dry. Do not sew on area to be folded.



### National Standards:

**Content Standard #2** — Using knowledge of structures and functions

- K-4** Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.
- 5-8** Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas.

**Content Standard #4** — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

- K-4** Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures.
- 5-8** Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.

**Content Standard #6** — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

- K-4** Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.
- 5-8** Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.