

Upcycled “Wild Thing” Mittens

An outgrown sweater becomes
a great pair of costume mittens

(art + literature)

Role-playing and escape into fantasy have always been an important part of childhood, helping children to manage the realities of their lives. This project encourages students to create fantasy mittens that are expressive of their own personal “wild side” emotions. Consider introducing this project by reading “Where the Wild Things Are,” a children’s book by American writer and illustrator Maurice Sendak that beautifully balances the conflicting emotions of anger and comfort.

Using a recycled wool sweater, shrink film, and other adornments, create a fun and functional “Wild Thing” mitten! The ribbing on the sleeve of the sweater becomes the ribbing on the cuff of the mitten. If the upcycled sweater is wool, it can be washed, dried, and made into wool felt before cutting

GRADES K-12 Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Read “Where the Wild Things Are.”
2. Find an outgrown, cast-off, or thrift store sweater (100% wool is best).

Process

1. If the sweater being used is 100% wool, it can be felted by washing it in hot water and then drying it on the “hot” cycle in a clothes dryer, causing it to shrink considerably and “felt” the wool fibers.
2. Cut the sleeves off an old sweater.
3. Lay one arm on top of the sleeve of the sweater so that the cuff ribbing is at the wrist and the hand lies further up the sleeve, toward the shoulder end. If desired, the mitten can be long and extend down the arm, so the cuff will be at mid-arm. Hold fingers together, but move the thumb apart from the fingers.
4. Using a dark marker, trace around the hand and arm, leaving a one-inch border for sewing.



Materials (required)

Upcycled sweater - one per student

Needles, Blunt Tapestry #13, pkg of 12 (65104-1009); need one per student

Delta[®] Sobo[®] Craft and Fabric Glue, 8-oz (23820-1008); share 4 among class

Fiskars[®] Performance Softgrip[®] Titanium Scissors, Double Loop, 7" (57612-1007); share 8 pairs among class

Grafix[®] Shrink Films, pkg of 6 sheets, white (61412-2020) or black (61412-1010); need one half sheet per student

Sakura[®] Permapaque[®] Markers, set of 16 colors (21377-0169); share 2 sets among class

Printed Felt Swatches, assorted patterns (63229-); share 2 pkgs among class

Craft Button Assortment, 1-lb (61495-1001); share one bag among class

Creativity Street[®] Embroidery Floss, set of 24 skeins (63100-1009); share one set among class

Optional Materials

Clover[®] Natural Wool Roving (63239-)

Felting Needles, pkg of 4 (63122-1004)

Clover[®] Needle Felting Mats (63236-)

Bendable Blunt Plastic Needle, pkg of 12 (65103-1009)

Carno[®] Natura[®] Deluxe Acrylic Yarn, 3-oz (65226-)



Process, continued

5. Cut the mitten out, through both layers, cutting just inside the traced line.
6. Repeat for the other hand.
7. Embellish the body of the mitten by adding buttons, yarn stripes, needle felted additions (see note), or animal print felt pieces. Glue or sew on the embellishments.
8. Sew around the cut edges of the mitten. Bendable plastic needles are well-suited for younger students, while older students may use tapestry needles.
9. Make "wild" claws out of shrink film! Using permanent colored and metallic markers, draw large claws on a sheet of shrink film. Make the claws about half as long as the page. Add polka dots, leopard striping, or fake fur designs. Punch at least three holes along the bottom edge of the claws with a hole punch. Place them on a medium-weight piece of cardboard, and bake them in a regular oven or toaster oven at 300-350 degrees for 2-3 minutes. To keep the claws from curling, top them with a piece of parchment paper. Alternately, use an embossing tool to shrink the film.
10. Sew the claws onto the mittens and explore the wild side!

NOTE: To add needle felted additions, tear small amounts of wool from the ball of wool rove, and use a felting needle to punch through the wool into the mitten, and into a felting mat that is placed beneath the mitten. Punch many times to firmly adhere the wool to the mitten. Occasionally place a hand into the mitten to separate the fibers.

Options

- Make a hat using the bottom half of the sweater.
- Add shrink film ears with wool tufts.



Step 1: Trace around the hand and wrist onto the sweater sleeve. Cut out and repeat for the other hand.



Step 2: Embellish the mitten and sew the seams.



Step 3: Make claws out of shrink film to add to "Wild Thing" mittens!

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

K-4 Students describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

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

K-4 Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning

5-8 Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

9-12 Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art