

Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art

Start with Art

Andean Dreamers:

Pre-Columbian Inca Textiles

September 3 – October 24, 2010

Arts Integration Educator's Guide for Teachers and Parents

PRE-COLUMBIAN INCA TEXTILES:

About Incan Weaving:

Weaving was one of the most important crafts of the ancient Incas. The women did most of the dying, spinning, and weaving of cloth. However, many Incan men were also weavers.

The Incas used wool [from American camelids] for weaving most of their cloth. Llama wool is very coarse and is varied in color. The Incas used it to make blankets and ropes. Wool from the alpaca is white with some gray and brown. The Incas used alpaca wool to weave clothing. The wool from the vicuña is a soft fiber. They used vicuña wool for weaving the finest cloth. When the Spanish invaders first saw cloth woven from vicuña wool, they thought it was silk.

Cotton could not be grown in the mountain regions of the Incas. When the Incan empire spread to the coast, cotton became available through trade with other tribes and soon became popular with the Incan weavers.

Three types of looms were used by Incan weavers. The most unusual was the backstrap loom. They tied one end of the loom to a tree. They then tied the other end to a belt that went around the weaver's back. The Incas also

used a horizontal loom. It was stretched about a foot off the ground between wooden supports. They also used a vertical loom, attached to a wall. The weaver using this loom would stand to work.



Incan cloth had bright, bold colors. They obtained the colors to dye the wool from many sources. They used metals such as copper and tin for some of the dyes. The Incas also used vegetable dyes. The indigo plant gave a bright blue dye, and the achiote tree was the source of a brilliant red dye. A dye made from ground shellfish provided a deep purple color.

Several steps were necessary in the production of wool cloth. The Incas gathered the wool from the animals. The women then dyed the wool. After drying it, they spun the wool into thread. Next, they wove the thread into cloth. The Incan weavers used geometric patterns. Seldom did a weaver repeat the same pattern.

The Incas used embroidery to decorate some of the cloth. Some of the better garments had decorations of gold, silver, or copper attached to them, and some garments had feathers woven into them for extra color and decoration.

A group of women called the “chosen women” lived in the temples. They wove the finest wool into garments for the ruler. He only wore each garment once, and then it was destroyed.

Today, descendants of the ancient Incas still weave beautiful, bright textiles. The methods and designs used have remained unchanged for about 3,000 years.

Courtesy of: Kramme, M. *Mayan, Incan, and Aztec Civilizations*, USA, Mark Twain Media Inc, 1996.

POINT-OF-ENTRY:

Weave a Mat:

OK PASS (listed for 5th grade but applicable to additional grade levels): VA 3.1-3, 3.5, 4.1-3

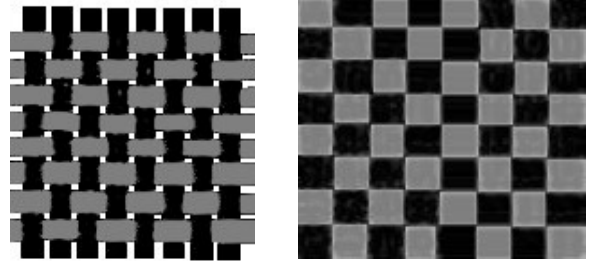
Supplies: 1 sheet of construction paper, paper for weaving strips (see below), scissors, ruler, pencil

1. Observe and study the Pre-Columbian Incan weaving at the museum.
2. Collect your supplies.
3. Fold the stiff paper in half horizontally.
4. Use the ruler to measure 1” along the edge opposite from the fold. Draw a pencil line parallel to the edge. This is the guide line.
5. Use the ruler to measure and the pencil to draw several lines every 1.5” perpendicular to the edge. Cut the along the perpendicular lines, being careful to stop at the guide line. Now you have several strips. These are your *warp* strips.
6. Create paper *weft* strips from other papers. You can use any paper—copy paper, construction paper, magazines, paper that you’ve painted—feel free to be creative! For the best results, the paper strips should be a different color than the cut paper mat. Make the strips the same length as the paper and 1.5” wide.

7. Now, weave the *weft* strips through the *warp* strips on the mat.

For a checkerboard pattern, weave your strips:

Over 1, Under 1, Over 1, Under 1, (continue)
Under 1, Over 1, Under 1, Over 1, (continue)
Over 1, Under 1, Over 1, Under 1, (continue)
Under 1, Over 1, Under 1, Over 1, (continue)
REPEAT, alternating each strip



Be sure to push your *weft* strips down tight!

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

Social Studies:

OK PASS (listed for 5th grade but applicable to additional grade levels): **SS 1.1, 2.1-2**

Much can be learned about the Inca culture, the events and lives of these Andean peoples from the writings and illustrations of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala. Several illustrations by Guamán Poma are included in the *Andean Dreamers* exhibition and can also be seen on the first page of this study guide.

Have students study the eight illustrations by Guamán Poma in the handout “The Illustrations of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala” available at www.mgmoa.org/lesson-plans.

What do they reveal about the daily lives of Inca children? How were their lives different and similar to those of children today? Students should try to determine the content of the illustrations before reading the captions on the last page.

Discuss as a class the aspects of Guamán Poma’s life that enabled him to write the letter providing valuable insight into Inca life. Discuss the ways in which Guamán Poma might have been biased against the Spanish and the Incas.

Language Arts:

OK PASS (listed for 5th grade but applicable to additional grade levels): **R/L 3.4.a, WGU&M 2.2**

After students review the handout “The Illustrations of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala” available at www.mgmoa.org/lesson-plans, discuss as a class whether Guamán Poma’s letter was fiction or nonfiction. How was the literary form chosen by the author suitable to his purpose?

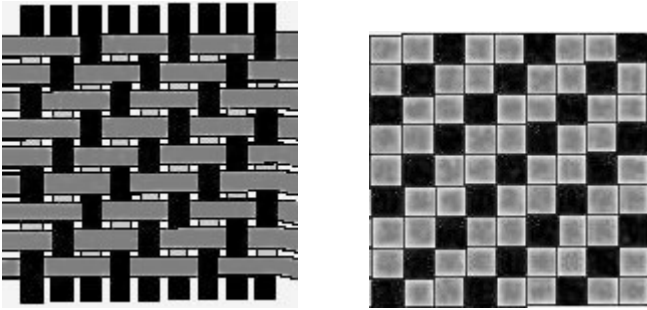
Then, students should write a fictional narrative about the life of an Inca child. Students may look to additional resources for further information and inspiration.

Math:

OK PASS (listed for 5th grade but applicable to additional grade levels): **MPS 1.3, 4.4**

Challenge students to devise new designs when weaving their mats. Have them work out their design patterns first in writing, as in the checkerboard example, and then have them try their patterns to see if the new designs work out as expected.

Present students with weaving designs, such as the twill weave (below) and challenge students to determine the patterns in writing and in practice.



Science:

OK PASS (listed for 5th grade but applicable to additional grade levels): **SP&I 1.2, LS 2.2**

The earliest camelids (members of the scientific family Camelidae) were native to the Americas, with some migrating westward to Asia beginning 2-3 million years ago. Their descendants had to adapt to survive in their new environments.

Have students compare the camelids species of Africa/Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. How did the camelids of these different areas adapt to survive? What environmental factors led to the adaptations? Did these adaptations create differentiations in the way that humans use the animals (i.e. food source, pack animals, wool, etc.)? How are the different camelids alike? How are they different?

NOTES: