

SELECTION 11

CREATE A BOLIVIAN CRAFT

OBJECTIVE

To allow children to create a craft in the style of a Bolivian handicraft.

CONNECTING ACTIVITIES

Explore the world of the artisans

Show the students the photo of the appliquéd drawstring bag enclosed in the activity and learning box. This bag was purchased at an artisans' co-op in Santa Cruz.

The bag was made by women who started working together in 1987. At first the group—called “Embroiderers Association of Los Tabijos”—consisted of only six women. Today there are some 35 women in the group. (Los Tabijos is the name of their village, which is in the department, or state, of Santa Cruz.)

This is what they say about their work: “Each piece we make is unique; it’s a creation in which we show the life of our town: the planting, the harvest, the festivals and other things. In this way we are able to make a living with our imagination and the skill of our hands.”

Ask the students to describe what is depicted on the cloth bag. Can they name the animals shown and the activities portrayed? Ask them to reflect on the importance of nature and the land for rural families, many of whom sustain themselves through farming, fishing, etc.

Create an appliquéd bag

The finished bag in the photo measures approximately 22 x 30 centimeters or 9 x 12 inches. Larger bags could be made as well.

Use a solid color for the bag, something appropriate for the scene’s background, and a medium-weight cotton or cotton-polyester blend fabric. Cut the fabric larger than what is desired for the finished bag size, to allow for seam allowances. The bag in the photo has been outfitted for the colorful drawstring cord by sewing two long rectangular “hoops” on each side of the bag.

Here are directions for a bag that features a “tube” casing for the drawstring running around the top of the entire bag:

1. Cut the fabric so that the piece is as wide as the finished bag will be and two times as long as the finished bag will be. (Cut it an inch—2.5 centimeters—larger both ways to allow for seam allowances.)
2. Fold the piece in half lengthwise, right sides together, and stitch up the sides (1/2-inch—1.3 centimeters—seam allowances) to about 7.5 centimeters or 3 inches from the top.
3. Create a folded “seam allowance” on the front and back *side* edges of the top 7.5 centimeters or 3 inches and stitch these folded pieces down.
4. To make the cord casing, fold the top edges over about 2 1/2 inches or 6.4 centimeters. Turn the edge under 1/2-inch (1.3 centimeters) and stitch 1/4-inch (.65 centimeters) from bottom edge of folded casing. Stitch 1/2-inch from top edge.
5. Thread drawstring through bag, first through casing on one side and then through casing on other side. Knot the two ends of the cord.

For the appliquéd, have the children first sketch out a scene on paper. The scene may represent some activity of their daily life. Use fabric scraps to cut out the various elements. The fabric pieces in the bag shown have been hemmed under before being sewn to the background. Using felt and perhaps a fabric glue, such as Fabri-tac or Aleen’s OK-to-wash-it, may make the project more manageable for younger children and/or their teachers!

The young artists can get as creative and fancy as their abilities and interest take them—the bag depicted, for example, features three-dimensional doll-like people and a bit of stuffing under the animals. The fisherwoman is holding a small piece of wood with embroidery thread inserted in it, running to the fish.

Use simple embroidery stitches to add any final details.

Note: Two simpler arts and crafts ideas are provided on page 5, #8 and #10, and a clay project is briefly described on page 22.