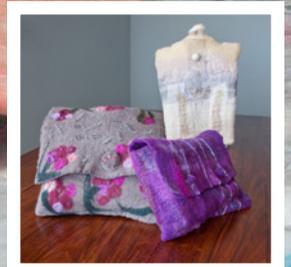
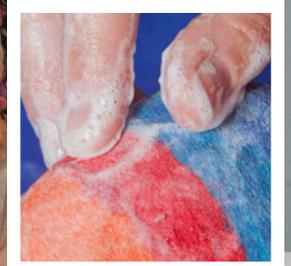


Felting



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

Summary

Felt is the oldest form of fabric known to humankind. It predates weaving and knitting. It was the first fabric to be made from wool as it could be made anywhere without any special equipment, this was essential for nomadic people. As there was always a ready supply of wool, felt became an important fabric to have; they could make clothes for babies and adults, bags, saddle clothes, hats, shoes and even nappies and of course homes. The oldest archaeological finds were decorative motifs made of felt in Turkey around 6500 to 3000BC. In Southern Siberia there are archaeological finds of felt found inside a frozen tomb of a nomadic tribal chief that dates from the fifth century BC. In the National Museum of Copenhagen there are preserved caps of thick solid felt from the early Bronze age. The ancient Romans and Greeks knew of felt. Roman soldiers were equipped with felt breast plates for protection from arrows, also had felt tunics, boots and socks.

Felt has so many properties; it is flexible and can be shaped, it can be dyed easily, it breathes well, it holds water, it can shut out sound, it can be thick or thin, it can also repel water and sea spray, it is shock absorbent and probably most important of all it keeps you warm.

Today felt is made for different purposes. It is used in making cars and acts as soundproofing and stops vibrations inside the car; it also collects tiny bits of dirt getting into small joins. Felt is also used in making musical instruments for example the piano hammers are made of felt to control the key noise.

Many crafts people design beautiful things by making felt, some use fabric with the felt making and this is called nuno felt making.

Because it is very versatile crafts people like to use lots of different colours and different techniques to make a range of items such as bags, purses, clothes, slippers, masks, puppets, hats and even toys.

Felt is made by using clean and carded wool; each wool fibre is covered in scales. Warm water opens the scales. Feltmakers like to use soap as this changes the chemistry of wool. A lot of rubbing and rolling is needed to bond the wool fibres together.



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

Case Study

Sonia Mrowiec, Cambridgeshire.

My interest in felt making starting many years ago. It gives me the opportunity to create various shaped pieces as well as using fabrics with the felt. The process of felt making fascinates me as it is so versatile; I enjoy exploring and testing new techniques. I tend to focus on using different fabrics with felt as each fabric creates something different each time, this is called nuno felt making. I like making scarves and seamless felt items like bags.

I am inspired by the natural landscapes around Cambridgeshire it has many meadows, woodlands, fields, fens and rivers and streams. When walking I like to record what I have seen by taking photos of natural landscapes and using them in my work. I blend different colours of wool by carding them together. Wool is a natural fibre and resource our nation produces lots of wool. Man made fibres are much more expensive to produce. Making things ourselves gives us a powerful feeling of self sufficiency.



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

Activity Idea

Felt making can be fun and full of surprises. Although it can be physically demanding it gives children the opportunity to work with textures and colour. They begin to understand where different textiles come from (wool from sheep) and the process a felt maker has to undergo to make felt. By using the pebble to make felt with gives children an opportunity to develop their fine motor skills and co-ordination. It provides a multi sensory and a creative learning opportunity which is accessible to most children.

For teachers this activity can provide many cross curricular links;

Science the properties of materials - felt making is a process where there is an irreversible change the felt can not be changed back into wool fibres. Felt has many useful properties it can be an insulator, provide sound proofing, hold water and is very flexible

Art and Design many garments and accessories are made of felt typically felt hats. There is the social history of the 'Mad Hatters' who used mercury as part of the process making their hats and became quite ill in doing so. Many cultures around the world have strong traditions of making felt and a particularly popular item is the yurt.

Design and Technology

Yurts are made of felt as they are easy to make and carry which suits many nomadic tribes. Felt yurts can be rolled up and used whenever needed this provides a ready home. The whole community are involved in making them. The resources used to make them are locally available sheep and trees which makes them a sustainable product lasting many, many years and also ecologically friendly.

YOU WILL NEED

Merino wool fibres various colours
Soapy water (a mix of warm water and washing up liquid)
Bowl to hold the soapy water
Smooth clean pebble

TIME TO MAKE

1 Hour

SUGGESTED SUPPLIERS

Wool fibres from ;

Wingham Wool Work 70 Main Street,
Wentworth, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S62
7TN or www.winghamwoolwork.co.uk

Pebbles from any garden centre

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.winghamwoolwork.co.uk

www.feltmakers.com



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

STEP 1

Clean a smooth pebble ready to use.

Choose a photo or picture based on a natural landscape or painting to work from.



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

STEP 2

Gather the wool colours that match your art work – you may want to finger card two colours together to 'mix' them. This is simply holding them together and pulling them apart with your fingers.



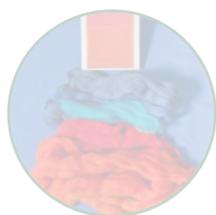
Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

STEP 3

Have a bowl of soapy warm water ready to use.

Start on one side of the pebble wrap the wool around the pebble. Dip into the soapy water to make one of your hands wet and smooth the wool around the pebble.

Dry your hands each time you need to add more wool around the pebble to stop it sticking to you.



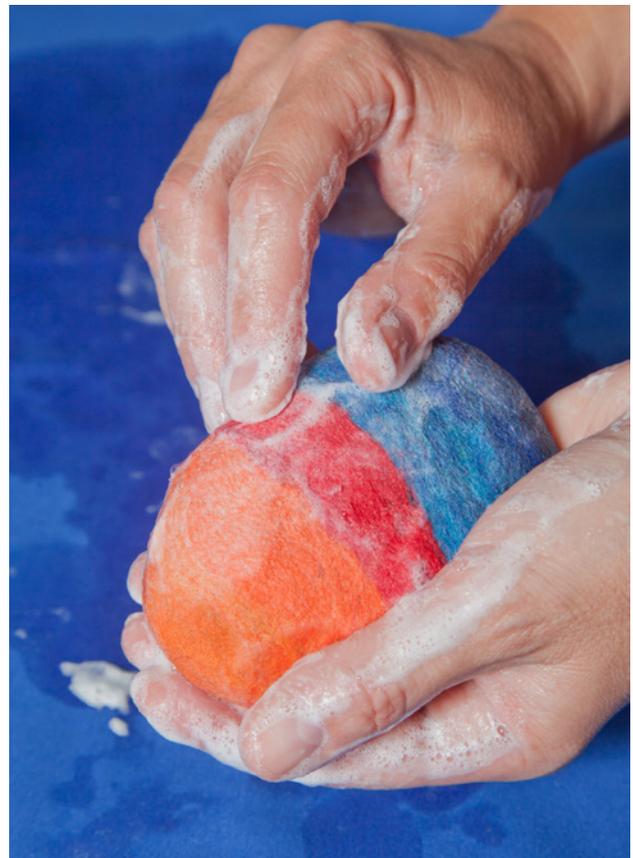
Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

STEP 4

Now work on the other side and wind the wool around the whole pebble. Introduce the soapy water with your hands again as this gives you control over how much to use.

When the pebble is covered in enough wool you can start working on the wool by gently and carefully smoothing it over with the soapy warm water.

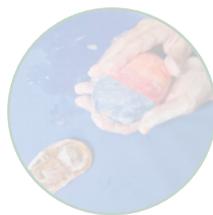
Work gently to start with so you don't move the wool too much off the pebble. When the wool starts to bond you can then work more vigorously and add more soapy water and roll the pebble around in your hand. Work up quite a lather this will make the process work faster. Make sure the water doesn't go cold either.



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

STEP 5

Check the fibres are bonding together; you can tell when this happens as there is no 'give' with the wool you can't move them apart. Keep working on the pebble until all of the wool has felted and bonded together.



Countryside Crafts: Feltmaking

STEP 6

Finally rinse in warm water under a tap and leave to dry. You can then compare your pebble with your art work.

