



www.MaineAgintheClassroom.org

Lesson 5: A Colorful Life Lesson Ideas for Alignment

Developed by Grace Morgan

Maine Learning Results

ELA

B5a Writing: Practical Application

E1a Listening

SS

E2a Individual, Cultural and Global Connections in History

VPA

B1 Media Skills

E5c, e Interpersonal Skills

Common Core

ELA

Speaking and Listening: 4

Writing: 4



Lesson Summary: Native Americans and colonists used natural substances to dye fibers. Adding color to clothing, blankets and baskets became common practice. Mordants were used to “set” the color. Often, yarn was dyed and stored until a traveling weaver used the dyed yarn along with natural (not dyed) yarn to create many colonial weaving patterns. Students will be using natural substances to dye fiber/fabric samples much like the colonists did long ago.

Teacher Note: Although all dye and mordant substances for this activity are all edible and safe for student use, it is important that they have eye protection and protection for their clothes (garbage bags with holes for head and arms will work well). Rotating small groups through several dye stations would work well.

Learning Objectives:

The student will:

- Follow the recipes and mix the dye-baths.
- Follow either written or oral directions to dye the fibers/fabric provided.
- Create group posters to provide dye sample information: include dye recipes for each color, a creative name for each color and a picture/drawing of the plant used as a dye source for each color.
- Create a collage with dyed materials.
- Write a paragraph explaining the advantages of modern day fiber dyes over the dye substances used by the colonists.



Process:

- Share information from *A Colorful Life* and discuss unfamiliar terms: mordant, chamber pot.
- Introduce dying with natural plant substances. Have class brainstorm possible plants to use for dying yarn.
- Have class check resource books to determine the dye possibilities of the plants listed.
- Follow directions in the Activity sheet.
 - Brew the dye baths
 - Dye fibers/fabric/other materials (example: cotton balls, paper, bits of wood or other items to be used in a collage)
 - Wash dyed fibers/fabric and dry completely
- Working in small groups, create a poster of samples that each group dyed and label with an original name for the color, recipe used, and a picture/drawing of the plant/spice used as the dye substance.
- Individually, create a small collage of dyed fiber/fabrics
- Show class samples of yarn, thread, fabric dyed with modern dyes.
- Have students write a paragraph comparing fiber/fabric dyed with natural dyes to fibers/fabrics dyed with modern dyes. Have them include advantages and disadvantages of each.

