

LESSON PLAN: NATURAL DYES

Author: Maple Ridge Museum

Subjects and Grade Level: Social Studies (Gr. 3)

Objectives: Foster a better understanding of the process of dyeing textiles and how this is a process that is shared by many different cultures.

Materials:

One of the below dyes (see background information), a saucepan and a piece of white fabric

For detailed instructions:

<https://abeautifulmess.com/2017/02/experimenting-with-natural-dyes.html>

Additional Notes:

See background information for which dyes makes which colours.

POSSIBLE OPENING QUESTIONS:

How do you think our modern clothes are coloured? What do you think people used to use in the past to change the colour of their clothes? Why do you think that is? Which colours do you think were difficult to make?

PROCEDURE/STEPS:

1. Open with a discussion about dying clothes and how there is a long history of using natural dyes before the invention of synthetic ones.
2. Follow these instructions to dye a piece of fabric:
 - o Place fabric into a saucepan and pour water over it until it is completely submerged (approx. 2 cups).
 - o Add your dyeing agent to the saucepan and place it over medium high heat.
 - o When small bubbles start to form at the bottom, reduce heat and let simmer for 45 minutes. The longer you let the fabric simmer in the dye, the stronger the colour will be.
 - o When the time is up, remove the fabric and admire it's new colour! Let the fabric cool before wringing it out and hanging it to dry.
3. Finish with a closing discussion.

DISCUSSION AND REVIEW:

Discussion question ideas: Why do you think people dye their clothing? Why do you think some dyes were more expensive or more popular than others?

ASSESSMENT:

ENRICHMENT:

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Some options for natural dyes: ½ cup of kale/spinach - light pale green, 2 red onions skins - purple grey, ½ cup of red cabbage - purple, 2 tsp hibiscus - cool pink, ⅓ cup of blackberries - burgundy, 1 small beet, chopped - magenta, 1 Avocado pit - light peach, 1 tbsp turmeric - bright yellow, 2 yellow onion skins - amber/warm orange, ½ cup of carrots - pale orange.
- There is evidence which was found in the country Georgia of dyed fibers that date to 36,000 years ago.
- Mauve, which is a pale purple, was the first man-made dye and was not discovered until 1856.
- Deep purples and reds were among the most expensive dyes and were often reserved for royalty or nobility.
- Green was also a difficult colour to make as most of the green dyes were muted or dull. In the Victorian period, they used a dye that was made from an arsenic compound which was incredibly toxic. It soon fell out of favour.