People of the Plains: Focus on Native American Art

PPHM: At school lesson on Native American art and everyday objects as Functional Art

TEKS:

Art: 4.1A, 4.1B, 4.2B, 4.2C, 4.4A

The Big Questions: Explain that as they participate in the activities the students will be seeking the answers to these questions.

1. What are “everyday” objects?

2. Do we still use some “everyday” objects similar to what the Native Americans used?

3. Can “everyday” objects be expressions of art?

Objectives:

Students will identify the elements of art and principles of design in Native American artwork

Students will discuss why Native American “everyday” objects are considered Functional Art.

Students will examine elements of art and principles of design in their own “everyday” objects.

Students will create a piece of art based on a Native American object using the elements of art and principles of design.

Materials:

Pictures of Native American objects (Found in introduction on Website)

Parfleche template (below) printed on cardstock, one for each child.

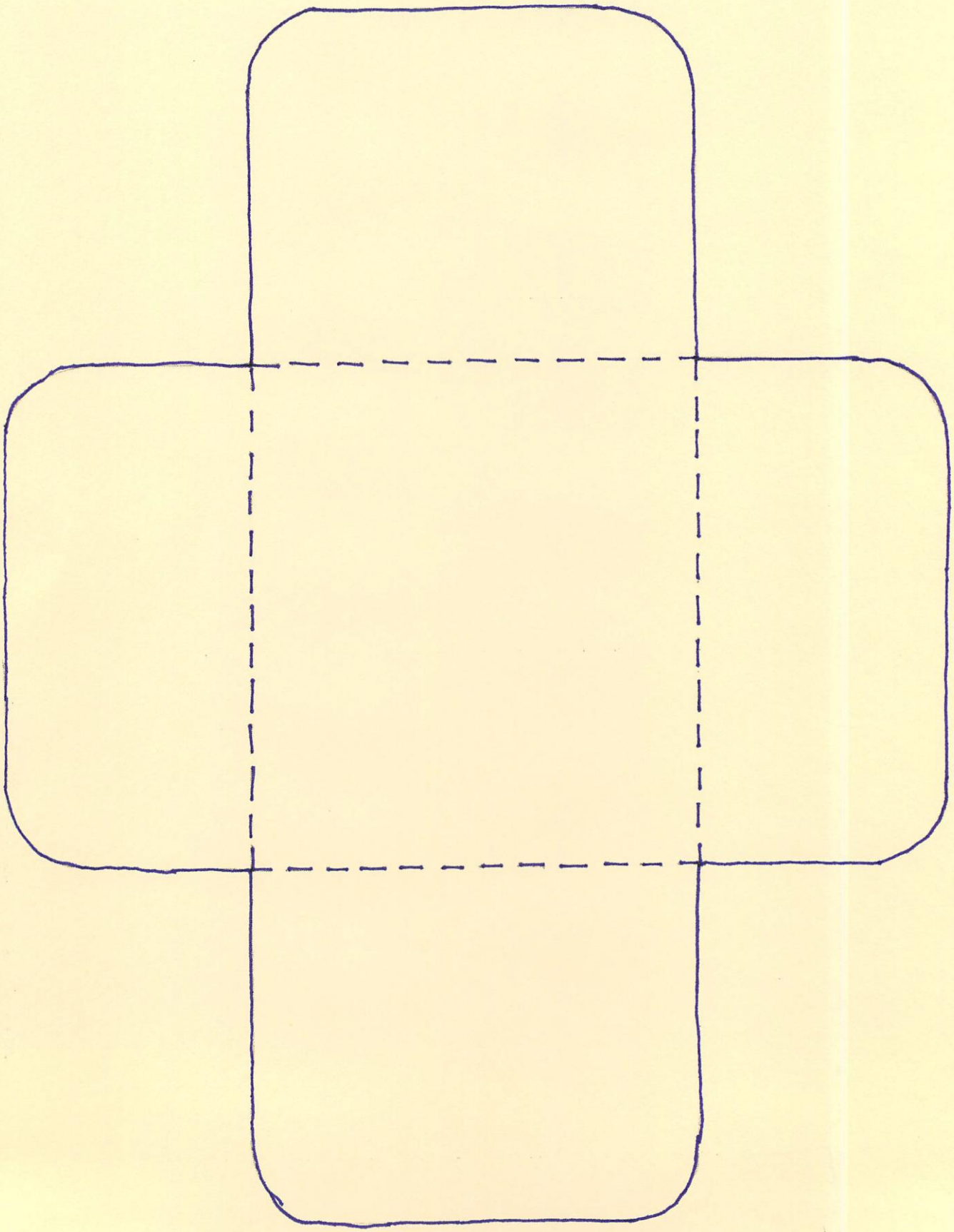
Twine, about 8 inches for each student

Color pencils

Hole punchers and scissors

Procedure:

1. Show the students the pictures of Native American objects and ask them to identify/predict what each item is. (Pictures may be either printed or projected onto a screen) How is each item used? Why was this item useful to the Native Americans? Explain that these objects are examples of Functional Artworks – objects that are designed to have a function or purpose, but are also decorative.
2. Ask the students whether we still use similar items today. We may have different names for the same items, or use something different for the same purpose. How have "everyday" objects used in the Texas Panhandle changed over time?
3. Ask students why they chose the particular backpack they carry. Some will give answers indicating the design and colors entered into their decision. So, do we still decorate our "everyday" objects?
4. Lead your students to the conclusion that people like decorated "everyday" objects because they are aesthetically pleasing. Present the pictures once again asking students to make observations on the some of the elements of art and principles of design.
5. We consider these "everyday" objects to be examples of Native American art. Do you also decorate your "everyday" objects? At this time instruct students to show examples of their own "everyday" art on their folders and binders, and discuss which elements of art or principles of design they used to decorate their object.
6. Students will now create their own version of a Native American "everyday" object – a parfleche. Explain that a parfleche was a leather envelope that Native Americans used to hold their important personal items, similar to the students' backpacks. Provide each student with a cardstock template of the parfleche. Students will cut them out, decorate them using ideas from the elements of art and principles of design, and then use the hole punchers and twine to close the parfleche.

Assessment:

Once the artworks are complete, students will present their parfleche to the class and discuss which art elements and principles of design they used, as well as how they were influenced by one of the American Indian pieces of art seen in the pictures at the beginning of the lesson.