

Textiles from Around the World



by **Gloria Jasperse**

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

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School Publishers

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Table of Contents

A Pretty Piece of Cloth	3
The Navajo and the Hopi	4
The Asante	8
The Maya	10
The Maori	12
The Beauty of Textiles	14




🔊 A Pretty Piece of Cloth

What do you see when you look at a beautiful piece of fabric? If you look closely, you will see more than just **yarn** or threads. You may find shapes, symbols, and colors that tell stories or have special meaning.

The Navajo and the Hopi

The Navajo and the Hopi have been weaving for hundreds of years. Today, these two nations live mostly in the states of New Mexico and Arizona.

 In the past, both the Navajo and the Hopi grew cotton and used it to **weave** clothing, blankets, and rugs. Later, they began to use a special type of wool from Churro sheep for weaving.

 **Cotton**



 **Churro sheep**



🔊 The Navajo and the Hopi most often use brown and white wool. But sometimes they dye the wool yellow, indigo blue, or green before spinning and weaving it. Red is common, too, because it is found throughout the landscape.

🔊 Most Navajo weavers are women, and most Hopi weavers are men. Both the Navajo and the Hopi use an upright loom for weaving.







 Symmetric pattern



 Geometric pattern

 Weavers like to use intricate patterns. Sometimes the patterns are the same on both the top and bottom or sides. These patterns are called symmetric. Other times the patterns are geometric, which means they have simple shapes like circles and squares. Stripes are common in Hopi textiles. Stripes appear in Navajo textiles as well, along with diamond shapes and zigzag patterns.

 These designs often have a deeper meaning, too. Since the land where the Hopi live is so dry, many Hopi textiles symbolize, or stand for, rain that helps **delicious** crops to grow. For example, their belts or sashes often have shapes that represent clouds and fringe that represents flowing rain.


Some people think the diamond and zigzag patterns in Navajo rugs represent the landscape, but only the weaver who wove the rug really knows. Many Navajo designs are unique and never have been duplicated.

Navajo weaving



The Asante

Textiles tell the story of other groups around the world, too. The Asante live in an area of West Africa that is part of the country of Ghana today. They are known for weaving kente cloth.


 Kente cloth is woven into narrow strips on horizontal looms. The strips are usually only a few inches wide but several feet long. Many strips must be sewn together to create cloth for men and women to wear.

 **Horizontal loom**





 Kente cloth

 Kente cloth is usually very bold and bright. Each color has a special meaning. For example, gold stands for royalty and wealth, and blue stands for peace, good fortune, and love. More than 300 kente patterns have been created using different colors. Many of the patterns are tied to certain ideas. They also have specific names that come from sayings. For example, one pattern is called *Sika fre mogya*. This is a saying that means “It is important to share your money with relatives.”

The Maya

The Maya live in an area of Central America that is part of the countries of Mexico and Guatemala today. The Maya weave using a backstrap loom that is worn around the weaver's waist. Today, they use cotton for weaving. In the past, they used fibers from the maguey plant. Sometimes they even used the long green and blue feathers from the quetzal bird.

 **Backstrap loom**






Mayan textile

Mayan textiles often tell a story, too. Some designs represent the days on the Mayan calendar. Some designs use symbols to tell about legends and myths. For example, the myth of a great flood is represented by a vulture symbol in weaving. The diamond shape represents the idea of the world and the directions of north, south, east, and west. Clothing worn by the Maya can also tell about their family, or the area where they live, or how important they are.

The Maori

New Zealand's Maori weavers use fibers from the flax plant for their weaving. Maori women do the job of weaving, while men spend time **sharpening** tools for woodcarving.

 The Maori are very skilled at weaving. But Maori weaving is different from weaving in most other parts of the world. Maori weavers do not use looms. Instead they weave **strands** together with their fingers, and they place the fabric on pegs in the ground.



Flax




Maori weaving





Maori textile

 The patterns in Maori textiles often have special meanings. Some tell about the customs of a particular group. Sometimes one symbol means more than one thing. For example, a diamond motif can stand for either a fish or a group of stars. Woven mats have special meaning, too. As a guest in someone's home, you would be happy to see a mat because it means a warm welcome from your host!

The Beauty of Textiles

From welcome mats to brightly colored blankets, textiles are popular around the world. The look and style may be very different from one place to another. The method of weaving may be different, too. But it is easy to see that textiles are more than just beautiful pieces of cloth.

 **Textiles come from all over the world.**





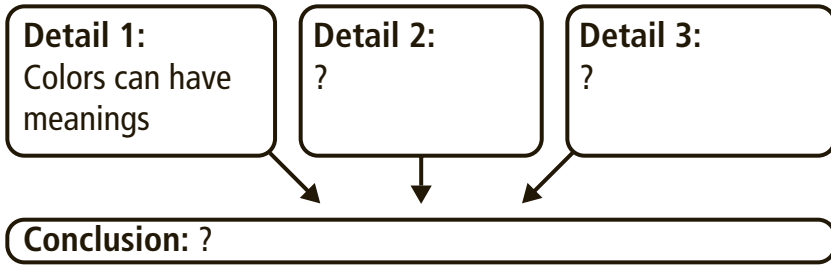
Responding



TARGET SKILL

Conclusions

What do this book's details help you conclude about textiles? Copy and complete the diagram below.



Write About It

Text to Text This book describes what people weave all over the world. Pretend someone wants to take a trip to see what people weave. Write a paragraph that instructs someone where to go and what to look for in the different textiles.



TARGET VOCABULARY

delicious
duplicated
dye
sharpening

spinning
strands
weave
yarn

EXPAND YOUR VOCABULARY

fabric
geometric
intricate

motif
symmetric
textiles



TARGET SKILL

Conclusions Use details to figure out more about the text.



TARGET STRATEGY

Summarize Stop to tell important ideas as you read.



GENRE Informational text gives facts about a topic.

Level: Q

DRA: 40

Genre:

Informational Text

Strategy:

Summarize

Skill:

Conclusions

Word Count: 851

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