



Developed with Susan Philp Bivona

Fish stitchery

Volume 15 | Gr. 5-7

Time: 2-3 class periods



Standards

Students will understand and apply media techniques and processes; learn the difference between materials, techniques, and understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures; and learn that visual arts have a history and specific relationships to various cultures.

VA:Cr2.1.5a

Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

VA:Cn11.1.6a

Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.

VA:Re.7.1.8a

Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others

Objectives

Students will...

- Learn the history of gytaku printmaking and learn how to make gytaku using fish replicas.
- Learn about fibers such as yarn, thread, and burlap and their applications in creating artwork.
- Learn and use the following stitches: running stitch, backstitch, chain stitch, satin stitch, couching, and French knot.
- Combine gytaku and a variety of stitches on burlap to create an ocean scene in fiber.

Gytaku:

“Gyo” = fish — “taku” = impression
(pronounced gee-yo-tah-koo)

Background information

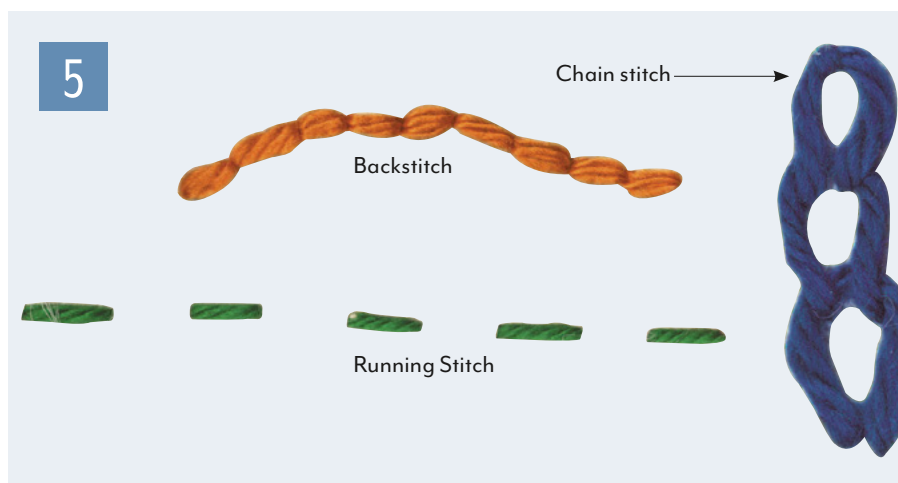
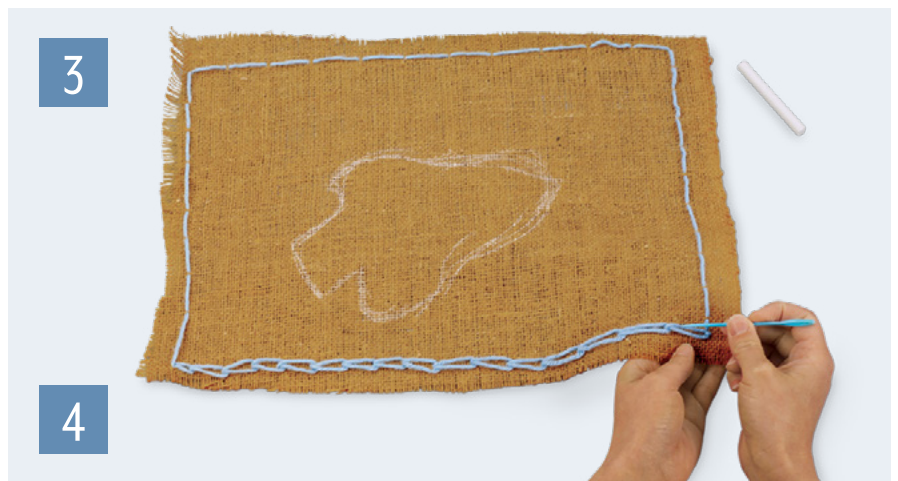
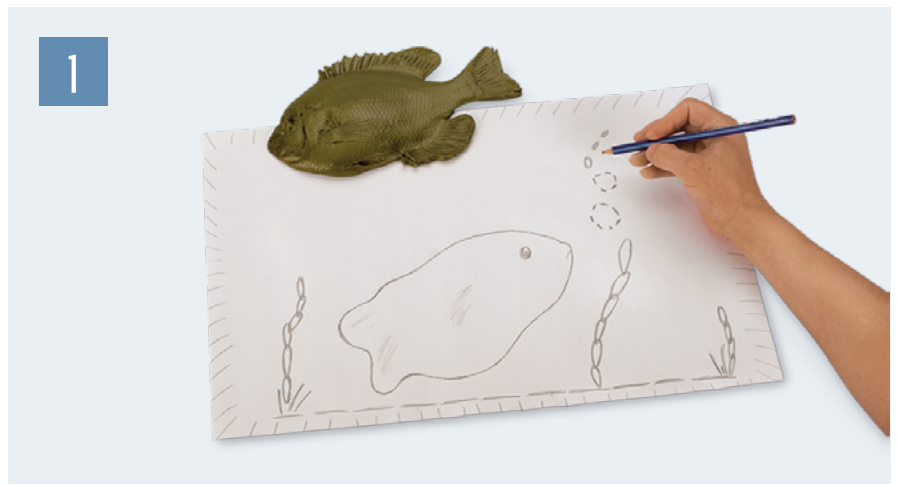
Gyotaku is a fun way to excite your students about everything from Japanese culture to printmaking. A science teacher can use gyotaku to introduce fish anatomy. For a geography teacher, it's a great way to introduce the students to Japanese culture. In the art studio, gyotaku has endless avenues as a printmaking technique. Gyotaku is a technique used by Japanese fishermen to record the size and species of trophy fish they catch. The Japanese fisherman returns from the sea and takes his fish to the market to sell. On the rare occasion that the fisherman catches a large fish worthy of record, he hires an artist to make a print of the fish using waterbased inks or paints. Since the paint is waterbased and nontoxic, the fish can be rinsed off and sold in the fish market. Each year the Japanese hold contests and use gyotaku as proof of a trophy catch. Although gyotaku originated in Japan more than 100 years ago, it has more recently become popular in the United States. Along the docks in San Francisco, and also in other parts of the country, artists wait for the fishing boats to bring their catch back from the ocean. Many tourists on these fishing boats choose to have a print made of their fish rather than have it stuffed and mounted by a taxidermist.

Preparation

As with many projects, there is preparation that needs to be done before the project can begin. The muslin needs to be washed and torn or cut into pieces at least as big as the largest fish replica (approximately 6" x 18"). The burlap also needs to be cut into pieces, each approximately 12" x 18".

Tip

If you have never cut burlap, a great way to get equal pieces is to remove a strand from the weave and cut in the open area where the strand was.



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Procedure: Step 1

On the first day of this project, students will be involved in two different activities. Set up stations where students can print their fish. While some students are printing, others can begin to sketch ideas for the ocean scene. Have plenty of sea life visuals available. Sketches should be done on 12" x 18" white drawing paper. Students should select the fish replica they will print and plan for it in their drawing.

Note: Do not try to press the fish onto the muslin — press the muslin onto the fish. Remove the muslin and allow to dry completely. Wash the replica thoroughly using soap and water. Be sure it is completely dry before storing.

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Step 2

When printing the fish replica on the muslin, have plenty of clean newsprint to lay the fish on. Have students apply a thin layer of acrylic paint to the fish with a brush or brayer. They should carefully move fish to a clean work surface and place the muslin over the fish, pressing gently with the palms of their hands.

Step 3

While the fish print is drying, work can begin on the burlap. Have them use a large-eye plastic needle and yarn to sew a running stitch around the edge of the burlap (about 1/2" from the edge). This will stop the burlap from fraying along the edge. Remind students that the needle must come up from the back of the burlap or the knots will be on top of the burlap, the front of their project.

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Step 4

Working from their original sketches, students should then draw their ocean scenes onto burlap with chalk.

Step 5

Have them stitch over their chalk drawings using a variety of stitches. Any embroidery stitches may be used. Some basic, successful stitches include the running stitch, backstitch, chain stitch, satin stitch, couching, and French knot. The running stitch, backstitch, and couching all work well for outlining; the chain stitch makes great seaweed; the satin stitch can be used to fill in areas; and the French knot can be used to make eyes on fish or details on coral. Have students experiment and try combining as many of the different stitches as they can.

Step 6

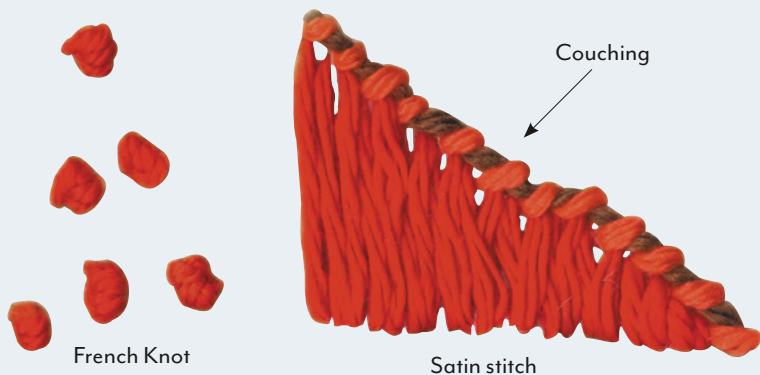
When the stitched ocean scenes on burlap are complete, have them trim the muslin around their fish prints, leaving a 1/2" border.

Step 7

Then, have them place a line of fabric glue around the outline of their fish, leaving a 2" opening at the top, and adhere the fish prints on muslin to the burlap. Allow the glue to dry overnight.

Step 8

Have students stuff fish through their 2" openings, glue the openings closed, and pin to secure. Allow the glue to dry overnight and remove pins. Fish stitchery is complete!



French Knot

Satin stitch

Fish stitchery

— beautiful and eye-catching — you will be delighted with the results of this multimedia project!



Materials list

- Nasco Gyotaku Fish Replicas (**9724022**)
- Muslin, 6" x 18" (**6500285**)
- Pacon® Trait-tex® Yarn Dispenser Box, Jumbo Weight, Bright Colors (**2500358**)
- Fish and ocean visuals
- Acrylic paints (**9705749**)
- Large-eye plastic needles (**7500153**)
- White drawing paper, 12" x 18" (**4100479**)
- Ink Mixing Trays, Pkg. of 10, 6" x 9" (**9703440**)
- Stuffing (**8500234**)
- General's® Drawing Pencils, Set of 4 (**9728483**)
- Brayers (**9701362**)
- Straight pins (**W05440**)
- Chalk (**SB09901**)
- Water containers (**9724664**)
- Scissors (**9718528**)
- Newsprint (**9700914**)
- Paintbrushes (**9728039**)
- Aleene's No-Sew Fabric Glue™ (**9726498**)
- Burlap, 12" x 18" (**9733568**)