

***POJAGI* WRAPPING CLOTH DESIGNS**

GRADES: Elementary to Middle School

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SUBJECT: History, Art

TIME REQUIRED: One to two class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize the unique folk art form of *pojagi* wrapping cloth as a reflection of Korean history and culture by reviewing, analyzing, and creating their own *pojagi* designs.
2. Reflect on *pojagi* folk art as a representation of historical Korean culture.
3. Understand the concepts of folk art as it applies to *pojagi* cloth.
4. Apply concepts of color, balance and design to creating a wrapping cloth.
5. Follow directions in use of classroom tools in generating a work of folk art.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- One standard piece of white copy paper to act as a base for each child
- Wrapping paper supplies of various colors and textures (large sheets should be cut to smaller pieces to simulate cloth scraps that would have been available)
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Visual models on computers (see website references below), books, or pictures of *pojagi* wrapping cloth.
- Optional materials for older students: graph paper and colored pencils for planning, one fabric square for each student as a base, fabric scraps, fabric glue, thread and needles for making the cloth. Steam iron for smoothing out the final products is also helpful.

BACKGROUND:

Pojagi, or wrapping cloth, has been a Korean tradition since history was earliest recorded. During the Chosŏn kingdom, this art form developed into a distinctive and notable art form by Korean women. *Pojagi* are made up of pieces of like material (silk, ramie, or cotton) that, in many cases, were recycled by the women of the family, reminiscent of American quilting tradition. The material is sewn together into rectangles or squares that are used to store, protect or carry any number of items. *Pojagi* may be richly embroidered and sized to hold traditional wedding costumes, or small and sturdy enough to hold fruit from the market. They may appear as simple backpacks or richly decorated coverings for religious artifacts. Some *pojagi* are lined or padded for their intended function. Traditionally, when a young woman married, she had many *pojagi* given by her family to take to her new home. The final products are uniquely utilitarian and exceptional examples of folk art by Korean women who had limited means of expressing their creativity. According to Confucian tradition of the Chosŏn period, women's lives were strictly dedicated to home and family. The creative energy of these women was channeled into the creation of handmade goods that became reflections of the history and culture of the women themselves.

The pieces often include rectangles, squares or triangles placed in a pleasing, though non-symmetrical pattern of rich color. Hand stitched seams may be virtually invisible tiny stitches, or bold seams that generate their own patterns. A single color or several contrasting tones may be used. *Pojagi* are unique in design as they are an artistic blend of texture, color and tone, and balance of geometric shapes. Every wrapping cloth reflects the maker's talents and personal characteristics. Embroidered patterns that include symbolic trees, birds or complex designs are particularly notable in the *pojagi* used for rituals as weddings, religious rites, or for the elite. The symbolic use of embroidered patterns or use of color may also remind the user of wishes for well-being, happiness and prosperity.

In Korea today, the use of *pojagi* piecing is seen in the ramie coasters, placemats, and decorative wall hangings that are available for sale to visitors who admire the traditional artifacts seen in museums. It is the contemporary use of the *pojagi* art form that inspires this activity.

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce students to the concept of folk art and *pojagi* in Korea. Impress on the students that this is an art form that grows from the needs of the average person. How might they use such cloth? What material would they use? Is there anything similar in the United States (consider the use of bandanas or quilts)?
2. Have students explore samples of *pojagi*. The Museum of Korean Embroidery (http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/eng/info_db/cul/cul_detail.jsp?seqno=393) provides an especially good site for viewing a variety of cloth.
3. Bring students back together as a group and discuss the features of *pojagi*, tailoring questions to the age of the students: What colors are used? Why do you think this is so? (Available dyes in early times, cloth available to makers, traditions of symbolism in color) What shapes do you find in the wrapping cloth? What shapes are the wrapping cloth themselves? Are the patterns in the cloth symmetrical - is each half or quarter of the wrapping cloth the same? How does the maker create balance in the wrapping cloth? (Tone, size of pieces, seams, placement) Would you consider these as forms of art? Why? How do you think the maker decided how to choose and piece the material together?
4. Allow students to choose several pieces of wrapping paper to work with. For students using cloth scraps, a planning period with colored pencils and graph paper is helpful in creating an effective design.
5. Using a sheet of copy paper or cloth as a base, ask students to cut and paste pieces of the various papers together to create a *pojagi* design. All final products should be square or rectangle, but need not be the size and shape of the base.
6. Each student should complete a one-paragraph explanation of their design that addresses use of color, balance and design. Ask students to explain what they would use their wrapping cloth for in historical Korea. Display students' work.

EVALUATION:

Students will be assessed on the production of a rectangular *pojagi* cloth design that demonstrates appropriate use of classroom tools and application of artistic elements. In addition, students will reflect understanding of history, use and artistic expression through written sample and classroom discussion.

ENRICHMENT:

Every piece of material used in *pojagi* has a history--much like quilts in early America. Ask students to identify one piece from their design and write a story about where it came from and what it had been used for before becoming part of a wrapping cloth.

Research the use of fabrics and colors as they apply to this geographic region. How is silk or ramie manufactured? What indigenous plants have lent them to use in coloring fabrics?

For older students, consider collecting cloth scraps to make small a wrapping cloth or decorative pieces. For this project, a pre-planning phase using colored pencils and graph paper would be helpful in planning the final project. The base should be a rectangular piece of fabric, rather than paper. Fabric can be glued with fabric glue, or teach the students a simple overlap stitch to piece together their material. Remember that while color, shape and size of pieces may vary; the fabric should remain consistent (cotton, silk, ramie). Have students start the project in class and complete it as homework over the next week. In contemporary Korea, table coasters and placemats are popular formats for *pojagi* design and are simple to create.

REFERENCES:

Korea Insights Museum of Korean Embroidery: a visual feast of *pojagi* wrapping cloth
http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/eng/info_db/cul/cul_detail.jsp?seqno=393

Roberts, Claire, and Huh Dong-hwa, eds. *Rapt in Color: Korean Textiles and Costumes of the Choson Dynasty*. Seoul: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 2000 [ISBN: 186317074X]