



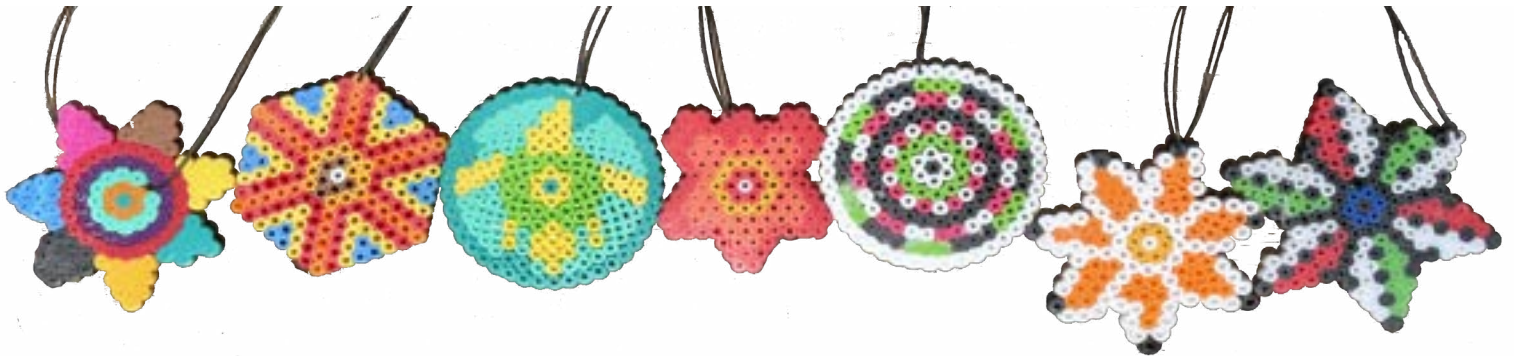
CHOCTAW BEADED MEDALLION

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CONTENT SCOPE

Students will engage with Choctaw culture and art by learning about Choctaw beadwork and creating their own medallion with perler beads. This hands-on activity not only teaches students about beadwork but also incorporates lessons in history, culture, and art technique.



FOR TEACHERS

Subject & Topic: Social Studies (Native American History) and Art

Grade Level: K-12

Lesson Time: 1 Hour Class Period

Group Size: Regular Class Size (18 - 25 students)

MATERIALS

- Perler Beads
- Peg Boards
- Iron (Optional to use oven instead)
- Wax paper
- Leather cord

OBJECTIVES

STUDENTS WILL:

- Learn about the Choctaw people, focusing on their history, culture, and beadwork.
- Understand the significance of beadwork in Choctaw society, including its uses and symbolic meanings.
- Develop skills by creating their own medallion using perler beads.

BEADWORK IN CHOCTAW CULTURE

Beadwork is a vibrant and intricate art form that has long been a part of Choctaw cultural expression. Historically, Choctaw beadwork began with the use of natural materials such as bones, shells, and stones weaving them into meaningful patterns that narrated stories, symbolized status, and represented individual and communal identities. The introduction of glass beads through trade with European settlers marked a significant shift in Choctaw beadwork, leading to the creation of more vibrant and detailed designs. These intricate glass beads that are still in use today allow the beader to create even more complex patterns and symbols. Beadwork creations are often worn today in many different ways. Modern expressions of beadwork are diverse, ranging from earrings and cuffs to traditional items like belts and medallions. Beadwork plays a vital role in preserving Choctaw culture and identity.



BEADED MEDALLIONS

Usually a medallion is circular in shape, but many artisans today create medallions in many different shapes. For example, many artisans have created beaded medallions in shapes found in nature, team logos, or their own creations. There are a lot of symbols and colors that have significant meaning to the wearer or the specific tribe. The Choctaw tribe, for instance, uses diamonds in a lot of their creations. They also use their tribal seal many times. Some examples of meaningful colors are turquoise, red, black, yellow, white, and orange. Depending on the order, these colors can make up the Medicine Wheel or what is called Fire Colors. The Medicine Wheel can mean different things to different tribes, but overall, the main idea is that it represents the circle of life and the idea that everything is connected even all of us. Turquoise is more popularly used by the Dine people. Turquoise holds significant value to their tribe. Fire Colors are called by their name because they represent the different colors of flames in a fire. Many tribes use these colors in their beadwork.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Begin the lesson with a brief overview of the Choctaw people's connection to Tennessee lands. Highlight key historical points, including their forced removal, resilience, and how they have continued to thrive, particularly in Mississippi. In connection with their long history, the teacher will share more about the significance of beadwork particularly for Choctaw peoples. The teacher is encouraged to share more history and background surrounding the beaded medallion. Upon understanding the significance beadwork plays in Choctaw culture and history, students will replicate their own Choctaw beaded medallion using perler beads.

ACTIVITY

We will be making your own medallion out of perler beads. This activity is a great way to immerse yourself in Native American culture respectfully while learning more about the culture and honor in wearing a beaded medallion. Traditionally, Native Americans use glass seed beads to create their art. These materials can be costly and time consuming, so we will be using perler beads to recreate a medallion without the price tag.



1 On a flat surface, use the peg-board to assemble your design.

2 Place beads carefully on the peg-board in the pattern or shape you would like.

3 Put wax paper over your design with the wax side facing the beads.

4 Using an iron on medium heat, heat your beads in circle motions. Be sure to keep the iron moving so not to burn the beads. You will start to see the beads fuse together. Move the iron in a circular motion for 30-45 seconds.

5 Once you have one side done, flip your design and heat the other side using the same method.

6 Carefully peel off the wax paper and allow your design to cool.

7 Add string or yarn through the a bead on the last row of your medallion and tie off. Now you have a completed medallion to wear!

EVALUATION

Evaluate students based on their engagement in discussions, the effort and creativity displayed in their medallion creation, and their understanding and respect for Choctaw culture and beadwork as reflected in their final piece and participation in class discussions. This lesson plan not only educates students about Choctaw history and art but also encourages them to think critically about indigenous cultures and the importance of preserving such traditions.

- What was the most challenging aspect of creating your beaded medallion? How does mastering this technique give you insight into the skill and creativity of Choctaw artisans?
- What have you learned about the significance of beaded medallions within Choctaw culture, and how does your work honor or contribute to this tradition?
- How does the act of creating beaded medallions affect your mental and emotional state? Do you find it meditative, therapeutic, challenging, or something else?