

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Cold weather clothes

Ada was a seamstress which was one of the reasons she was employed on the exhibition.



Questions for the class

- Does this tell us something about how important it is to have good clothes in the Arctic?
- What would happen in a very cold and remote climate if you got holes in your clothes or if the seams came undone?
- Do you think everyone should learn to mend or make their own clothes?
- What are the important qualities of clothes for life in the Arctic?

Clothing design often includes elements that are for decoration not just function. Look at some traditional Arctic Parkas (please see resources section) and how they are made and decorated. What materials were available 100 years ago in the Arctic? Materials were natural rather than synthetic 100 years ago, and because of the harsh Arctic climate animal products were more readily available than plant ones. Animal fur, skin and gut were all used to make clothes and were very effective materials. Do we still use these in the UK? What other sort of materials are available to us?

Show the children some plant-based textiles, such as cotton, wool and linen, and synthetic textiles, such as polyester and nylon. Ask them if they know what silk is made from? Silkworm caterpillars spin this and silk is a surprisingly warm material, still popular with people who go on outdoor adventures in cold places – it makes very warm

underwear, especially long-johns and vests! People who live in the Arctic today use both modern and traditional materials to make their clothes.

Let the children feel and examine a selection of materials and threads. Try to provide a range of fabrics, natural and synthetic, thin, thick, smooth, rough, plain, patterned, waterproof, fur-fabric, fleece, knitted, etc. Can the children sort them into natural and synthetic?

Design Activity

Design something to wear in a cold climate.

- Thinking of materials, the function and the decoration, design a garment (a parka, dungarees or a hat) for very cold weather.
- Will you choose natural or synthetic materials? Or a mix?
- Draw and annotate these designs, clearly explaining the choices of fabric and design features.
- Make sure there is a strong decorative design unique to you! What does it say about your identity?

Sewing Activity

Some children may already know how to sew, but some may not. Demonstrate threading a needle and how to do a running stitch or a blanket stitch to join two pieces of fabric together. Felt is easy to use, especially for younger children, but other fabrics could be used.

- Imagine how important Ada's diary was to her. Make a bag in which you could keep a diary safe.



Example of a simple blanket stitch purse created by Christine Johns.

This can be a simple rectangle, with sides sewn up with either running stitch or blanket stitch, and a fold over flap that can be closed with either a button and loop, or with Velcro spots. A tape or ribbon can be added as a strap, or two loops to attach it to a belt. The bags can be decorated with extra stitching or by adding sequins, ribbons or patches, with glue. Encourage the children to take care with the decoration and design and to try to make it unique to them.