

# + + + WE WEAVE + + +

## ACTIVITY GUIDE

Notes for parents, grandparents, librarians, and teachers reading *We Weave* with children and students.



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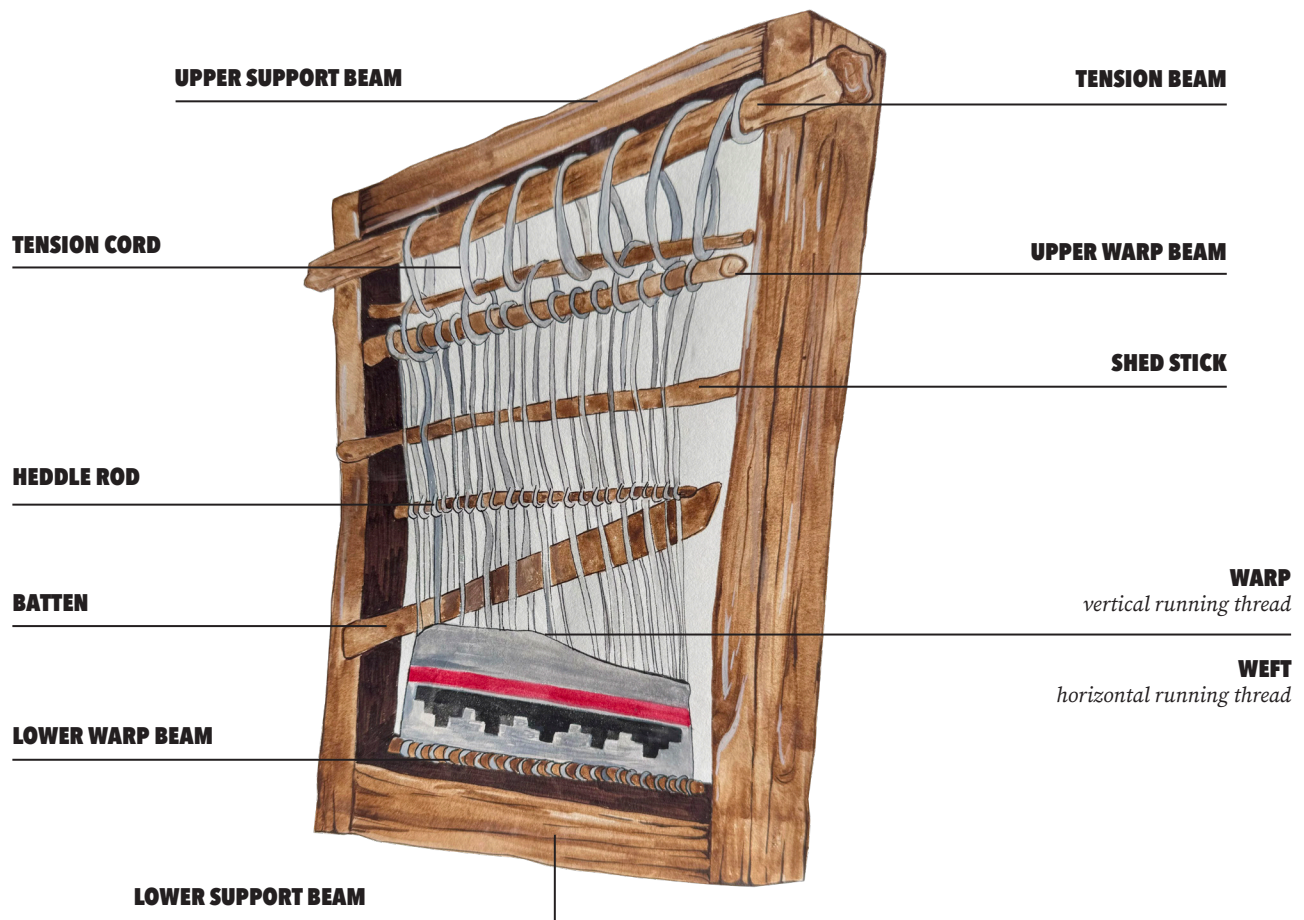
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## ACTIVITY GUIDE

*We Weave* is a tribe-specific story that takes readers on the intimate journey of weaving a Navajo rug. The purpose of the Activity Guide is to engage readers of all ages in the cultural aspects of *We Weave*. Explore the following sections to learn about the Navajo loom and traditional rug patterns. Then create a cardboard loom of your own to weave a rug.

### THE NAVAJO LOOM

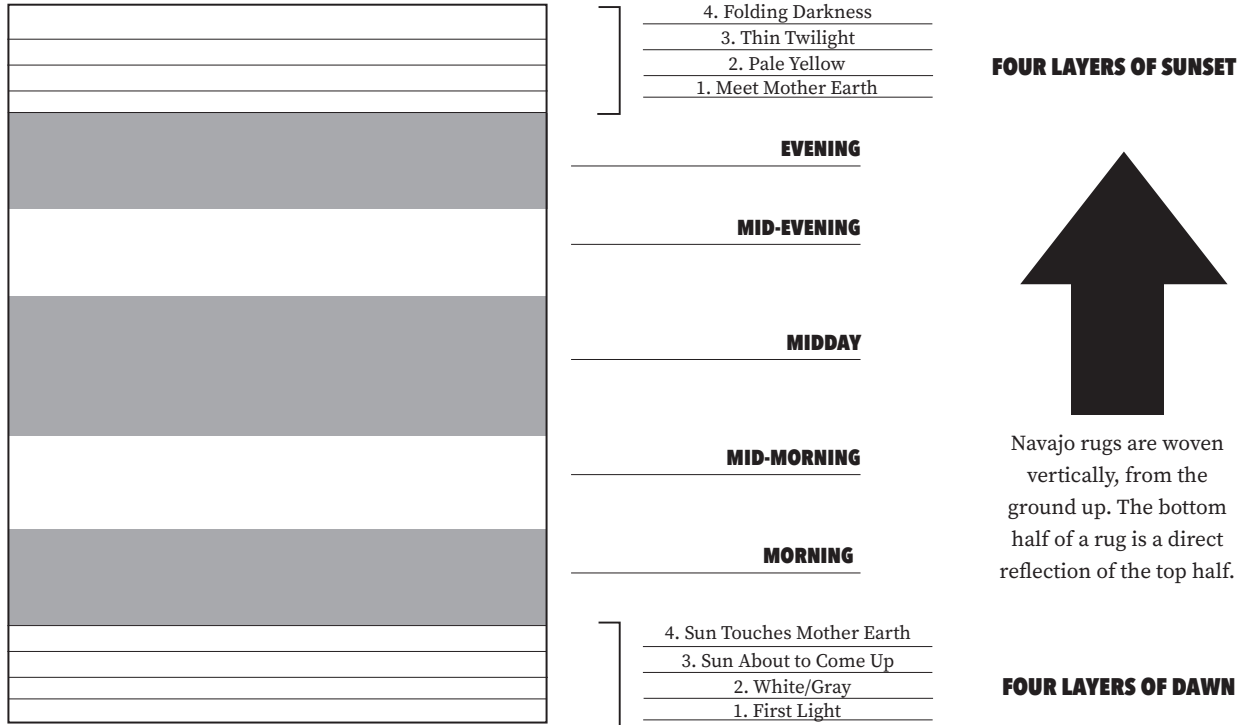
Weaving tools and the Navajo loom were constructed by Spider Man to aid Spider Woman as she taught First Woman to weave. Spider Woman's approach to weaving was spiritual and reflected balance and harmony. Her teachings emphasized patience and understanding and included songs and prayer. Below is a representation of the various elements that make up a Navajo loom.



# TRADITIONAL RUG PATTERNS

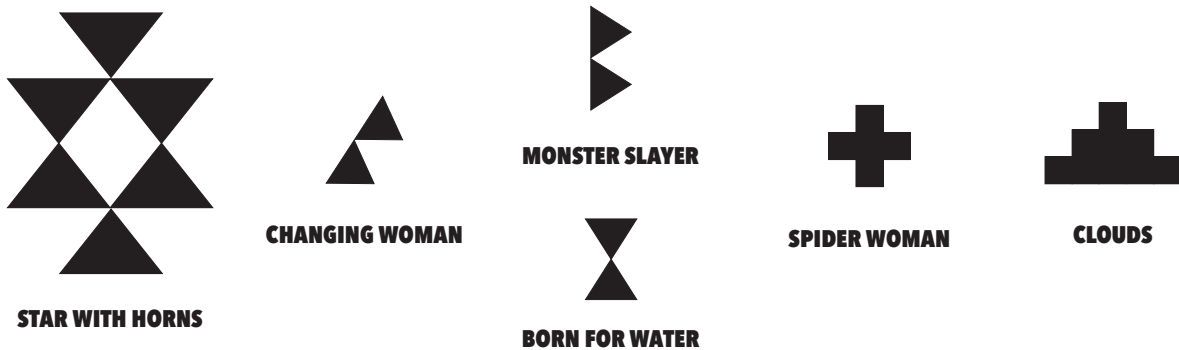
Traditional Navajo rug patterns took shape in the 17th century as the result of cultural exchanges with Pueblos and the Spanish. Rugs were used as dresses, chief blankets, saddle blankets, and doors to dwellings. Many rugs had animal hair or mountain top plants woven into the fiber for protection.

Designs were modest and would include symbols representative of deities and/or the environment. Each rug was divided into thirteen sections representing a full day. The bottom four layers represented the four layers of dawn. The middle five sections represented morning, mid-morning, midday, mid-evening, and evening. The rug would then finish with four layers of sunset as a reciprocal to the bottom half of the rug. Most traditional rugs can only be seen in museums.



# TRADITIONAL RUG SYMBOLS

Symbols on traditional rugs were used to honor deities like Changing Woman, the Warrior Twins, and Spider Woman. Elements of the environment were also represented, such as clouds and stars.



Draw the layout of a traditional rug (above). Include some of the traditional rug symbols in the middle five sections. Remember, the top half of the rug should be a direct reflection of the bottom half. The right half of the rug should also reflect the left half of the rug. Use grid paper to help.

# CARDBOARD WEAVING

Want to try weaving? Build a cardboard loom and weave a simple pattern. Think good thoughts when you weave and practice patience and understanding. Start simple with a tabby weave.



## CARDBOARD LOOM MATERIALS

- Cardboard
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Sharpie
- Scissors
- Warp Thread/Thin Yarn

## WEAVING MATERIALS

- Yarn (at least three different colors)
- Scissors
- Baton/stick/skewer

## HAVING TROUBLE?

Look for videos online to assist your project by searching for the keywords “Cardboard Loom” and/or “Cardboard Weaving.”

## TAKE A WALK WITH AN ELDER

The boy and his grandmother take a walk in nature to collect plants that can be used to dye wool in *We Weave*. Take a walk outside with an elder and ask them about the plants and trees you come across. Take pictures of each and write a summary of what they say. Share what you learn in school.

The plants you discover will depend on the region of the country you’re from. Share what you find by tagging author Daniel W. Vandever on social media.

### STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS: CARDBOARD LOOM

1. Mark notches 1/4 in. apart on the bottom and top of the cardboard. The notches can be further apart for young weavers.
2. Cut along each notch 1/4 in. - 1/2 in. deep.
3. Draw horizontal lines 1 1/2 in. from the top and bottom of the cardboard indicating where to start and stop weaving.
4. Add warp thread. Wrap the warp thread around the bottom left corner of your loom and tie it with a double knot. Move the thread to the top left notch and wrap it around its neighbor notch to bring the thread down to the bottom notch. Alternate the warp thread from neighbor notch to neighbor notch until your last warp thread runs to the bottom of the loom and you can tie the notch off with a double knot.
5. Cut off remaining thread.
6. Add a pencil to the warp strings to make it easier to weave.
7. It’s time to weave!

### STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS: WEAVING

1. Tie a double knot over your first warp thread. Keep the knot above your “start weaving line”.
2. Proceed to run your weft thread under the next warp thread, alternating over and under, row by row (hint: fold your weft thread in half to lead the thread more easily through the warp threads).
3. Once your weft thread passes through each warp thread, arch the weft thread down by fully extending the weft thread. Then comb the thread down to the “start weaving line” with your fingers.
4. Continue weaving layer-by-layer, alternating over and under. Don’t pull too hard as you move from one layer to the next as it will cause an hourglass shape.
5. When you are done weaving with a color, tie off the end of your weft thread to an end warp thread in a knot.
6. Cut off the tail.
7. Repeat steps 1-6 with a new color until you are done.
8. When finished, trim the two closest warp threads in the bottom corner of the cardboard loom. Tie each thread into a knot. Be sure to pull gently.
9. Cut the next two warp threads and tie them into a knot. Continue until all your warp threads on the bottom of the rug are tied off.
10. Use a stick/skewer to thread your loom’s tension cord. Once the pencil is in place, slide each loop of the tension cord off the cardboard loom.

Your rug’s pattern will be simple. As you grow comfortable with the process, try incorporating designs into your rug pattern.

