

MADE to SIT



Lori Dudley

Have you been looking for a fun, inventive project that captures the middle school students' attention from beginning to end? Well, I found it—papier-mâché chairs! Where there's fun, of course, a mess is sure to follow, but it's worth it. Opening up your classroom to a novel medium allows students to express themselves in previously unknown ways.

I began the lesson with a discussion about papier-mâché. We discussed how the term is French and means "chewed paper." Papier-mâché can be made using a pre-mixed paste, or from a mixture of

wallpaper paste, newspaper, glue, and water.

Mixing the Pulp

For this particular project, we used the pulp method with newspaper. I divided students into groups, assigning each group a pair of scissors, a five-gallon bucket, and a stack of newspapers. Each group ripped the newspaper into long strips and cut the strips into small squares, no longer than 1" (2.5 cm) until each bucket was half-full with the newspaper squares.

The next step was to pour water into the bucket until the paper was

covered, and add one cup of wallpaper paste. This was blended together using a drill equipped with paint beaters, covered, and allowed to soak overnight. The next day, students drained off any excess water and added 1½ cups of white school glue. Once again the painter's beater was used to ensure a proper mixture.

Building Armatures

The next phase was to build armatures out of old magazines or phone-books for chair or stool legs and braces. Check with your library for discarded magazines. Working in pairs, students rolled the magazines tightly, starting from the bound edge. One person held the magazine tightly in place while the other taped it

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together with masking tape.

Once all the legs and braces were taped, they were wrapped individually in newspaper to provide a surface to which the paper pulp would adhere. The legs and braces were taped together, again with masking tape, forming the base of a stool or chair.

We used sturdy cardboard boxes as the base for the seat section of the chair or stool. Students used two layers of cardboard for the chair seat, taped it to the top of the legs, and covered the seat with newspaper.

Applying the Pulp

Beginning with the legs of the stool or chair, students applied a handful of pulp (first squeezing out any excess water) in a patting motion, forming it to the shape of the leg. Each chair or stool needed two to three layers of pulp, but each layer had to be dry before another was added. To speed up drying, we used fans or set the work outside in the sun.

The final structures were sturdy and had a rough texture. Students evened out the rough texture by

smoothing the surface with small amounts of water and pulp.

Decoration

When the chairs and stools were completely finished and dried, students decorated them with acrylic or tempera paints. When paint was dry, students applied two thin coats of a water-based sealer. We determined that a properly constructed chair or stool would hold up to 350 pounds! 🐘

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

WEB LINK

ultimatepapermache.com/paper-mache-recipes

Materials

- newspapers
- magazines
- masking tape
- wallpaper paste
- white school glue
- acrylic or tempera paint
- paintbrushes
- drill with paint beater
- water-based sealer
- cardboard boxes
- five-gallon buckets to hold water and pulp, one per group or table
- trash bags to store paper and cover pulp

