

KIDS FIBER FUN CAMP

YARN SPINNING WITH WORDS



The world of reality has its limits, the world of imagination is boundless.

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

by Vicki Gadberry

Mankind has been telling stories in pictures and words since the first humans inhabited the earth. The origin of the word *yarn* can be traced back through Middle English, to Old English, Old Norse, Greek, and finally to Latin—and translates at that point to the word *soothsayer*. In foretelling the future, soothsayers were indeed among the first yarn spinners. Whether in prehistoric cave paintings or oral stories told around fires, passed from one generation to the next, or by using the more modern written text with illustrations as in books, “spinning yarns” is an integral and rich part of everyone’s heritage.

Summer is here again, and kids have more time at home. Why not spin a few yarns of your own? With Kids Fiber Fun Camp, one can have both hands-on activities, and a story time, and perhaps these stories will inspire new directions for hands-on projects. This year’s selection of titles covers a range of age groups—from preschoolers to the chronologically older but still young-at-heart reader. Read on about these books and discover innovative ways to introduce multicultural, multidisciplinary ideas and fun into your family’s life or special summer classes and programs.

Begay, Shonto. *Navajo*

Visions and Voices Across the Mesa. New York: Scholastic Books, 1995. 0-590-46153-2, \$15.95.

A celebrated artist in the southwestern United States, Shonto Begay accompanies this collection of twenty selected paintings with his original poetry. This book presents an enriching, colorful, and intimate look into modern Navajo life. Every illustration is beautiful in itself, strikingly colored, and most include Navajo handwoven fabric in various forms. “Storm Pattern,” a poem about handweaving, tells how this pattern, a gift from Spider Woman, was given to Begay’s mother and reveals the deep influence of her weaving upon his life. (For more on Spider Woman see “Building Bridges with Fiber Art,” *Shuttle, Spindle and Dyepot*, Summer 1997, 51.) For ages 10 and up.

Boy Scouts of America. *Basketry*. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1964, revised 1994. 0-8395-3313-7, \$2.75; available through Boy Scout supply stores.

This merit badge pamphlet provides the badge seeker (or other interested parties) with a very basic though succinct history of basketry. Greater detail is given on a variety of selected ethnic ornamental and ceremonial baskets. Types of basketry materials are explained; a

selection of terms is defined. The section entitled “Weaving Baskets” provides a materials list, specific directions (referred to as Method in this text), and suggests possible variations for eight different projects. An annotated bibliography provides references for further reading and research. For ages 12 and up.

Chetkowski, Emily. *Amasa Walker’s Splendid Garment*. Farmington, Maine: Heritage Publishing Inc., 1996. No ISBN, no price.

This paperback provides interesting lessons in American history with its emphasis upon clothing and how it was made in the early 19th century as told through the eyes of 11-year old Amasa Walker. Detailing the entire process — carding, spinning, and weaving the wool into flannel, to coloring (to use the book’s terminology) and dressing the cloth, and finally tailoring the *surtout* (fancy coat) being made for Amasa. This process, requiring a total of six months, is certainly more complex than the modern method of going to a store to purchase a readymade garment. Amasa’s tale imparts the work, appreciation, and let’s not forget patience, necessary for the creation of garments during that time period. Unfamiliar terms are defined on the page where they appear. Simple, but effective, sepia-toned illustrations add to the warmth

and factual basis of this book. For ages 10-13.

Enderle, Judith Ross and Stephanie Gordon Tessler. *Six Sandy Sheep*. Illustrated by John O’Brien. Honesdale, PA: Caroline House, 1997. 1-56397-582-3, \$14.95.

Ah-summer, and a perfect day on the beach for the woolly misadventures of this action-packed crew. Rhyming, tongue-twisting, frolicking fun for ages 2-6.

Enderle, Judith Ross and Stephanie Gordon Tessler. *Six Snowy Sheep*. Illustrated by John O’Brien. Honesdale, PA: Carolina House, 1994. 1-56393138-0, \$14.95.

Using gifts found under the Christmas tree, six sheep, clad in warm woolly fleece of course, are up to their usual hilarious daring sheep feats—this time in the snow. Another fun one to read aloud, and a good way to keep cool thoughts on a hot summer day. For ages 2-6.

Follett, Veronique. *Friendship Bracelets*. Kent, Great Britain: Search Press Ltd., 1995. \$16.95.

Beginning with an explanation on their origin and meaning, this text provides detailed directions for making a variety of patterned friendship bracelets. Truly multicultural in its origin and scope—a wonderful way to combine thoughts on

friendship into a hands-on art project. And a good way to use up some of Mom's embroidery floss, and extra yarns! For ages 12 and up.

Gryski, Camilla. *Friendship Bracelets*. New York: Morrow junior Books, 1993. 0688-12436-4, \$14.00.

Starting off with a basic design for a Diagonal Strip Bracelet, and progressing to more complex designs utilizing additional threads and colors, this book contains directions for 14 basic friendship bracelet designs. Step-by-step instructions are accompanied by full-color, easy-to-follow illustrations. Same theme as above title, but concentrates more on process. For ages 11 and up.

Kitamura, Satoshi. *Sheep in Wolves Clothing*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1995. 95-18199, \$15.00.

This clever story portrays more woolly adventures, this time with three sheep. In their big outing to the beach, these three are unsuspectingly tricked by a group of four golf-playing, wily wolves. Private detective Elliott Baa, aided by a gang of rugby-loving cats, help solve this hair-raising mystery. Wonderfully amusing illustrations will delight anyone from age 6 up!

Lecher, Doris. *Angelita's Magic Yarn*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1992. 9134344, \$14.00.

Simply drawn but effective and delightfully colored illustrations accompany this text. Though Angelita, the finest and fastest knitter in the village of Oru suffers misfortune, she is able to turn it into good fortune. Entertainingly shares lessons in faith and persistence; it may even inspire a knitting project. For ages 6-9.

Von Ammon, Helen. *Alaska Llama Far North Hero*. Illustrated by Erin Mauterer. San Francisco: Doodlebug Books, 1998. 0-9647756-70-0, no price.

Sparsely but effectively illustrated, Von Ammon has a gift for painting pictures with her words. Like her previously reviewed title about musk ox ("Building Bridges with Fiber Art." *Shuttle, Spindle and Dyepot*, Summer 1997, 52), this book is a well-told, touching, intimate story centering on the birth and life of a llama named StarBoy. Revealing many details about llama behavior, this story continues the adventures of StarBoy, from a cria (baby llama) birth, to how llamas mature

and grow, until he is sold to guard sheep, and earns his new name of Hero. Touchingly informative and educational for those 10 and up, and animal lovers of any age.

Westray, Kathleen. *A Color Sampler*. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993. 0-39565940-X, \$14.95.

An introduction to basic color theory on a primary level, this book asserts and illustrates how color can both delight and deceive the eyes. Covering primary, secondary, intermediary, and complementary color concepts as well as demonstrating the interaction and perception of color, this wonderfully illustrated book will delight color lovers of any age. For ages 7 and up.

Falick, Melanie. *Kids Knitting*. New York: Artisan, 1998. 1-885183-76-3, \$17-95.

Looking for a way to introduce children to the joys of fiber craft? Troll Publishers has the perfect kit for you. Small parts make these kits inappropriate for children under three and most children will need adult assistance, at least until they get the hang of braiding.

Quick Takes ...

Since the Native American beaded bracelets require a needle, adult supervision is recommended.

BEAD BUDDIES, by Caitlin and Conn McQuinn. 1998. Kit, \$5.95US \$8.25CAN.

Bright plastic beads, simple zig-zag interlacings and voila: Jake the Snake, Lexie the Lizard and Moe the Turtle. For ages 7 and up.

MY FIRST FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS, by Kate Mason. 1994. Kit. 24 pages. \$6.95US \$9.95CAN.

Pipe cleaners and beads will soon have little ones making some pretty bracelets to share with their friends. The bracelets are named after animals and the directions are simple and straightforward. With the help of a grown-up even four and five-year-olds can make these simple braids.

HOT NEW FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS, by Elise Richards. 1996. Kit. 24 pages. \$7.95US 10.95CAN.

MAKE YOUR OWN FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS, by Kate Mason. 1993. Kit. 24 pages. \$6.95US \$9.95CAN.

Beware! These two kits could unleash braiding mania at your house. Boys and girls alike will set right to work and enjoy wearing and sharing their braids. The directions are clear and well illustrated and the bracelets progress from simple to quite challenging. Colors are bright and older kids will definitely like the styles. For ages 7 and up.

NATIVE AMERICAN BEADED FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS, by Geri Dawn Weitzman. 1996. 16 pages. Kit. \$6.95US \$9.95CAN.

ALL-NEW NATIVE AMERICAN BRACELETS, by Geri Dawn Weitzman. 1996. Kit. 16 pages. \$7.95US \$10.95CAN.

Both books feature seven different patterns with enough beads to complete two bracelets. Simple macrame finishing techniques are included. Younger bead enthusiasts will need help with the beads and patterns. For ages 7 and up.