

NEBRASKA BY HEART

Folk Arts • Traditional Arts • Folklife
Curriculum Unit • Grades 6–8
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Instructions and Templates for a Miniature Saddle

For the Teacher

Grades: 4–8 (students in grades 7 and 8 can use leather to make saddle, if desired)

Instructional Objective

Students will:

Students will learn about saddlemaking as an art form and assemble and decorate a mini saddle using shoe polish, black ink pens, brads and thread/fishing line with a sheet of 12" x 16" brown craft foam, paper, or leather.

Saddlemaking as an Art Form

Ranch culture in the Great Plains and other parts of the western U.S. has been influenced over the years by the traditions of Mexican vaqueros and various other early cowboy cultures. Some of the traditions developed from these influences are western music and song, cowboy poetry, western storytelling, rodeo, trick roping, and the making of horse and cowboy work gear, such as saddles, horse tack, boots, chaps, and other items.

Western saddles are heavy working saddles and they weigh between 30 and 40 pounds apiece. A good working saddle is a combination of function and appearance and is the result of the saddlemaker's ability to fit the saddle to the job, the horse, and the rider. A skilled saddlemaker uses high quality materials and components for longevity and safety.

While working saddles are usually sparsely decorated, highly ornamented saddles are also made for demonstrations, pleasure riding, and collectors.

Vocabulary

(Also see Resources for other sources of information on saddlemaking.)

cantle – raised rear part of the saddle

cinch – front and back – straps that hold the saddle in place. One cinch is placed just behind the front legs of the horse. The other goes around the horse's belly. It is sometimes called the "girth".

fender – the lateral piece of leather that protects a rider's legs from the horse's ribs and vice versa.

horn – a metal-cored front piece used to secure a lasso or reins

pommel – raised front part of the saddle

seat – top portion of the saddle that the rider sits upon.

skirt – large sheepskin-lined panels of leather directly under the saddle.

stirrups – attachments where the rider's feet rest, usually made of steam-bent oak.

saddle strings – long straps of leather used to tie things onto the saddle and hold parts of the saddle together.

tree – the wooden interior frame of the saddle.

Materials

One sheet of light brown 12 x 18" craft foam (or 12 x 18" piece of leather), one black ball point pen, 3 yards of brown yarn, 1 yard of black thread or fishing line and two paper clips per student, 300-400 brass brads, brown paste wax shoe polish, rags, scissors, and leather tools if using leather.

One set of templates, (enlarged to fit on 12" x 18" sheet), for each 5 students.

(Adapted with permission from a project of the Idaho Commission for the Arts – Folk and Traditional Arts Program and Boise State University)

Making a Miniature Western Saddle

Instructions For Students

Days One and Two

1. Listen to the presentation on saddlemaking and learn the vocabulary. Watch a demonstration, if available.
2. Trace template with a black ink pen onto a sheet of craft foam; cut out saddle parts with scissors.
3. Put your name or initials on the back of each part.
4. Find a picture of a western saddle on the Internet or take a photo of a local saddle with carved decorations.
5. Use a black ink pen to draw designs on your saddle. Use designs found on the Internet and/or seen on local saddles as a guide.

Day Three

6. Observe how to rub on and wipe off excess shoe polish. Pay attention to clean-up procedures.
7. Rub brown wax shoe polish onto saddle with a rag; wipe off excess with a clean rag. Dispose of rags as instructed.

Day Four

8. Watch demonstration, then assemble saddle stirrup and wrap with yarn.

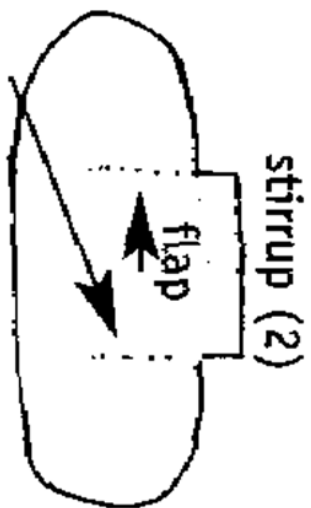
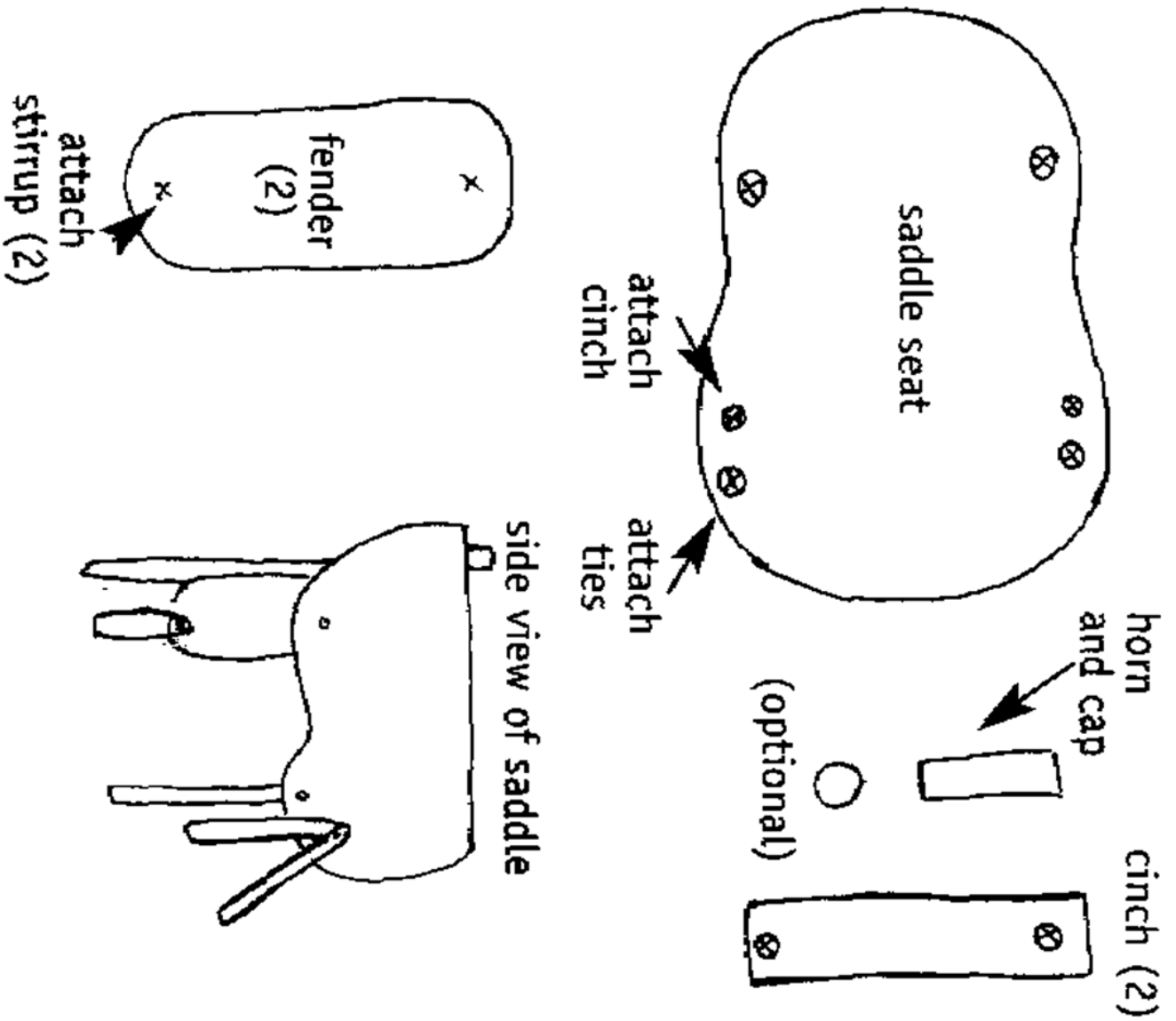
Day Five

9. Observe how to assemble the parts of the saddle with brass brads. Make your saddle.

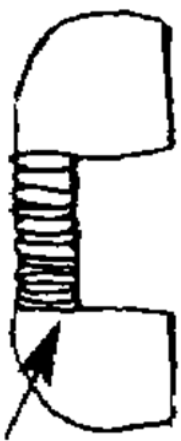
Optional

10. Watch demonstration on how to attach a hanger to your saddle. Prepare hanger and display.

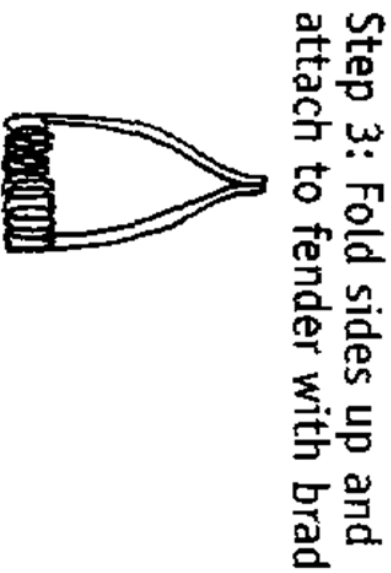
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Step 1: Cut down dotted lines; fold flap over and around



Step 2: Wrap with yarn



Step 3: Fold sides up and attach to fender with brad