

# Feeling Out Wet Felt

**Author:** Elise Bothel

**Grade Level:** 1-6

**Time Span:** Three 45 minute classes

First class:

Introduction- 20 minutes

Second class:

Demonstration- 15 minutes

Art making- 20 minutes

Clean up- 10 minutes

(staggered tables to wring out their felt and place on labeled baggie- 2 mins per table of 4)



Third class:

Introduction- 10 minutes

Art making- 25 minutes

Clean up- 10 minutes (staggered tables to wring out felt and place on labeled baggie 2 mins per table of 4)

**Essential Question:** How is felt made?

**Guiding Questions:** What is felt? What is wool? Where does wool come from? What are the different ways felt can be made unique? How do different types of fiber react to the felting process? How do different colored fibers react to each other when felted? How do the amount of layers change the end result? What happens if holes and gaps in the felt are embraced?

**Objective:** Students will gain an understanding of the historical context of felt. Students will create unique pieces of felt using wool, warm water, soap, and a textured surface. Students will explore and discover the process of creating wool fabric.

**Vocabulary:** Felt, Wool, Roving, Agitation, Fulling.

**Materials:**

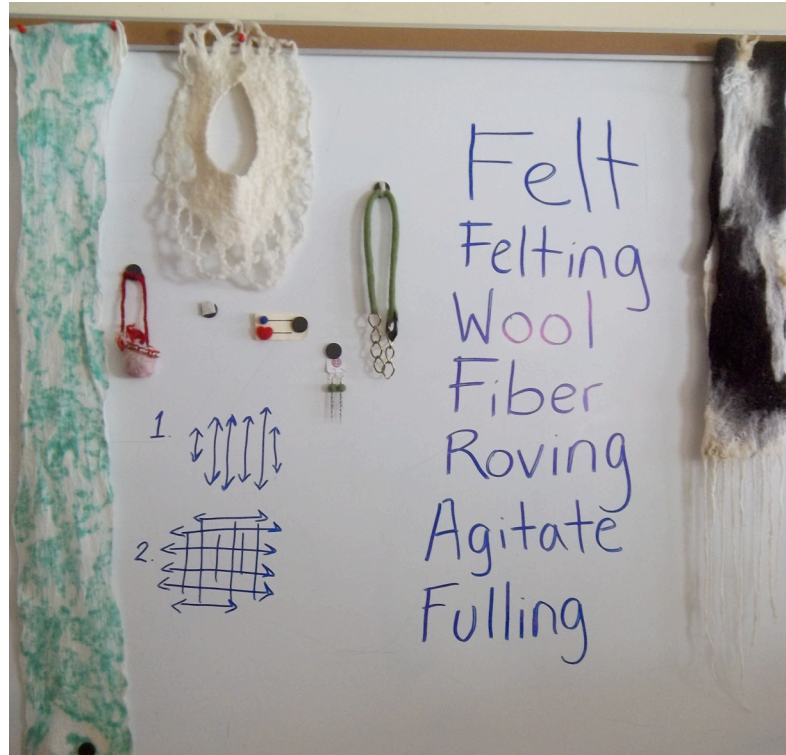
- Wool roving of various colors broken up into 1' sections
- Warm soapy water (electric kettle and a bottle of dish soap) (divided into pre-measured cups per student)
- 1'x2' piece of shelf liner per student
- 2' cut fabric strips from old t-shirts (2 per student)
- Sponges (several per table)
- Several textured surfaces (such as a plastic paint tray, boot mat, or washboard)
- Small pieces of non-wool fibers in various colors (such as silk, angora, alpaca, yarn, and thread, found factory felt)

**Resources:** Powerpoint and 20 minute lecture of historical and contemporary applications of felt. Several examples of finished felt pieces are helpful and wonderfully tactile. Mongolian felt making video:

*Mongolian felt making* [Web]. (2006). Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ0uojUHYdA>

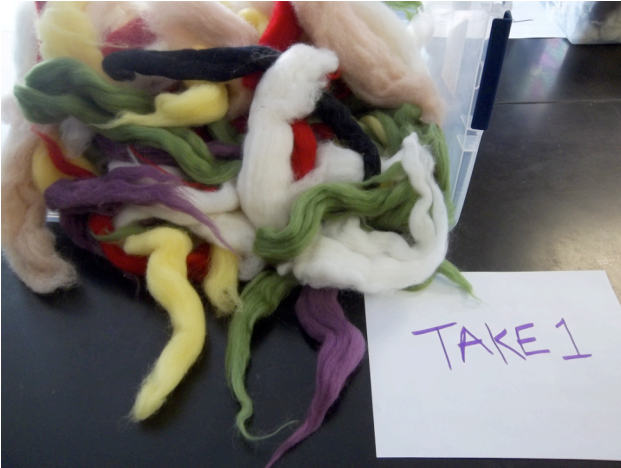
**Performance Tasks:** First class: Introduce the felting unit by asking students, “What is felt?”, explain that felt is a fabric made from wool, and that it is made from many wool fiber tangling together. Give a brief lecture accompanied by a Power Point presentation including a video on traditional Mongolian felt making and historical and contemporary applications of felt. After the Power Point,

present several pieces of Roving, explaining that it is the form of un-spun wool that can be purchased from the store to make felt, that the wool has been cleaned and brushed into long pieces, then provide tactile examples of partially felted and fully felted wool

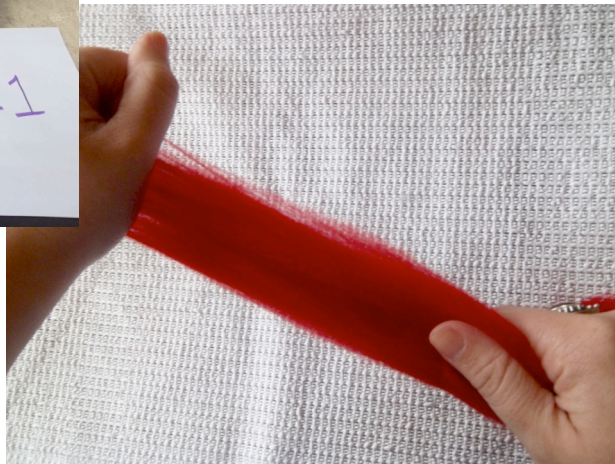


Second class: Recap, and ask students again what felt is and where wool comes from, and what roving is. The process of felting is then demonstrated on a small scale. Samples of partially finished pieces should be available for viewing. A few examples can be shown where other non-wool fibers have been embedded in the piece. The instructor can present thicker and thinner pieces of felt, and pieces where holes have been allowed to develop. Visual diagrams of each step should be available for viewing. Experimentation and variation are encouraged in this assignment. This is a learning exercise and not a formal lesson.

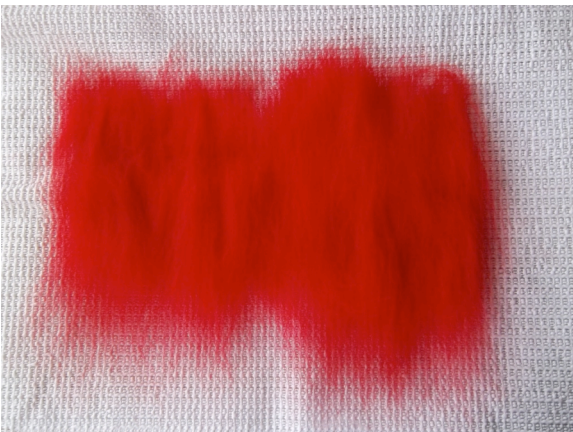
Step 1: Students are called up by table (4 per table) and are asked to choose two pieces of roving and several small pieces of fiber, they are also asked to take a piece of shelf liner back to their working space.



Students lay the shelf liner in front of them at a comfortable working distance with the rest of the materials to the side.



Step 2: Students start by grasping pieces of untwisted roving removing small handfuls of fiber. Next, they lay the fibers down in the center of their shelf liner arranging the pieces parallel to one another. (An example of this can easily be drawn on the board.)





Step 3: Students then lay a second layer of fiber, alternating 90 degrees, making a criss-cross or grid of layers. Pieces of non-wool fibers can be embedded in between the wool. Two layers are essential to felt, but up to 3 layers can be made (in the

given time period). Peers who easily grasp this concept can be especially helpful during this step.

Step 4: Once students are happy with their design they go to the instructor for some water. The teacher pours some warm, (but not too hot), soapy water in a cup for each student when they are ready. Or can pour water directly on each piece when a student raises their hand, to control soap and water amounts.



Step 5: Students roll the shelf liner like a scroll.



Step 6: Students gently begin to squish and roll their wool bundle. This will start to lock the fibers together. Students should be encouraged to open the roll and check the progress, and continue by rolling the mat in a different direction.



Step 7: Students can check to see if their wool has felted by doing a “pinch test”, if the layers fibers lift away from one another then the wool needs more agitation. Fibers that are too wet, soapy, or cold are difficult to felt, and many layers take longer to felt. The second class strives to reach the point where they can pick up their wool without it falling apart. Several students may quickly create a

fully felted piece and those students should be appointed as peer helpers.

Students wring out their felt 10 minutes before the end of class, a row of plastic bags with labeled with each student’s name and class are laid out on a table in the classroom. After each student has finished squeezing the water from their felt, they find the bag with their name on it, and place their piece of felt on top of the bag to dry.



Third class: A recap is had about the process of felting. Did you like felting? Why or why not? What are some important steps or tips you remember about felting?

Students to look at their dry felt laid on top of their labeled storage bags. The instructor points out the well-felted pieces and appoints those students to first rinse the soap from last class from their felt and then to be helpers for the rest of the first half of class. The instructor tells the rest of the students to grab a felting mat and a cup of water, and to continue to roll and work the wool until it passes the “pinch test”.

Once the wool is felted to the student’s liking the felt needs to be rinsed. Each student rinses their piece themselves at the sink when they are ready.



If students finish early they are asked to complete a colored drawing in the medium of their choice, (marker, crayon, or colored pencil) of their finished piece of felt. Third through sixth grade students are asked to write one thing they learned about felt on the back of their drawing.

**Clean up:** Once a student is satisfied with the progress of their felting they go to the sink and rinse out their piece. Students lay their felt to dry on top of a labeled

plastic bag on a table or drying rack in the classroom. Students should be responsible for returning remaining pieces of wool and supplemental fibers to the appropriate bins. Students should help wipe water from the tables and the floor with dry towels. The instructor cleans up all remaining soap and water, and places students' felt in the appropriate storage bag after they dry. (Approx 10 minutes- felt drying time: over night.)

**Modifications:** Students who have extreme difficulty lying down the fiber for felting can be given wool batting, which can just be placed in layers. Students who are physically irritated by wool fibers can have the option of wearing rubber gloves. (Non latex available), Students with limited mobility can receive alternative instruction on how to felt using the feet or even the wheels of a wheelchair.

**Assessments:** Students are assessed based on a rubric. Evidence of creative exploration in the created piece should be apparent. Understanding of the process of felting should be demonstrated. Students with un-felted pieces or limited understanding of the process will receive additional instruction.

**Main Learning Results:**

A. Disciplinary Literacy - Visual Arts: Students show literacy in the art discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes.

A1. Artist's Purpose: Students explain and compare different purposes of artists and their artwork, in the context of time and place.

A3. Students explain the effects of media and their associated tools, techniques, and processes, using elements, principles, and expressive qualities in art forms and genres.



B. Creation, Performance, and Expression - Visual Arts: Students create, express, and communicate through the art discipline.

B1: Media Skills: Students choose suitable media, tools, techniques, and processes to create original art works.

E. Visual and Performing Arts Connections: Students understand the relationship among the arts, history and world culture; and they make connections among the arts and to other disciplines, to goal-setting, and to interpersonal interaction.

E1: The Arts and History and World Cultures: Students compare products of the visual/performing arts to understand history and/or world cultures.