



NORTH CAROLINA
MUSEUM OF HISTORY

**Hands-On Heritage:
North Carolina
Folklife Traditions**

Resource Manual

A compendium of classroom activities
and resource materials to help you
prepare for your Hands-On Heritage
Discovery Tour

The following information will help your group prepare for its museum visit.

Hands-On Heritage: North Carolina Folklife Traditions

I. What is a Hands-On Heritage Tour?

During your visit to the North Carolina Museum of History, you are scheduled for a Hands-On Heritage Discovery Tour. This special docent-led tour focuses on folklife traditions found in our state. Depending on the museum's current exhibits, you will learn about one of various folklife traditions or crafts such as pottery, baskets, music, quilts, storytelling, or wood-carving. Your tour will lead you through a current exhibit or may be located in a classroom. Every Hands-On Heritage Tour will allow visitors to interact with a tour guide and touch reproduction artifacts and crafts. This resource guide will prepare your group for its upcoming visit. It contains basic information about folklife traditions and craft exercises to introduce the concepts of folklife.

II. What Is Folklife?

by Sally Peterson, Curator of Folklife

The word conjures up images of fiddle tunes and quilting bees, of split-oak baskets and tales told by firelight. Folklife is all these things, but also much more.

Simply put, folklife is traditional expressive culture shared within communities. **Traditional expressive culture** includes customs, beliefs, technical skills, art, architecture, music, play, dance, theater, and pageantry that all speak to the spirit of community. People learn these traditional forms through speech, by imitation, or in performance.

A **community** can be a single family, a small town, or a rural village. Workers sharing an occupation or workplace form a community; so do the students of a school. Religious convictions bind people into communities; so do ethnic origins and experiences. We all belong to many communities, and each of these communities shares many expressive traditions.

The North Carolina Museum of History explores the expressive traditions of many North Carolina communities and your tour will examine traditional

expressive culture through **process and product, maker and community.**

Culture reaches deep into our lives and provides the means for **expressing our innermost thoughts and feelings.** Community members share common ways of communicating personal experiences to each other. Stories, songs, and jokes take advantage of oral abilities, and handcrafted products—from quilts and canned goods to fishing gear and gardens—that serve occupational and artistic ends utilize our mechanical skills. Folklife fosters this creativity and fellowship while capturing the spirit of community in artistry and action.



III. Classroom Activities

A. Words to Discuss in Class

culture the total pattern of human knowledge, beliefs, and behavior that is embodied in thought, speech, action, and artifacts and is dependent on man's capacity for learning and transmitting this knowledge to succeeding generations.

tradition the process of handing down information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example without written instruction.

artifact a physical object, showing human workmanship, collected by a museum. An artifact can be unusual or common, old or new, a whole item or part of an item.

B. Discuss the meaning of folklife. Have your students write down family traditions, customs, or special skills that they enjoy. Ask the following questions:



1. Who began your favorite family tradition?
2. Has anyone in your family or community taught you a skill or craft?



3. Do members of your family or community sing, dance, or play musical instruments? If so, have they passed their skills on to others?
4. Does anyone in your family or community tell funny and interesting stories?

C. The following pages highlight North Carolina artisans. Complete the activities in class or give your students copies to take home.

YOU can
be a *Potter*
at work

POTTERY OR PLASTIC?

People used pots for storing, making, and keeping food long before plastic was invented. In North Carolina's Piedmont, pottery making has gone on for more than two hundred years! Many potters learn the art from family members—parents or grandparents, or maybe an aunt, uncle, or cousin.

To make a face jug,
a potter starts with a plain
jug and adds a nose, a
mouth, ears, eyes—
whatever he or she pleases.
No one knows why potters
started making face jugs,
but it was probably just for
fun.

What kind of face would
you make?

Pottery



earthenware

pottery produced from ocher-colored surface clay that contains large amounts of iron or other impurities

stoneware pottery

made from dense clay that matures at a high temperature

bisque ware

fired but unglazed pottery

kiln

oven, furnace, or heated enclosure used for processing pottery by burning or firing

groundhog kiln

long, low rectangular kiln with a deep firebox at one end and a wide chimney at the other; may be buried in the ground or against a hillside

blast off

to add large amounts of fuel to a kiln to heat it quickly

burning

firing of a kiln to process pottery

salt glaze

hard, glassy coating on pottery, produced when salt added to a kiln vaporizes

alkaline glaze

mixture of ashes, water, and clay with powdered glass, iron cinders, feldspar, or quartz; usually a green or brown glaze that forms a lustrous coating

salt glaze

hard, glassy coating on pottery, produced when salt added to a kiln vaporizes

crawdad slip glaze

golden brown to greenish brown glaze found by Sid Luck in a pond near his home



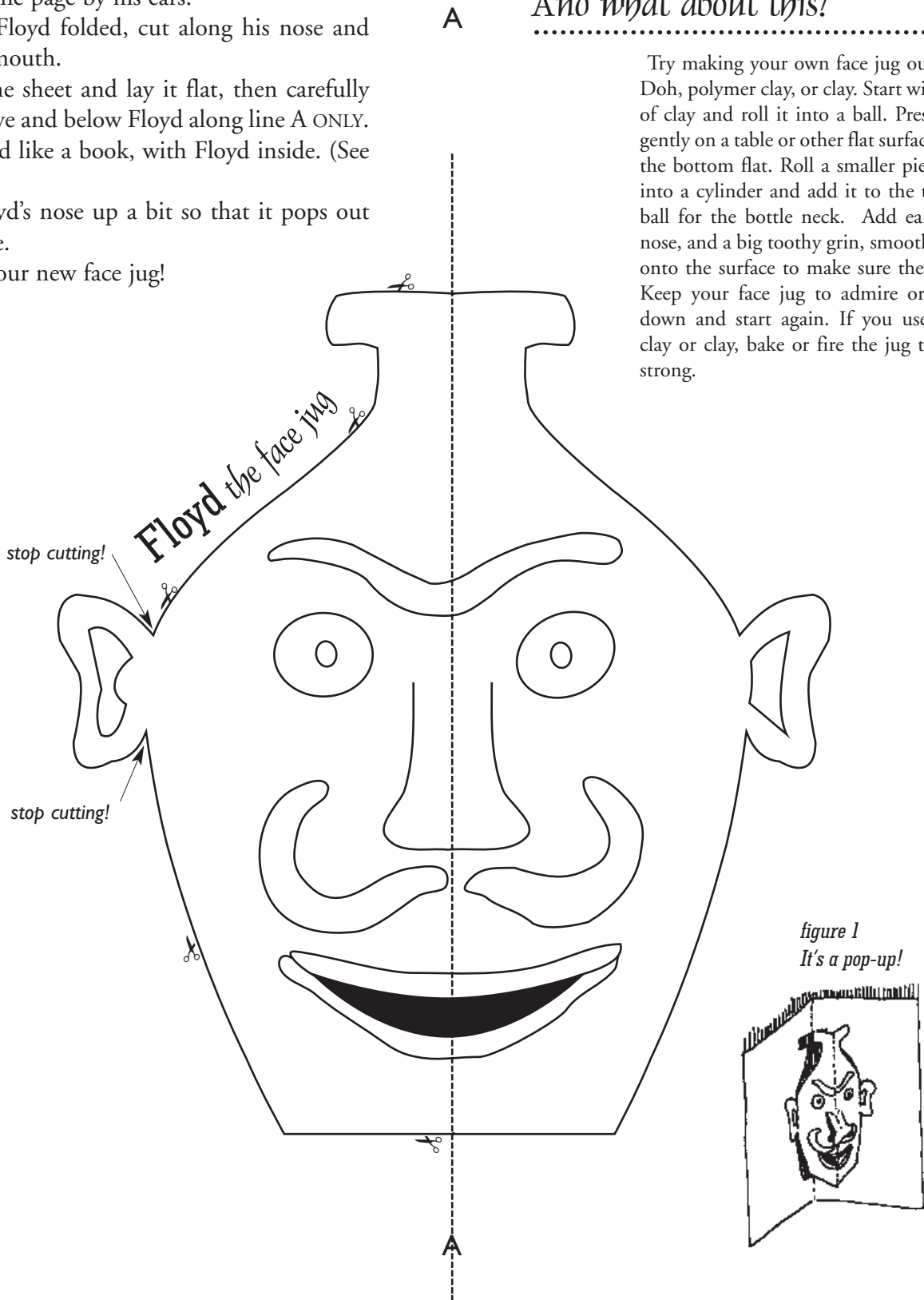
Now let's make a pot!!

Face jug

1. Color Floyd the way you like.
2. Fold Floyd carefully on dotted line A, keeping him on the outside of the fold.
3. Cut around Floyd's edges, top and bottom. DO NOT CUT HIM ALL THE WAY OUT! Leave him attached to the page by his ears.
4. Keeping Floyd folded, cut along his nose and cut out his mouth.
5. Unfold the sheet and lay it flat, then carefully refold it above and below Floyd along line A ONLY. It should fold like a book, with Floyd inside. (See figure 1.)
6. Bend Floyd's nose up a bit so that it pops out from his face.
7. Display your new face jug!

And what about this?

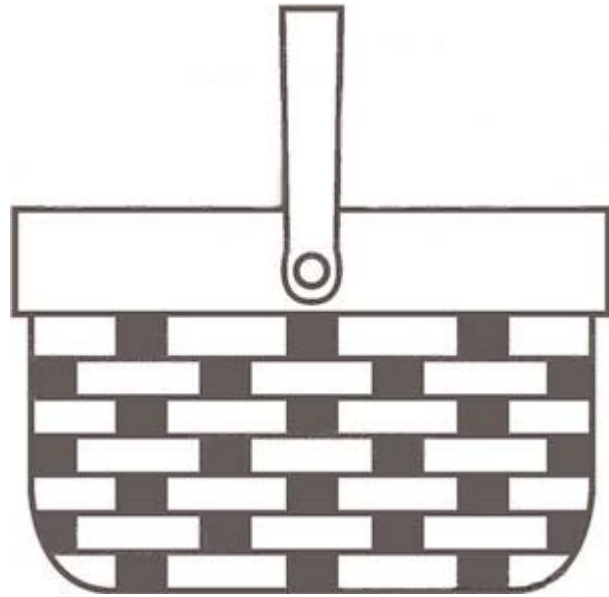
Try making your own face jug out of Play-Doh, polymer clay, or clay. Start with a lump of clay and roll it into a ball. Press the ball gently on a table or other flat surface to make the bottom flat. Roll a smaller piece of clay into a cylinder and add it to the top of the ball for the bottle neck. Add ears, eyes, a nose, and a big toothy grin, smoothing them onto the surface to make sure they stay on. Keep your face jug to admire or smash it down and start again. If you use polymer clay or clay, bake or fire the jug to make it strong.



Basketry

Materials

paper
scissors
glue
construction paper (various colors)



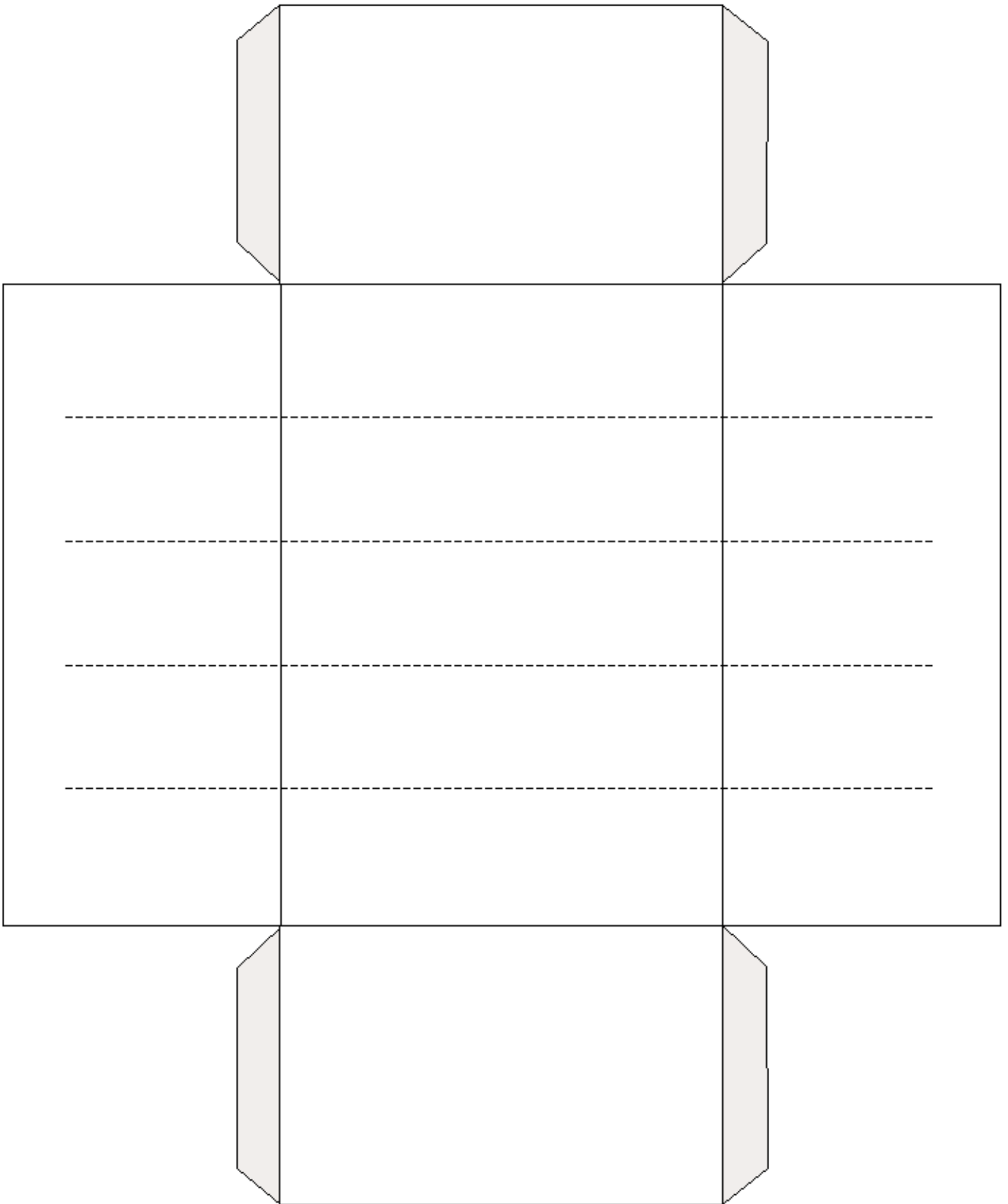
Directions

- Cut out the basket template on the following page.
- Cut along the dotted lines of the basket template. This will allow you to weave strips of paper into the basket.
- Cut 6 strips of construction paper the size of the weaving strip template below.
- Weave the construction paper strips over and under the basket's "ribs" and glue them in place.
- Fold the basket along the solid lines.
- Use the small tabs on each end to glue the basket together.
- Add a construction paper handle if you choose!

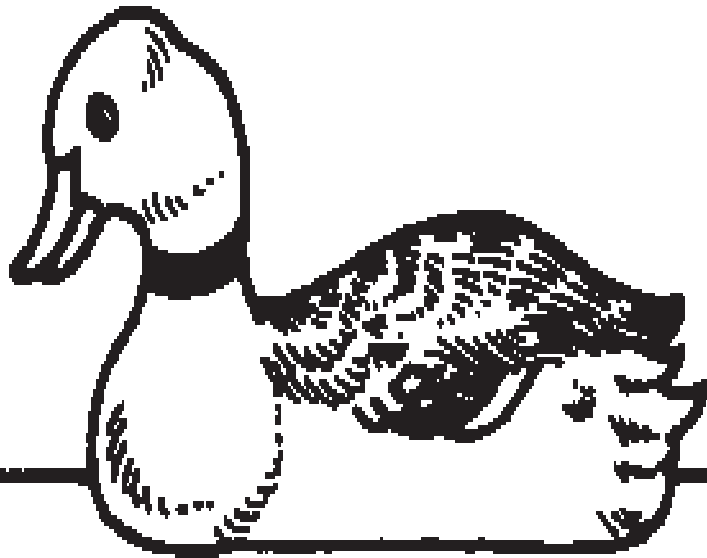
Weaving Strip Template

Cut 6 strips of construction paper to this size.

Basket Template



YOU can
be a *Decoy Maker
at Work*

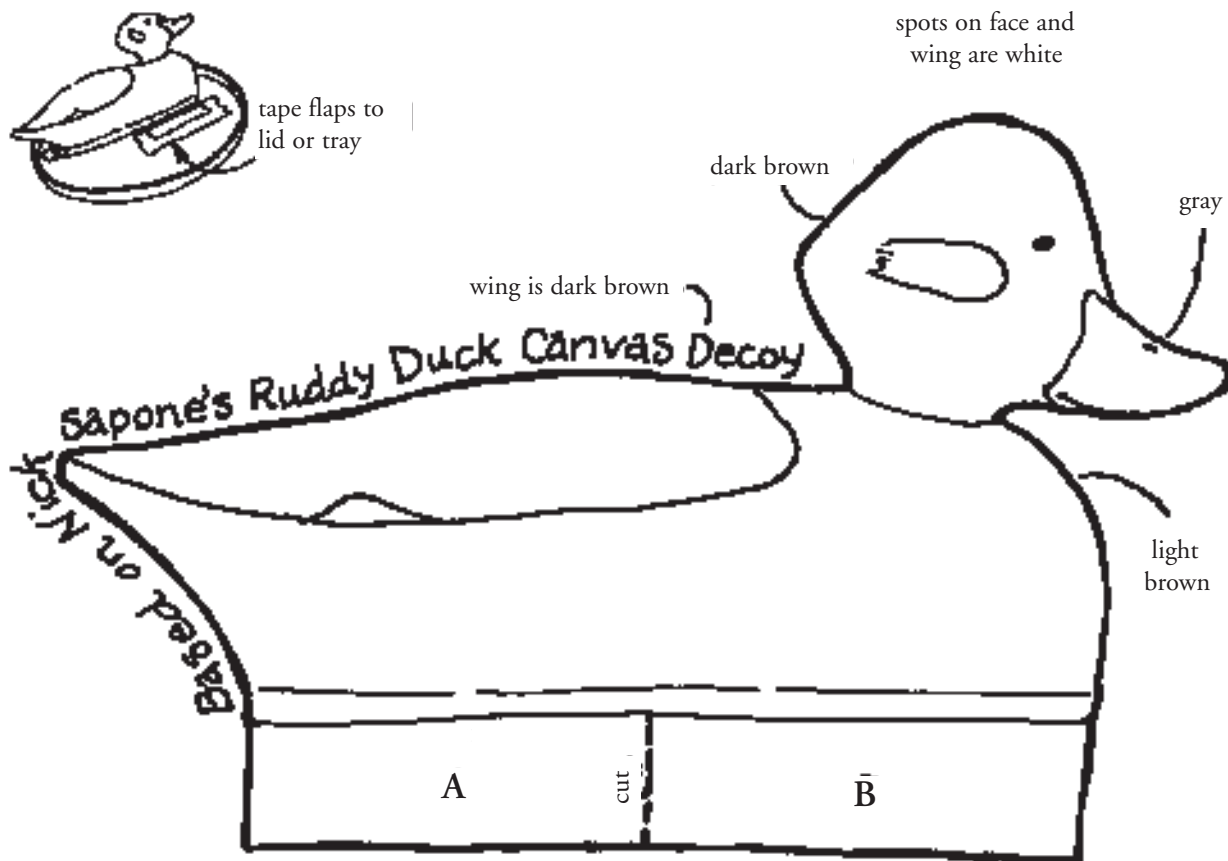


HOW DO YOU TRICK A DUCK?

Hunters use decoys, or artificial birds, to lure live birds within shot. People have been making and using decoys in North Carolina, especially along the coast, for a long time. Many decoys are models of ducks, swans, coots, and other shorebirds.

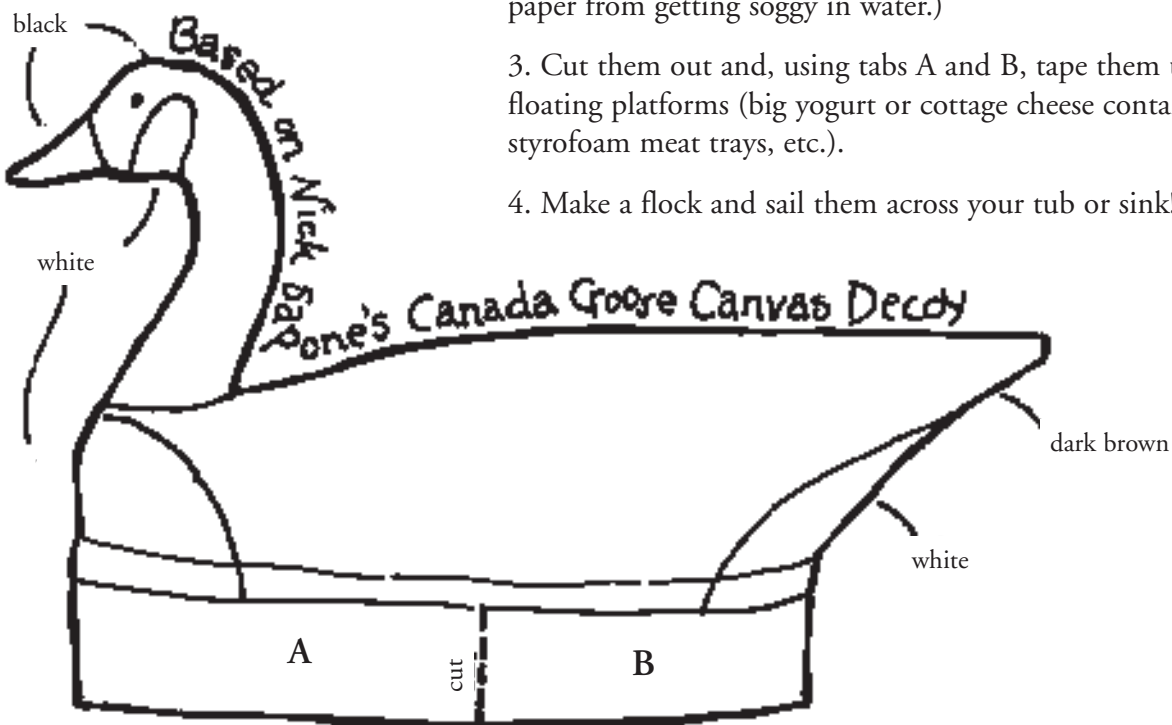
WHERE'S THE INSTRUCTION SHEET?

Experienced decoy makers rarely use plans or patterns because they have learned what sizes and shapes work best. They make decoys from nearly everything—driftwood, parts of telephone poles, wire, canvas, and other materials.



Bathtub Decoys

1. Trace or paste duck and goose onto poster board. (A cereal box works fine, too.)
2. Color them in. (A thick coating of crayon will help keep the paper from getting soggy in water.)
3. Cut them out and, using tabs A and B, tape them upright to floating platforms (big yogurt or cottage cheese container lids, styrofoam meat trays, etc.).
4. Make a flock and sail them across your tub or sink!



YOU can
be a *Quilter
at Work*

The Coharie Quilters of Sampson County gather to share ideas, work on community projects, and assist others. The group has been stitching together since 1980.

For each of the past five years, the quilters have completed projects for two statewide quilt shows. Their handiwork has benefited churches, individuals, and community organizations.



These drawings represent nine-patch quilt squares. People have sewed quilts using nine-patch squares for a long time. The designs look simple, but you can make many different shapes using these patterns. Try some! Copy the designs or create your own.



YOU can be a Wood-carver at Work

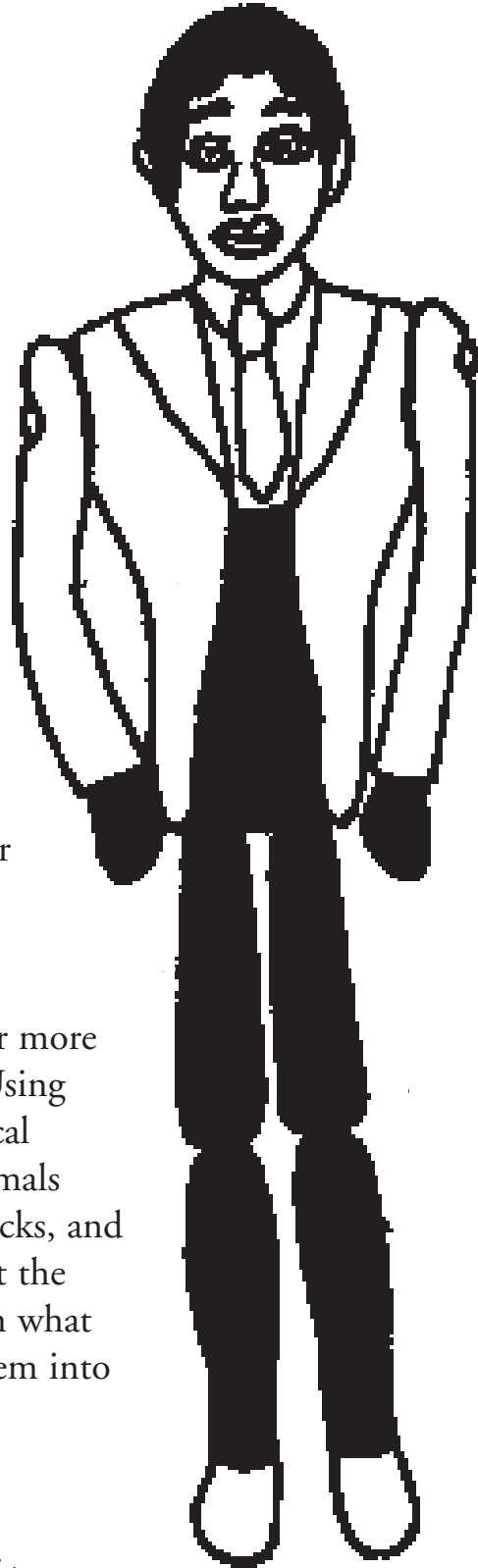
“I was always tinkering with something. I saw that picture and knew I could do better than that. It’s a gift, something that comes like second nature. Nobody ever showed me how to carve. The Lord just gave it to me.”

—George Servance

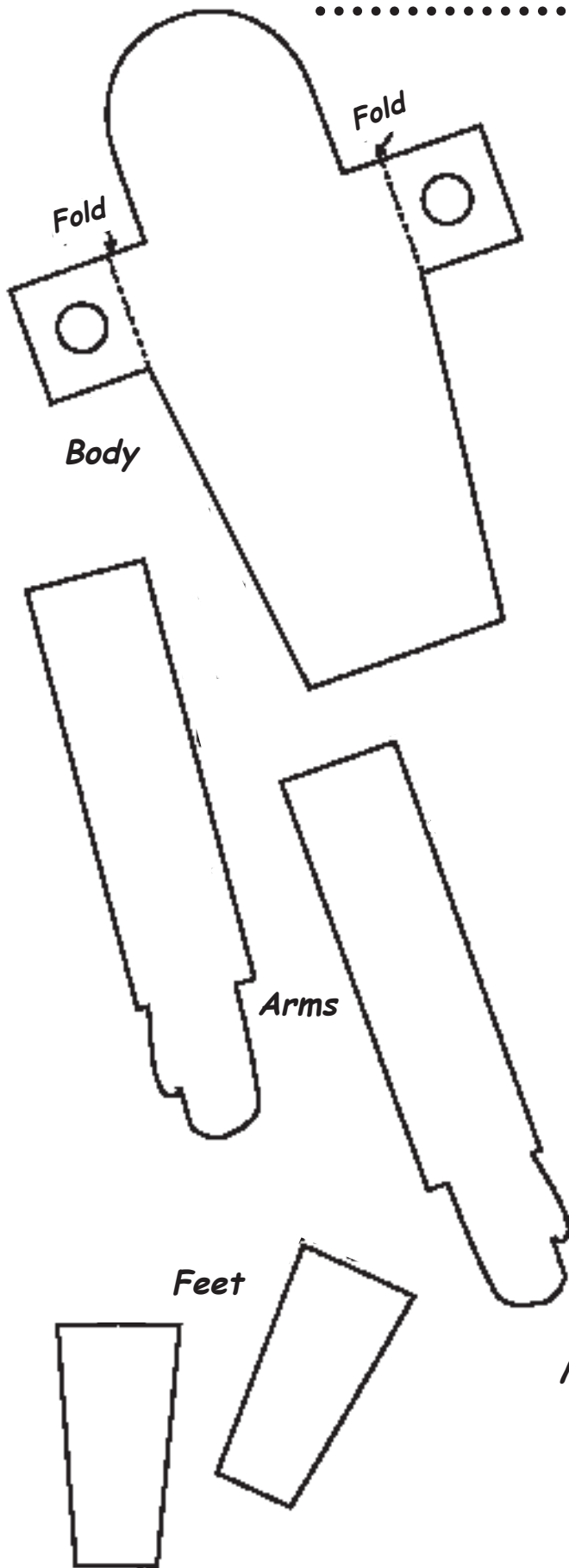
Dancing dolls

can be found in all three geographic regions of the state. African American carvers pass down traditions in their art. Toys like these are often called whimsies or limberjacks.

George Servance has been selling his dancing dolls around Thomasville for more than thirty years, but that’s not all. Using maple and mahogany scraps from local furniture factories, he also carves animals (including a full-size cat), walking sticks, and scenes and people from the Bible. At the same time he draws new images from what he sees around him and translates them into wood.



DANCING DOLL

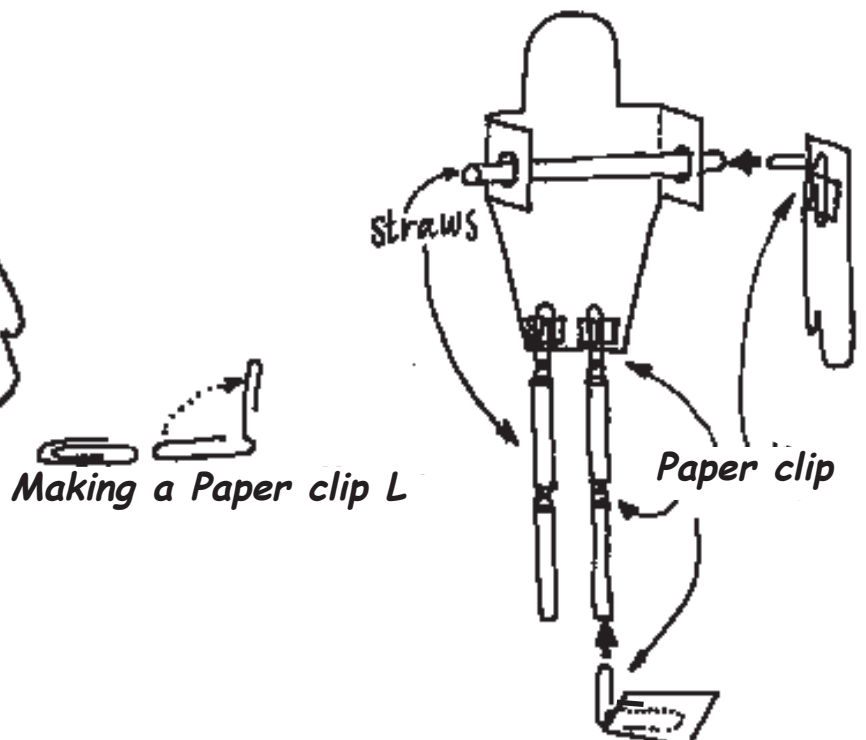


What you need:

piece of poster board or cereal box
glue
crayons or pens
scissors
4 drinking straws

paper hole punch
13 paper clips
tape

1. Trace or paste the dancing doll pattern onto poster board or a cereal box.
2. Color the pieces any way you like, then cut them out.
3. Punch open the two holes in the doll's shoulders. These holes should be large enough so that a straw stuck through them spins easily.
4. Fold the doll's shoulders back on the dotted lines. Cut a piece of straw 2 1/2 inches long and thread it through the holes.
5. Take a paper clip and unfold it into an L. Tape a doll arm to one leg of the paper clip. Push the other leg of the paper clip into one end of the shoulder straw (see drawing). Repeat for the other arm.
6. Hook eight paper clips together in sets of two. Cut two straws in half. Use the paper clips to attach the straws to each other and to the body (see drawing).
7. Unfold two more paper clips and attach the feet to the legs the same way you attached the arms to the shoulder straw (see drawing).
8. Make an L out of the last paper clip, tape it to the back of the doll, and attach a straw for a handle.
9. **Turn on the music and make your doll dance!**



..... **Additional Resources**



Artistry in Quilts

VHS (CC) 18 minutes Grades 4+

Quilts do more than keep us warm—they represent the histories of communities, families, and individuals.

Grade 4: Social Studies Goals 2 and 5; Language Arts Goals 2 and 3

Grade 8: Social Studies Goals 3, 5, and 6; Language Arts Goals 2 and 4

From Earth and Fire: North Carolina Pottery

VHS (CC) 14 minutes Grades 4+

Explore how pottery is created and how traditional pottery has played a part in North Carolina history and culture.

Grade 4: Social Studies Goals 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7; Language Arts Goals 2 and 3

Grade 8: Social Studies Goals 3 and 5; Language Arts Goals 2 and 4

Loan period: one week

Cost: \$1 per program—\$10 maximum (you pay return shipping)

From Earth and Fire: North Carolina Pottery

Create interdisciplinary lessons and encourage students to connect with history! Watch the video *From Earth and Fire: North Carolina Pottery* and use pieces of pottery and historical photographs to learn math, language arts, and science. This project was made possible through the support of the North Carolina Humanities Council and the North Carolina Arts Commission.

Grade 4: Social Studies Goals 1, 4, 5, and 6; Language Arts Goals 2 and 4

Grade 8: Social Studies Goals 3 and 5; Language Arts Goal 4; Math Goals 1 and 4

For more information about Educational Media Center programs or Educator Kits, please write or call:

Educational Media Center
North Carolina Museum of History
4650 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4650
Phone 919-807-7995
Fax 919-733-8655

Places to Visit

Mountain Region

Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Cherokee
828-497-3103
www.cherokee-nc.com/qualla.htm

Hensley Forge, Spruce Pine
828-765-2221
www.ncarts.org/ncfha/hensl_fa.html

Piedmont Region

North Carolina Pottery Center, Seagrove
336-873-8430
www.ncpotterycenter.com

Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts
(MESDA), Winston-Salem
1-888-653-7253
<http://www.oldsalem.org/mesda.html>

Coastal Plain Region

Native American Resource Center, Pembroke
910-521-6282
www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum

Core Sound Waterfowl Museum, Harkers Island
252-728-1500
www.coresound.com

North Carolina Maritime Museum, Beaufort
252-728-7317
www.ncmaritimemuseum.org

Books

North Carolina Arts Council, *North Carolina Folk Heritage Award*

Newman Ivey White, *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore I–VII*

Sarah H. Hill, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry*

John M. Coggeshall, *Carolina Piedmont Country*

William Neal Conoley Jr., *Waterfowl Heritage: North Carolina Decoys and Gunning Lore*

Daniel W. Patterson and Charles G. Zug III, eds., *Arts in Earnest North Carolina Folklife*

Kay K. Moss, *Southern Folk Medicine 1750–1820*

Ellis Credle, *Tall Tales From the High Hills*

Anthony Hillman, *Carving Miniature Shorebirds*

Charles Beiderman and William Johnston, *Beginner's Handbook of Woodcarving: Project Patterns for Line Carving, Relief Carving, Carving in the Round, and Bird Carving*

Kevin McGuire, *Woodworking for Kids: Forty Fabulous, Fun, and Useful Things for Kids to Make*

Mary Cobb, *The Quilt-Block History of Pioneer Days: With Projects Kids Can Make*



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