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Decorating a Christmas tree in primary school

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Abstract

This contribution is dealing with usage options of various material types for a creation of Christmas decorations at the first level of primary school. It summarizes creation from natural materials, paper, a combination of different materials as well as modelling materials. All these types of materials were tested at primary school with children. We also show here results of children's work, that they can create themselves. It comes to combining several parts during the classes, namely the promotion of the tradition of Christmas tree decorations, Christmas traditions linked to this and inter-subject relations (elementary science and social studies). By creating products, we improve children's fine motoring and with some products we support creativity.

Keywords: Christmas decorations, primary school

Introduction

The creation of Christmas decorations at elementary school is a very popular part of teaching in the field “Man and the world of work”. There is a wide range of both – types of Christmas decorations and material that can be used for creation. An important fact is that for many Christmas products, minimal costs are needed. It is advisable to start production in time, because children can get a lot of material on their own. We can also understand the gathering of natural ingredients used to make Christmas decorations from other perspectives. Children learn to know nature – from work that has begun, for example, already in the park or in the woods while walking with their parents, they are happier and have pleasant memories. It is important in today's sedentary period to move and stay in nature. Frequently elementary and simple material offers far more opportunities for developing a child than prepared and purchased expensive goods.

Although this work is linked to Advent, in many classes it is necessary to start production in time. Christmas fairs, where pupils sell their products, are held at schools at the beginning of Advent. That is why we need to think about Christmas and gather material already during the autumn.

Natural resources – Rowan berries

The soft fruit of the rowan tree is ideal for use in work activities. They are also a favourite model in art education. The berries are well spiked and threaded. They are an interesting addition among other natural resources.

To make Christmas decorations, they can be used as well as when creating autumn themes. The berries can be glued, threaded, combined with other material. When wire-strung, you can shape anything out of them.

Natural resources – Poppy head, rose hip, dried fruit, tomatillo flowers

Dry fruits of these plants can be used both individually and in combination. You have to think ahead again, to pick them up and dry them in time. Already from September, teachers can encourage children to gather these plants. Of course, according to their possibilities. They can also go out into the countryside and collect some fruits together during elementary science and social studies. Throughout whole September and October, children have to be motivated appropriately, for example by announced competition in the collection of natural materials for the production of Christmas decorations. Pupils choose suitable place in a classroom for brought fruit and observe their gradual change. Work with this material will be then much more interesting for them.



Christmas decoration – Poppy head, rose hip, dried fruit, tomatillo flowers

Natural resources – Cones

Among other natural materials that can be used at the first level of primary school in the creation of Christmas decorations are cones. Cones can be collected at any time, so it doesn't need to be planned too ahead. Various figures, for example owls, birds, etc., can be created from them. We can only decorate them or spray with gold or silver spray. Work with sprays is appropriate rather from the fourth grade of elementary school. It requires some skill and caution. Work clothes and a carefully covered work area are important. For children, this is a very entertaining event, and everyone wants to spray their own cone. Different cones are also good for something else. For spraying, suited are the tiny ones, for the decoration with other materials for the creation of some figure, medium size cones are better.

Paper

The most used material at the elementary school for creation is paper. A lot of Christmas decorations are also made from paper. Many of them can be easily created at school.

Before we begin to make any paper decoration with children, they should know what kind of paper they actually use. Ordinary paper – usually coloured – is sufficient for some decorations. For example, to make a Christmas chain that can be created already by first grade pupils. This is a simple job that develops fine motoring and teaches pupils to handle scissors properly, work with paper glue and keep order on the desk during the work. Even the paper chain can decorate the Christmas tree in the classroom. Coloured paper can be also glued to a harder paper. Or you can use right away hard coloured paper.

Another option is cardboard paper. But it is too hard for children and they could be injured when cutting.

Christmas decorations from paper can be cut according to templates, folded to different shapes – most often flowers, stars, trees, spheres; differently folded, and glued. An interesting example is a combination of, for example, fabric. Gluing coloured or patterned cloth on paper looks very impressive, and is easily achieved by choosing the right colour of the Christmas savour on the decoration. Paper can be also twisted to create different shapes, spray with colour varnish or decorative finishing.

Glue is often required for paper work. Stick glue is probably not enough to make paper decorations. It usually holds poorly and the paper separates. Paper decorations, especially for smaller children, are simple. Therefore, care must be taken to make a nice and clean design. The peeled pieces would not impress nicely. The best is to use a common dispersion paper glue (e.g. Herkules). Children can also apply it with a brush by themselves.



Christmas decoration – Paper

Combination of different materials

Various materials can be used to make Christmas decorations. In particular, combinations of natural products look very effective and children can be interested in such products. Still, the low cost of material remains important. Natural material can be taken by children themselves. The material we use to decorate the nature materials can also be easily available. If we don't count different bows and threads for hanging, the most common complement to natural products in the production of Christmas decorations are, for example, self-adhesive eyes, cotton wool (see "owls"), glass or artificial colour decorations such as spheres, beads, metal wires, felt, etc. It is material easily available and cheap. Pupils can bring it or teacher can buy them. Combining natural material with another is an attractive work for children and the result is pleasant. The Christmas decoration made this way will be a surprise for them. They take the knowledge of working with new material, its properties in relation to use with natural materials, e.g. adhesion of different materials using different types of glue. They develop their aesthetic feeling – less is sometimes more and it is not always fitting.

The creation of decorations from different types of materials is more suitable for older pupils of the first level of elementary school. In terms of difficulty, it is preferable to include it from the third year up.

Different material

In addition to natural materials, different modelling materials are very suitable for children at the first level. Work with modelling dough is part of the thematic plans of the work activities of many years of first level. When working with ductile material, children develop a fine motoring, imagination, and even the fact that this work is very fun cannot be forgotten.



Christmas decoration – Modeling mass

In the production of Christmas decorations at school, probably self-hardening materials succeed the most. The product is simply made and let to dry freely. Working with Fimo would also be interesting, but the problem may be

the inability to cook the product in hot water. Obstacles are hygiene standards, space, safety. There are doughs on the market that are baked afterwards. This is the same problem in the school space as with Fimo cooking.

Conclusion

The creation of Christmas decorations at primary school is appropriate supplementation of activities, that are the content of work activities or art education. The work on them is interesting for children thanks to their use. Not all work that is done by children during work activities have permanent character. For example, the work with modelling material, mounting and dismounting of a building kit, care for flowers and other works, that are only supposed to prepare children for more difficult work or they relate to other field than manual activity. And not every product is such as to withstand the tooth of time. But products, that will remain for children basically forever or they have some meaning to them, are very favourite. The feeling of ownership and the possibility to take their product home can inspire them. Sometimes they plan already during the work what will they do with their product, where will they put it, and for what else than it is intended to, they will use it. It is the same with the creation of Christmas decorations. It is necessary to show children the final product, template. Children need to be enthusiastic and desirous to have such a decoration. Their curiosity about the procedure must be awakened. They often ask about the creation process ahead. Then they get to work enthusiastically.

Literature

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