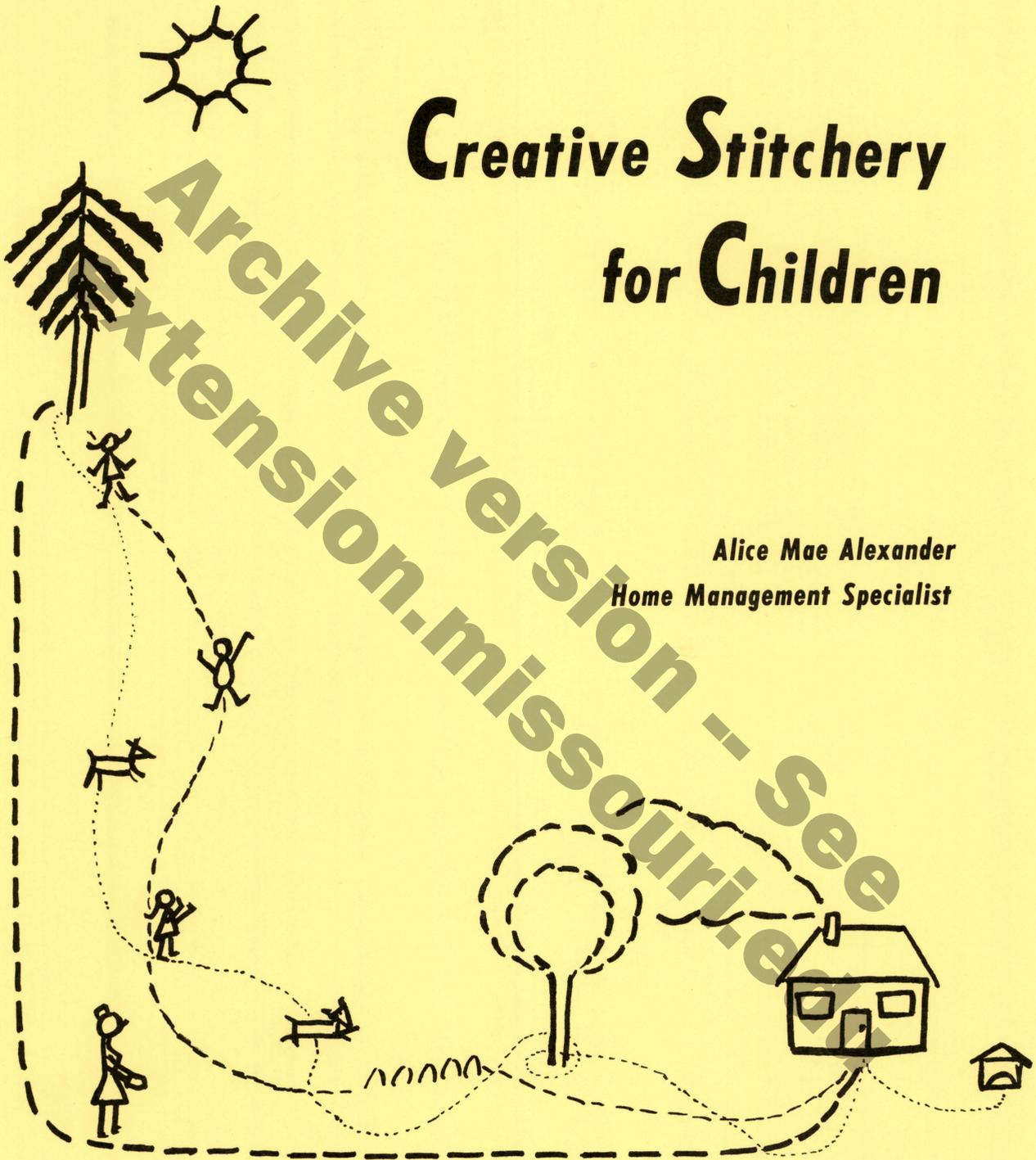


Creative Stitchery for Children

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THINGS TO DO

I Have your text book, "Stitchery for Children" by Jacqueline Enthoven, on your desk. (*If you are like most people, you have already looked at the pictures*). Hopefully, you are going to start at the very beginning of the book so you will have a better understanding of the stages of development of young people.

II Preschool Stitchery - P. 6 - 19

Read and react to the suggestions offered by Mrs. Enthoven. *I have a notion you learned a few new things yourself* - for example - did you ever try that tip on pulling yarn through a soap sandwich? And weren't you fascinated with the stick figures used in "Taking a Walk with Stitches?" I was.

Perhaps you will want to get some materials ready so you will be all set for that day when your own preschooler expresses a wish to sew. Hardware cloth and fiberglass screening need to have the edges covered to protect the child from sharp points. This should give you an opportunity to express your creativity.

Since you likely will have the textbook for a limited time, I have attempted to summarize some of the most pertinent information on the pages headed PRECHOOOL AGE STITCHERY and SCHOOL AGE STITCHERY. *Feel free to make notes on these and add other pages if I failed to include as much information as you wish to have.*

The pictures illustrating the summary were included as teasers. *Do they suggest anything you might like to do for your Jane or Jim or for their rooms?* Remember Mrs. Enthoven's advice about a child being an imitator.

III School Age Stitchery

Six years old - P. 20 - 28

In the second paragraph of your reading assignment, you are reminded that if you have not stitched before you could profit by picking up your doodling cloth. How many of these stitches suggested for a beginner can you do?

Back Stitch
Blanket Stitch
Buttonhole Stitch
Chain Stitch
Couching Stitch
Darning Stitch

Double Running Stitch
French Knot
Running Stitch
Stem Stitch
Straight Stitches
Whipped Running Stitch

If you don't already have a box or basket with a collection of yarns of different weights and colors and textures, start one.

What did you think of the pictures on Page 27? *Want to try that crinoline bit?*

Seven years old - P. 28 - 32

If you have a seven year old, do you agree with Mrs. Enthoven that this age is usually quite different from the six year old? It would be interesting to compare work of these two age groups. Pictures seem to appeal to this age. So frames are in order. Your assignment here seems evident. "*Make several frames at one time*" says Mrs. Enthoven. Follow her instructions on page 162.

Eight years old - P. 33 - 35

As you read the material in the textbook, react to it in light of other experiences you have had with your own youth. For example - how did Jane or Jim perform when they were handling some other medium, such as clay or dough or paper or crayons?

An easy and interesting way to introduce color to this age group is through combinations of thread. Do you know how to make God's Eyes? There are many books that have directions. It is a simple process of wrapping yarns around sticks or rods. If you are able to get the book "Embroidery for Children" by Kornerup - look on page 41. The student used transparent drinking straws and very, very thin thread to imitate a spider web. This wall hanging of 9 God's Eyes is quite lovely.

I don't know how you will respond to Mrs. Enthoven's suggestion of *encouraging the eight year olds collective urge*. Is there a spot for one more collection in Jim's room? It may be time to dispose of a jar or two of bugs for sanitary reasons and substitute some string and yarns. This will probably be easier for you mothers to tolerate at any rate. And Jane's room may need some attention.

Nine years old - P. 35 - 40

I was interested in the two approaches used by different teachers:

- a. Motivation was furnished by a study of the state. This permitted correlating art to geography.
- b. Each child was left free to make a stitchery of his favorite interest.

What would you do - if you were given these assignments? *Might try one.*

Ten and Eleven years old - P. 40 - 46

Perhaps this is a good time to thumb through Chapter II - Learning Stitches. No doubt you have looked at the pictures before this - but give some serious study to the stitches that are not familiar to you. *Experiment with repetition or combinations of stitches.* Proceed to Chapter III - Designing Stitcheries. *Try your hand at planning a design on paper* - P. 133.

Stitching a family vacation map or a mural could be a good project for this age group. Are you up to directing this activity?

Eleven and Twelve years old - P. 46 - 49

I was particularly interested in the 8 samplers on page 48. If you hadn't read the caption, could you have told which 4 were made by boys - which 4 by girls?

Review Chapter III - Designing Stitchery. To be honest with you, some of the designing done by young people put me to shame - how about you? But perhaps we can excuse ourselves by saying we were not exposed to this type of thing when we were young. But I hope you are making a resolution to see that those in your home have this exposure!

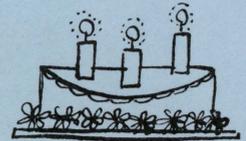
You know your own child and his interests - take advantage of this. If in doubt - *use nature for your inspiration* - you can't go wrong.

HAPPY STITCHING

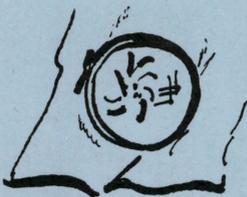
PRESCHOOL AGE STITCHERY



If you are interested in the very young stitcher, begin your reading on page 6 of your textbook "Stitchery for Children" by Jacqueline Enthoven. (I have a notion you have already thumbed through the entire book and have looked at the pictures. Aren't they interesting?) This chapter stresses the importance of being prepared for the day when your little one says "Mommie---I want to sew." This little one, he or she, may be in the neighborhood of 2 1/2 or 3 years old. If you are sewing, you will be more likely to hear the request. A more enthusiastic helper you'll never find! So, what do you do? Mrs. Enthoven (who is an authority), has a few words of caution. I'm condensing them for you.



1. Avoid long preliminaries.
2. Avoid offering choices of materials and colors, since decisions take time and delays may cause the first impulse to be lost.
3. Quietly and quickly solve problems beyond his grasp. (He and his will be used throughout the course, but little girls are included in this term).
4. As his understanding and manipulative skill increases, show him on a separate cloth what causes a problem. (Have your own doodling cloth.)
5. Since a preschool child's attention span is short, do everything you can so that there is no unnecessary interruption.
6. Make the experience pleasant so he will want to repeat it.
7. Often the finished piece is of little interest to the very young person---it is the "doing" that is important.
8. Start the stitching on some rigid material such as hardware cloth or fiberglass screening.
9. When cloth is introduced for stitching, do provide a hoop or small frame to keep the material taut and make handling easy.
10. For the first experience use only one color of thread. Later allow choice since this is half the fun.



11. First stitches will likely be a collection of straight ones, tossed

off at random---some long---some short.

12. Interfere as little as possible---remember this refrain, "Let ME do it," but whatever you do--

DISPLAY THE RESULTS!

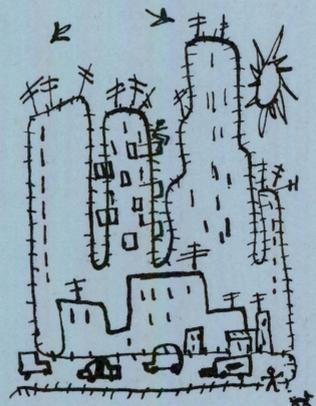
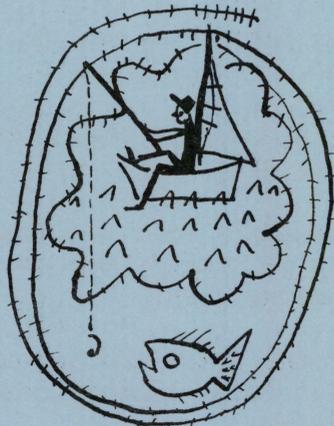
An now, Jim or Jane is four (all ages have to be approximate as children vary in their development). This is the age for first visualization, which is to say---the stitchery is telling a story to HIM or HER, but probably not to you. *Patience is your watchword.*

Five-Year-Olds are eager to learn. Mrs. Enthoven believes that this is a good age to develop the mother and child relationship by "sewing" together. She points out that successful students usually come from homes where parents have shared their children's activities. Her word of caution for this age--- "don't do for him what he should be doing for himself." She feels it is particularly important at this age to resist the temptation of starting out by teaching specific stitches, of showing how, because the child may well ask to be shown how. Rather, *the emphasis should be on spontaneous work, on the excitement of a new skill, on the act of "doing."*

As much as possible, let the experience be the thrill of discovery, of what he can do on his own as needs arise. *It should be fun with no attempt at perfection.*

I found the section devoted to stimulating the imagination of the pre-school child most interesting. By nature, I'm a doodler---you should see the "works of art" I have dashed off while waiting at the telephone. The suggestion of taking a walk with stitches fascinated me---(see page 16)--- can't you see the person doodling to get this pattern? I thought the example given should have a special place in your scrap book---so it is included on the cover page.

Now for some doodling---can you make up a story for any of these. Do any of them suggest ideas for stitchery?



SCHOOL AGE STITCHERY



According to Mrs. Enthoven, mothers who have not stitched before will find that a good way for them to start is to learn and practice a few basic stitches. She suggests using a doodling cloth. *Does this give you an assignment?*

She adds that children should not be stifled with demands for perfection of stitches. Her advice is to let them find their own way---but to be there as a consultant, as a source of information, and I would add, as a provider of materials.

As soon as children are old enough, let them follow the diagram of a needed stitch in a book on stitches. A good book should be thought of as an investment (see Bibliography).

Choice of material is important. Until the 6 or 7-year old child reaches sufficient muscular control and understanding to pull the yarn without puckering the cloth, it is well to stiffen limp material. Even adults find this helpful. Mrs. Enthoven believes that most children do their best work when the material is stretched on a simple frame. It makes the stitching easier and because it is mounted and has a professional look, they respond and stretch their ability to the utmost.



Mrs. Enthoven is often asked, "How do you stimulate a child at home so that he will want to stitch?" Her answering is simply, "Example is the best way." Your chances of success are much greater if you are stitching. As you work on your doodling cloth, children will be attracted and look at what seems obviously enjoyable; they will become interested in stitches as they explore and experiment on a doodling cloth of their own. *Create an enthusiastic climate, give them confidence in expressing themselves.* Working with a small group is a great help also.



Six Years Old



How well do you know your six-year old? You may be hoping that he will want to engage in a stitchery project, but he might rather fly a kite or watch some cowboys fighting Indians. Mrs. Enthoven cautions continually that *you must not force your ideas on your young child---rather encourage him by example and support.* So even though you may not use the suggestions she has offered for this age group right now, store the information in your mind so you can recall it when and if the proper time ever comes.



As you no doubt have already discovered, your six-year old finds decisions difficult. You will have to make certain decisions yourself well in advance of teaching him and not expect too much of him at first. Mrs. Enthoven discusses this very nicely on page 25. You will enjoy her accounts of actual work done by six-year olds. No fair making comparisons---your own Jim or Jane may never have been exposed to the delightful experience of stitchery---so how could they be expected to perform perfectly at the first sitting. Her descriptions are of classroom situations---yours will be different unless you gather in some of the neighborhood children to share these experiences.



Seven Years Old

According to Mrs. Enthoven, seven is a satisfying age for stitchery. The children quickly discover what can be done with needle and thread taking stitchery in their stride. If they have had no previous experience, let them feel their way on a doodling cloth. This doodling cloth often turns into an interesting sampler, reverting to the original meaning of the word: a record of stitches learned.



Encouraging free expression continues to be paramount. Years ago, seven was an age when little girls were expected to sit for hours, working tediously on adult imposed designs. Today, *stitchery not only develops manual dexterity and coordination, it helps children to grow in artistic consciousness, encouraging tangible expressions of a feeling, of an idea.*

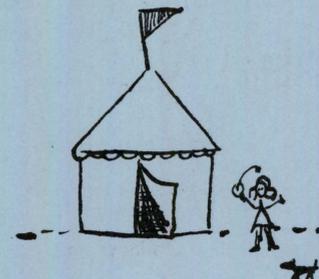


Eight Years Old

Eight-year-olds want stitchery to be done quickly, tossed off in one or two sittings. Encourage them to work directly on the material, without any or with very little preliminary drawing, using quick and easy stitches, keeping alert and responsive to what is taking place under their fingers.

Since children at this age like to work in a group, try to think of some projects which will fit into a neighborhood situation. Eight-year olds need encouragement and praise, specially from their mothers.

Studies of other countries and other times provide ready motivations for stitchery projects. These might lead to the creation of maps which usually fascinates an 8-year old. Or they might be interested in a stitchery map of the neighborhood. *In order to develop the creative processes, it is important to use a positive approach.*



Nine Years Old

Nine-year-olds are less spontaneous than 8-year olds. They're often quite

critical of their own work. It is a stage when they can become inhibited. Nine-year olds are often fascinated by the precision of stitches, showing an interest in textures and patterns created by one stitch, repeating it to perfection. A book with descriptions and illustrations of stitches should be available to this age group. They like to collect stitches or to make a list of stitches they know.



Strong motivation will help the nine and ten-year old in acquiring confidence in their ability to give concrete forms to an idea. Once they're motivated, they usually plan stitchery with care and are skillful in details.



Ten & Eleven Years Old

Like the 9-year-old, 10 and 11-year olds love to invent and "collect" stitches. They can work almost any stitch they want to and can work independently. A book with exact diagrams should be available so that they can consult it, find new ideas on how to vary stitches and devise the best way to obtain the effect they have in mind.

The 10 and 11-year-olds are not quite as interested in the doing as in the finished stitch and they want the results to be good; if it is not, they become discouraged. It is important to provide them with suitable materials although it is amazing to see what they can turn out even with poor quality burlap.

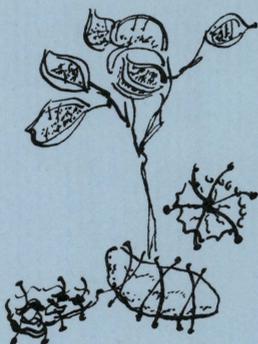
The importance of good craftsmanship should be explained now, if this was not done earlier.

At home, the idea of a "stitching club" might prove more fruitful than working alone.



Eleven & Twelve Years Old

As children reach adolescence, they begin to look at their work with adult eyes; they become increasingly critical and continue to need encouragement. From about the age of 10, they have been gradually losing the spontaneous, fresh quality of childhood. At this transitional age, it is more important than ever to stimulate their imagination and help them to give a physical expression to what their imagination has conceived. Stitchery is a particularly good medium for retaining and developing the uninhibited approach of earlier years. But try to develop an awareness of design in their stitchery. Introduce them to abstract design. Suggest that they use nature as source for design ideas.



The attention span of 11 and 12-year-olds is such that they can accomplish more in one sitting, with quicker results. Given a book with precise direction, there is hardly a stitch they cannot master. Their technique is often amazingly good.

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