

# SAMPLE LESSON

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## Tartan Lesson Overview

This teaching activity about tartans is something that I find extremely interesting both historically and genealogically. I can safely and proudly say I am an American, but to know one's past is important. I believe it is truly important to know where you came from and the path that lead to you. I also believe this helps define you as a person and your character. With that said, I do have ancestors from Great Brittan including Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. The Scottish bagpipes and the Scotsman have been a fascination ever since I saw the movie "*Bedknobs and Broomsticks*." What a better way to combine my passion of sewing/costuming with history. The purpose of this activity is to help students learn what tartan and plaid material are as well as learning why and how they became to be, historically. In costuming we do research in preparation for every show we design. Knowing and understanding these differences are extremely important when choosing a design element. For example, I would never get work



Fig. 1. Scottish Wedding scene in the movie *Brigadoon*, starring Gene Kelly. 1954.

again if I put the people of Brigadoon in plaid fabric instead of clan tartans. In figure 1, we see an example from the 1954 movie *Brigadoon*, starring Gene Kelly. Another expected learning outcome of this activity would be a better understanding of how tartans are created and produced and how each one is different depending on the materials available during the dying process.

These details are extremely important and will assist in the proper identification of different fabric patterns while choosing correct clan tartan material.

The first procedure I plan to utilize to achieve this goal is through a variety of group work activities (i.e., buzz groups). After introductions, I will have the groups divide a pile of material up into two groups, one of tartans and one of plaids. The next procedure is through the use of a combination of lecture, posing questions to the group with discussion, and a fun word search of relevant words from the activity. In addition to the questions, groups will check their separate fabric piles and make any changes to them. We will also go through the fabric piles to confirm their results.

In order for the students to constructively understand costume design, I hope to educate the class about a topic that I am passionate about by using the aforementioned methods of historical research, movie referencing, group activities, questions and answers, handouts, and lecture. This all-encompassing approach to costume design is the foundation for any production and will be the cornerstone to which their costuming future will be built upon.

## Tartan Lesson Plan

### Group Exercise – Tartan vs Plaid

#### ❖ Tartan –

- ✚ Tartan is made with alternating bands of pre-dyed threads woven as both warp and weft at right angles to each other. The weft is woven in a simple twill, *two over—two under the warp*, advancing one thread at each pass. This forms visible diagonal lines where different colors cross, which give the appearance of new colors blended from the original ones. The resulting blocks of color repeat vertically and horizontally in a distinctive pattern of squares and lines known as a *sett*.
- ✚ So, the pattern or sett is what makes it a Tartan.
- ✚ Tartans have stripes that meet @ 90° angle – where the vertical stripe is an exact duplicate of the horizontal stripe.
- ✚ Different tartans are created by changing the colors; varying the width; depth; number of stripes, etc.
- ✚ In the 1600's, it was commonly used to refer to a kind of cloth rather than the pattern

### Video – 10:35 – Over 20 Types of Weaves

#### ❖ Plaid –

- ✚ A plaid is a long piece of cloth that is made of wool and worn over the shoulder. So, while the interlocking woven pattern of colored stripes is tartan, the material itself is the plaid.
- ✚ According to Scottish tartan museum, “This belted plaid was a length of double width material (often tartan, but not always) 3 to 6 yards in length, gathered into folds and belted around the waist.” Eventually, the word plaid was used to describe any sort of blanket-type garment and as blankets themselves.
- ✚ The size, color or pattern can differ in a plaid, and the stripes are not the same in both directions.

### History

- ❖ Historians believe this weaving was introduced in the Iron Age by Celtic Scots from West of Northern Britain
- ❖ 1200 BCE - Mummies of U, China

- ✚ The bodies were excavated and taken to the museum in the city of Urumqi. There were 113 bodies taken from the site.
  - ✚ 1978 The faces of the mummies were very well preserved, so, on closer examination, they could see that they were not Chinese. They had blonde hair, big eyes, and European noses.
  - ✚ At that time, Chinese tradition had always shown the fact that they believed China had developed independently from the rest of the world. So, it took a while to scientifically accept.
- ❖ 100BCE (Before Common Era) The way the Celts dress is astonishing: they wear brightly colored and embroidered shirts, with trousers called and cloaks fastened at the shoulder with a brooch. These cloaks are striped or checkered in design, with the separate checks close together and in various colors."
- ❖ 83BCE - 230CE (Common Era) Falkirk Tartan found in Scotland in 1933
  - ✚ Small woolen checkered fabric used as plug in an earthenware pot to protect a treasure trove of buried silver coins
  - ✚ Simple 2 color tartan containing the Undyed Brown and White wool of the native Soay Sheep
- ❖ 1549 – The Church declared - "The clergy in Scotland will wear only round birettas and shall always take off their caps in churches, especially in choirs and in time of divine service and not dress, in top-boots and double-breasted or oddly-cut coats, or of forbidden colors, as yellow, green and such kinds of party-color." (*Provincial Council of Prelates and Clergy: Edinburgh*)
- ❖ 1587 – Record of Hector Maclean(heir to Duart) paying debt with 75yrd of the traditional colored Maclean hunting tartan – white, black & green
- ❖ 1631 – Mercenaries fighting for the German army of Gustabus Adolphus – in Great Kilts
- ❖ 1713 - The Royal Company of Archers adopt a uniform incorporating - "Stuart tartan coat lined with white shalloon(light twill lining)
- ❖ 1745-1746 - The romantic Young Pretender, *Charles Edward Stuart - Bonnie Prince Charlie* - ranged his inferior Jacobite forces of Highlanders against the Duke of Cumberland's Government forces. The Jacobite army was organized into Clan regiments and as historian *Jamie Scarlett* explains "*here we have the first hint of the use of tartan as a clan uniform.*" He ordered 5000 tartans for his men.
- ❖ 1746-1782 – Disarming Act in Scotland by the British. It came into force on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1746 and made wearing "the Highland Dress" — including the kilt — illegal in Scotland. Starting in 1689 they found their most effective support with a majority of the Scottish clans, and this act was part of a series of measures attempting to bring the warrior clans under government control. For the first offence, shall be liable to be imprisoned for 6 months, and on the second offence, to be transported to any of His Majesty's plantations



beyond the seas, there to remain for the space of seven years. After 36 years the tartan was longer a tradition in Scotland.

- ❖ 1822 - Thanks to the personal planning of Sir Walter Scott, the 1822 visit of King George IV to Edinburgh was to see Highland Chiefs being persuaded to attend the levee and other functions, all attired in their Clan tartans (some did not go). Almost overnight tartan became popular and families, who probably had never before worn tartan, (and hated the Highlanders), became the proud possessors of family Tartans. This along with Sir Walter's romanticism of Tartan in his novels this was to aid the Clan and the Tartan to become synonymous.
- ❖ 1853 - This tartan was designed by Queen Victoria's husband. Prince Albert in 1853 and, while predominantly grey with overchecks of red and black the background contains a thread of black and white yarns twisted together to achieve the appearance of the roughhewn granite so familiar in Royal Deeside. It is worn by HM Queen herself as a skirt and several members of the Royal Family but only with the Queen's permission. The only other approved wearer of the Balmoral Tartan is the Queen's personal piper.
- ❖ Industrial Revolution – factories – world trade via England

#### Tartan Fiber, Weaves & Colors

- 🚧 Sheep wool

#### Spinning

- 🚧 The spinning of wool and linen fibers into yarn has been practiced in Scotland for many centuries. Early spindles consisted of a stick through the center of a flat disc attached to it for the weight. This was known as a whorl. The whorl could be made of wood, stone, and even a potato. The ancient whorls of stone have survived.
- 🚧 A bundle of cleaned fibers could be attached to a staff. It was kept upright at one's side by being fixed in a belt fastened around the waist and steadied by the arm. This method of spinning was known as distaff spinning.
- 🚧 The distaff was not always used, as the spindle itself could be spun by being suspended so that the spinner could work while standing or walking, thus creating a greater length of thread. Having set it in motion by the fingers and thumb, the fibers, which have been attached to the spindle, are twisted into thread. The spinner continued to draw off fiber from the distaff, spinning until a convenient length was obtained, and then would wind the thread around the spindle, repeating the operation and removing the balls of completed yarn to be woven when a sufficient supply had been spun.

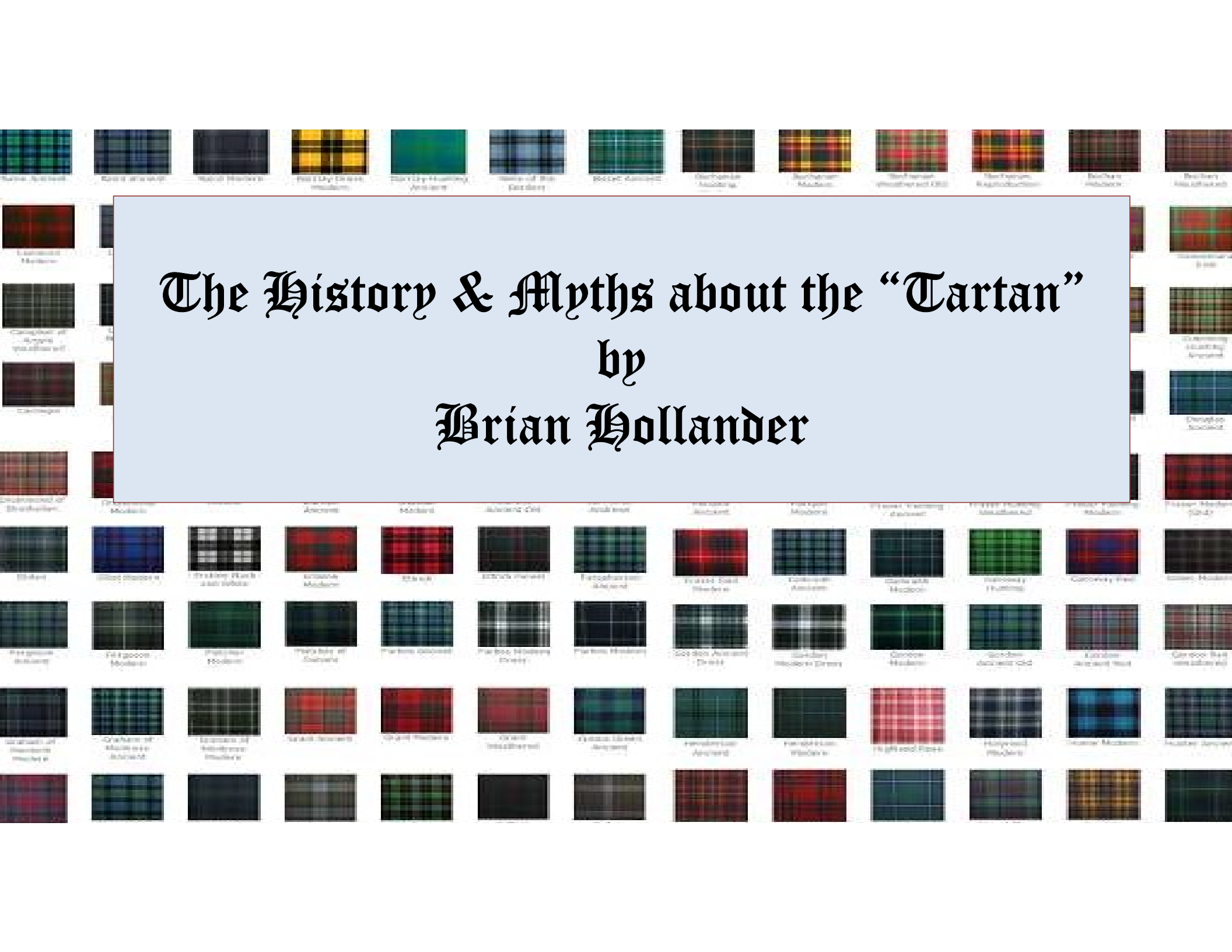
#### Colors & Dyeing

- 🚧 Ancient vs. Modern, vs. Muted, Reproduction, Weathered
- 🚧 Used with minerals like alum, and limestone, salt

#### Facts

- 🚧 Highlands – unique culture to their own vs. Lowlands – imitated English society

#### Group Exercise – Tartan vs Plaid



The History & Myths about the “Tartan”  
by  
Brian Hollander

# Objectives

- ~ Tartan vs Plaid
- ~ History & Importance of Tartans
- ~ How Tartans are Created & Produced





## Tartan vs. Plaid

“All tartans are plaid, but not all plaids are tartan.” ~ Scot Meacham

Wood, House Beautiful



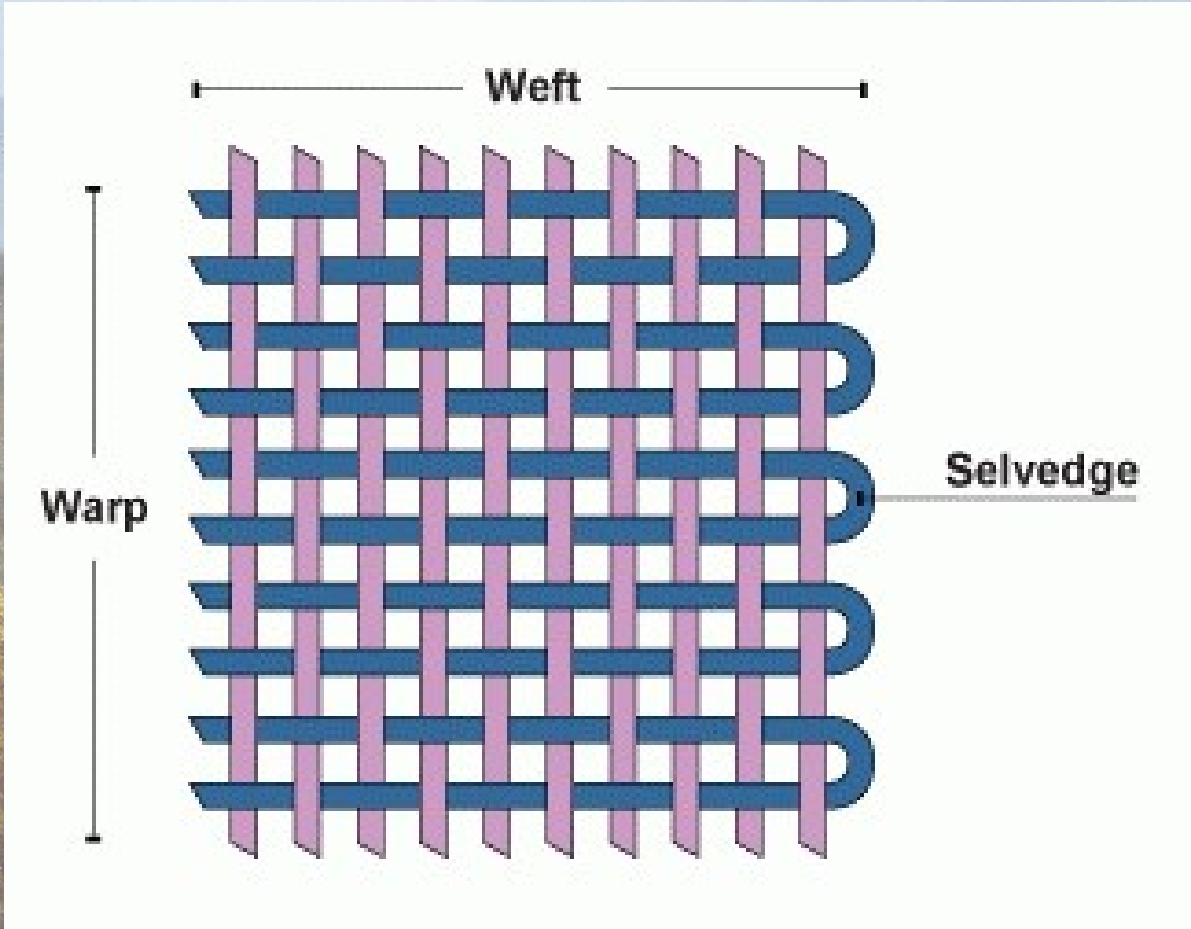
**Tartan** ~ Multicolored Fabric, Pattern or Design

– True tartans are 26in square & historically wool

**Plaid** ~ Blanket-like mantle folded and joined at the left shoulder

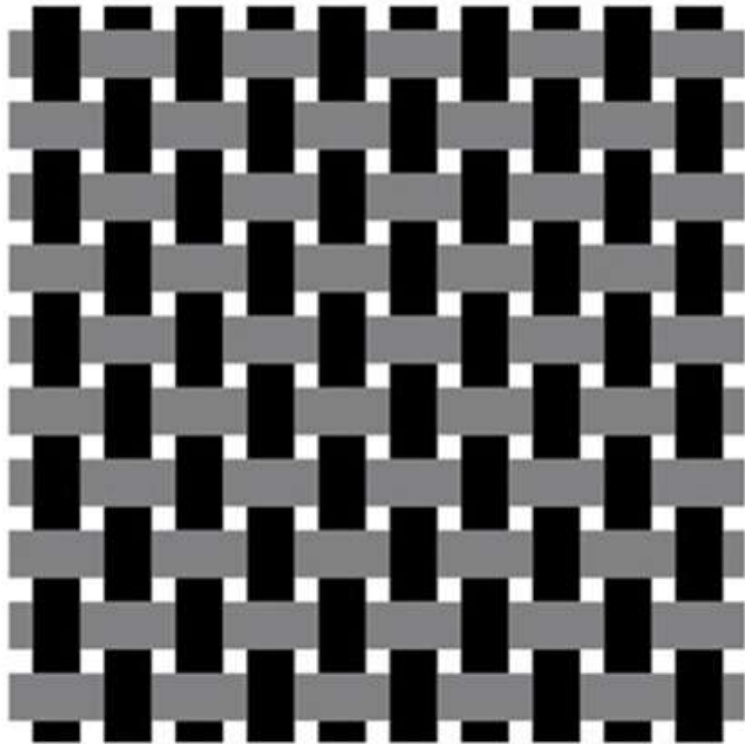
– True plaid is dyed fabric of colored thread crossing each other to form squares



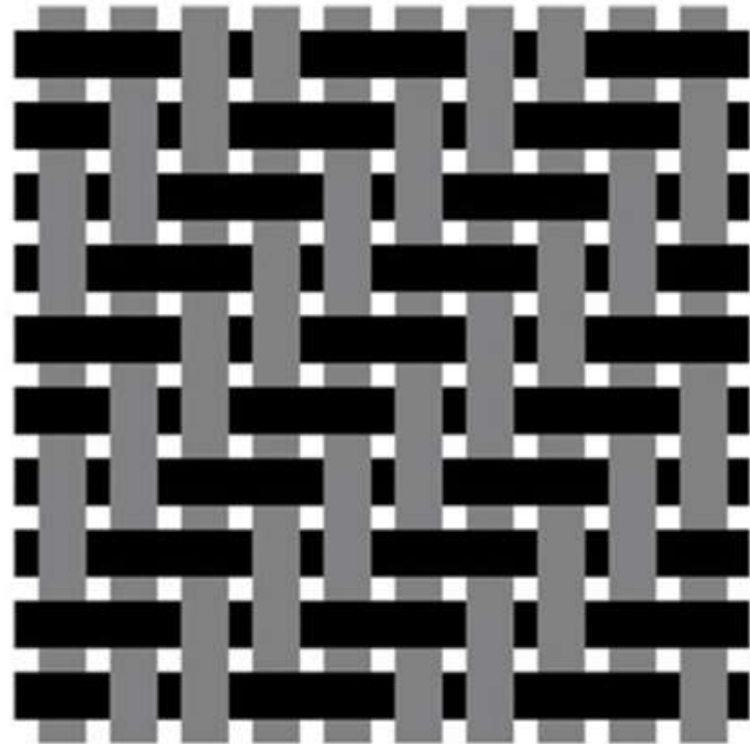




plain weave

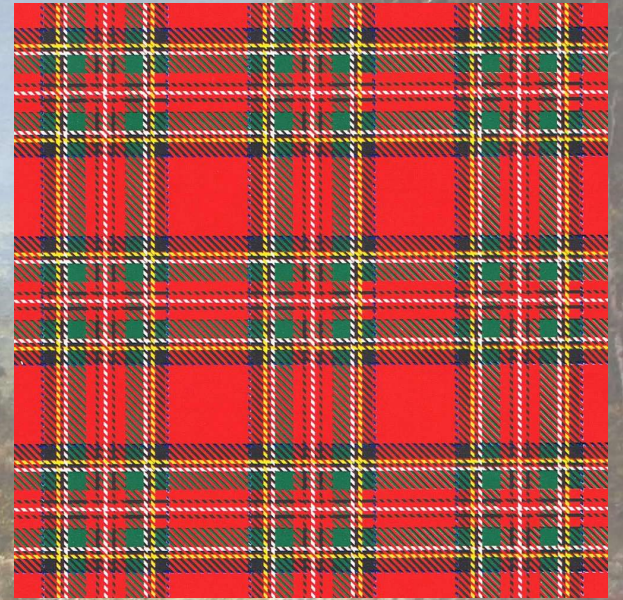
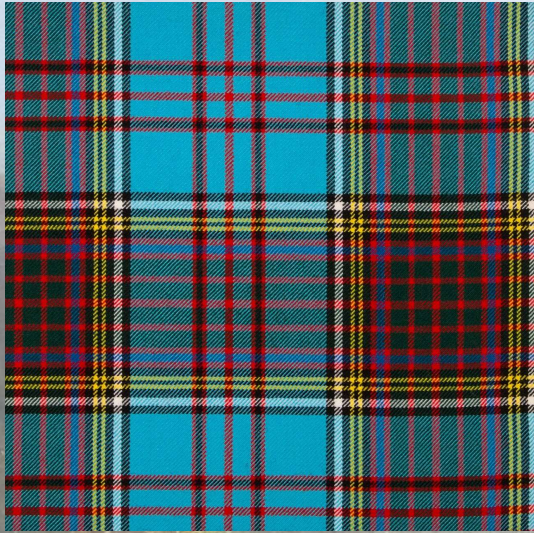


twill weave

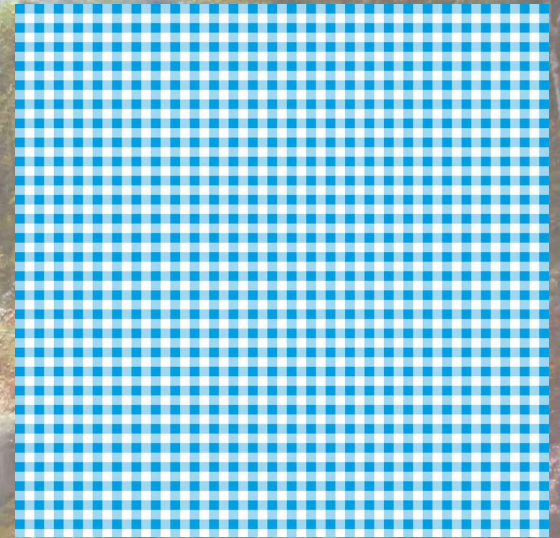
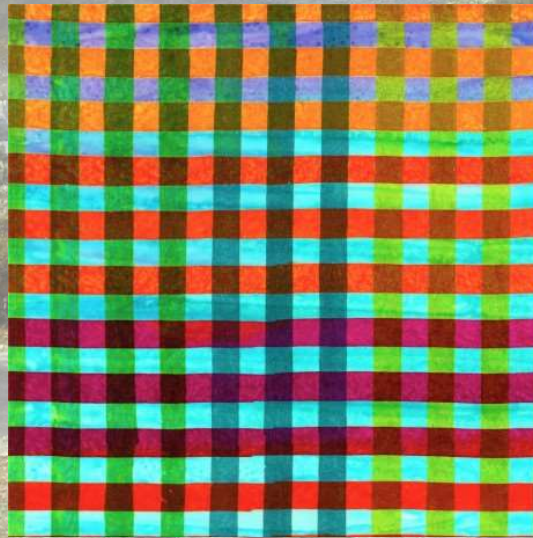
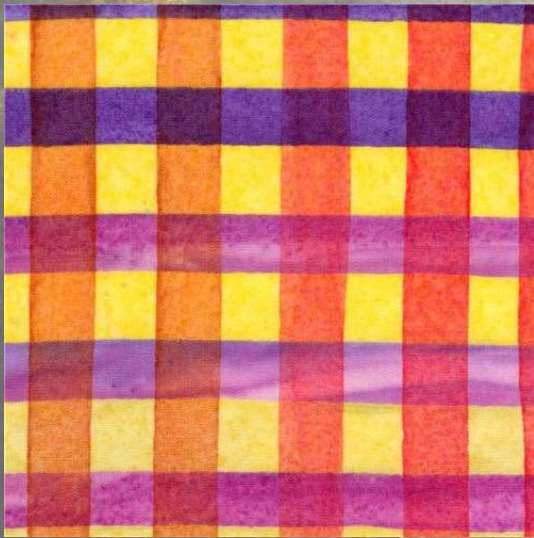


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7ImxAyCEXU>











# The History of Tartans

-----1200BC-----100BC-----230AD-----1100-----1500-----1603-----1678-----1707-----1715-----1745-----1782-----1822-----1842-----1880-----1906-----1914-----1932-----1943-----



1200 BCE

- ❖ Fabric found on mummified bodies of Caucasians in Urumqi, China
- ❖ Mummies prove Caucasians arrived 1000 yrs before Chinese people

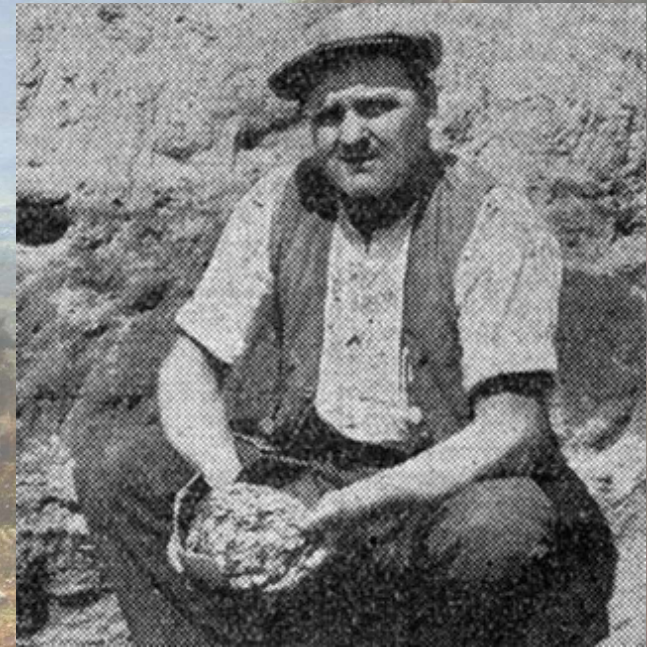






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- ❖ 100BCE – Greek Historian – Diodorus Siculus
- ❖ 83BCE – 230CE – Falkirk Tartan found in 1933
- ❖ 1549 – Burgh Court Book of Elgin
- ❖ 1587 – Minister of Kirkhill





-----1200BC-----100BC-----230AD-----1100-----1500-----1603-----1678-----1707-----1715-----1745-----1782-----1822-----1842-----1880-----1906-----1914-----1932-----1943-----

❖ 1631 – Mercenaries



**wearing the great plaid**

The following are suggestions based on research and experience, but there are many ways to arrange the Great Plaid, as a study of contemporary paintings and illustrations will show. Experiment till you find the most comfortable, smart or practical arrangement to suit you. The help of a friend is almost essential!

**method 1 - with no tunic or jacket**

Lay the plaid flat, gathering the waistband to form the pleats and tie round waist.

Wrap sides around, overlapping in front, and fasten round waist with a belt.

Stand up and the plaid will fall almost to the ankles.

Lift corner A and raise to the shoulder.

Lift corner B, pull back and tuck into waistband.

Pick up two points from the edge at C & D.

Pull these up to the shoulder and over.

Assemble points A, C & D in a neat joint and pin together.

**method 2 - with tunic or jacket**

Lift corner A and pull back and tuck into waistband on the opposite side from corner B. Then pull up corners C & D, arrange them neatly and pin to the tunic over the shoulder from behind.

To use as a cloak, don't tuck in the corners and simply pull over the shoulders. If convenient, pin together at the throat.

Some plaids may be large enough to cover the head also.





-----1200BC-----100BC-----230AD-----1100-----1500-----1603-----1678-----1707-----1715-----1745-----1782-----1822-----1842-----1880-----1906-----1914-----1932-----1943-----



❖ 1713 – The Royal Company of Archers





-----1200BC-----100BC-----230AD-----1100-----1500-----1603-----1678-----1707-----1715-----1745-----1782-----1822-----1842-----1880-----1906-----1914-----1932-----1943-----



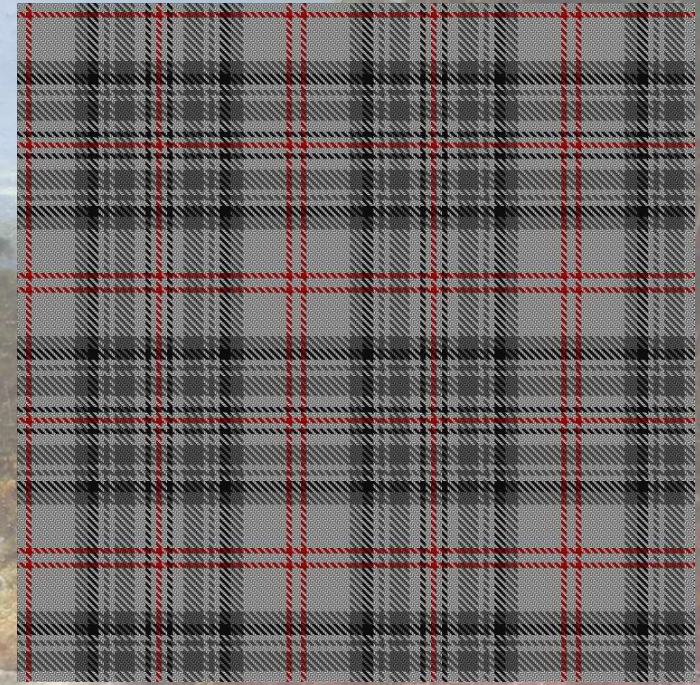
- ❖ 1745-1746 – Battle of Culloden
- ❖ 1746-1782 – The Disarming Act



-----1200BC-----100BC-----230AD-----1100-----1500-----1603-----1678-----1707-----1715-----1745-----1782-----1822-----1842-----1880-----1906-----1914-----1932-----1943-----

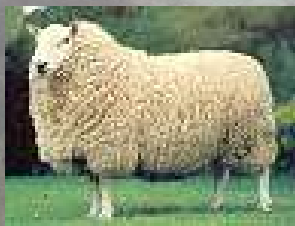


- ❖ 1822 – King George IV
- ❖ 1853 – Prince Albert





# Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors



Cheviot



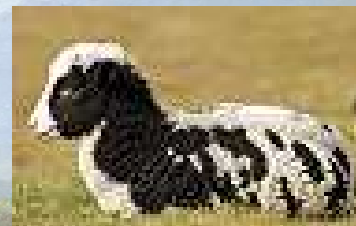
Shetland



Blackface



Hebridean



Jacob

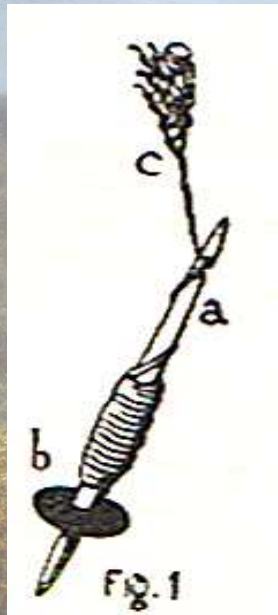


Soay –

Trace back to the Bronze Age



# Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors



**Whorl**

**Distaff Spinning**



## Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors



End of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Wheels in General Use

—

18<sup>th</sup> Century Males started Spinning as an Occupation



## Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors

### **COLORS & DYEING**

- ❖ Tartan Weavers “MUST” use the same colors – but can use different shades
- ❖ Each Weaver has their own color Palettes leading to aesthetic diversity & popularity
- ❖ Variations in scale and shade differences can all correctly represent the same tartan – as long as it falls within specified color spectrum
- ❖ It’s the Pattern – or “Sett” – that defines a tartan
- ❖ Smith Ancient– imitation of natural vegetable dyes
- ❖ Smith Modern–intense/darker–chemical dyes after 1855



## Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors

### *Muted Tartan*

- ❖ Imitation of long exposure to sun and rain
- ❖ MacPherson Tartan (Muted)–MacPherson Tartan Modern





## Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors

### *Reproduction Tartan*

- ❖ Colors simulate tartans buried in a bog
- ❖ Ulster Tartan (Bog) – Ulster Tartan Modern





## Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors

### *Weathered Tartan*

- ❖ Weathered = exposure to elements for a long time
- ❖ Henderson Tartan (Weathered)–Henderson Tartan Modern





## Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors

### *Color Dyeing - Local Plants, Minerals & Animals*

❖ Gipsywort –	lettuce green
❖ Seaweeds –	flesh tones, browns
❖ Seashore Whelks –	purple
❖ Heather –	yellow, deep green, brownish orange
❖ Blaeberries(blueberries) –	purples, browns, blues
❖ Alder Tree Bark & Dock Root –	black
❖ Currant Bush & Crotal (lichens)–	reddish browns, purples
❖ Cup Moss –	purple, blues
❖ Dandelions –	magenta
❖ Wild Cress –	violet
❖ Whin/Gorse Bark, Broom, Knapweed –	green
❖ Bracken Ferns –	yellow
❖ White Crotal –	red



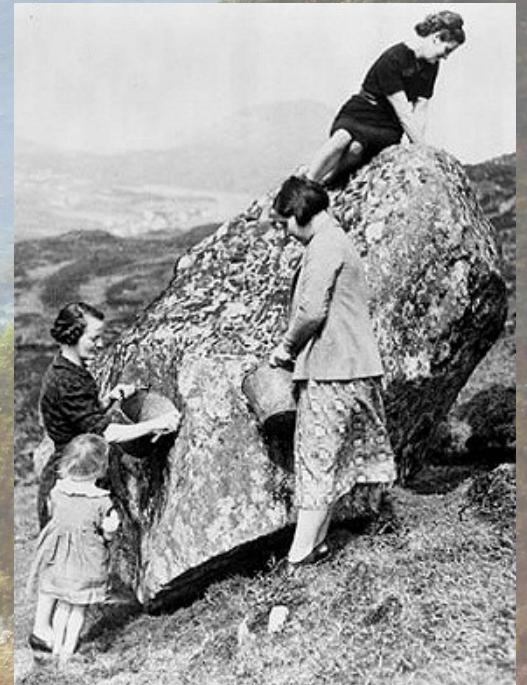


MacGregor –  
Rob Roy Kilt





# Tartan Fiber, spinning, and Colors





## Royal and Clan Tartans, Tartan Etiquette, and fun facts

- Most Tartans do not pre-date the Battle of Culloden – 1745-46
- Queen Victoria can be traced back to the Royal House of Stewart or Stuart, a Breton nobleman in 1097
- After 1782 – Tradition has it: if no tartan of their own – can claim the Black Watch (Government Tartan), Hunting Stewart, Caledonian, or the Jacobite



## Royal and Clan Tartans, Tartan Etiquette, and fun facts


- **Identifying Clan Tartans not used before 1745**
- **An organized system cannot exist without organized communities, money, require technology to mass-produce & distribution**
- **Clansmen recognition – plant badges (heather to a broomstick, yew in bonnets)**
- **Highlanders vs. Lowlanders**







## Royal and Clan Tartans, Tartan Etiquette, and fun facts

- 
- **3500-7000 different tartans with 150 new designs added each year**
  - **14,000+ different variations with different hues through use of “Modern”, “Ancient”, “Weathered”, “Reproduction” & “Muted” colors**
  - **Burberry Check is a protected tartan**

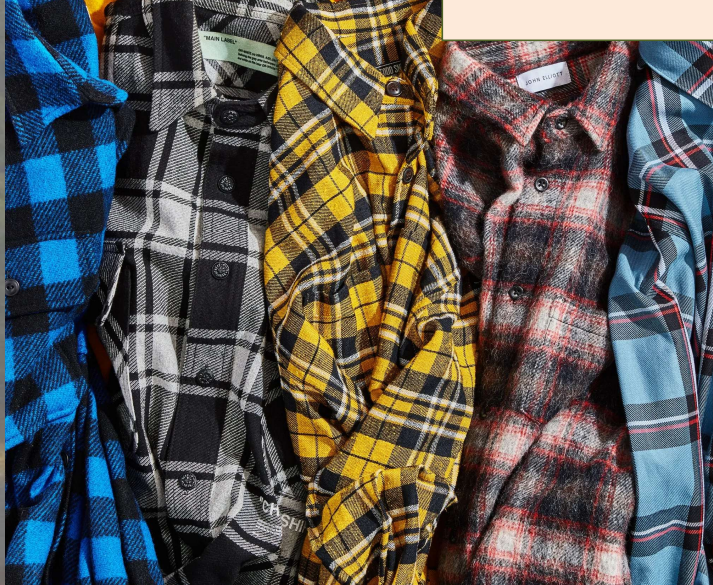


# Summary

~ Tartan vs Plaid

~ History & Importance of Tartans

~ How Tartans are Created & Produced







The Modern Textile & Apparel Dictionary – 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

<https://www.lohcarron.co.uk/tartan-finder/>

<https://highlandkilt.com/pages/scottish-tartans-list>

<http://www.tartansauthority.com>

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofScotland/The-Piob-Mhor-or-the-Great-Highland-Bagpipes/>

<https://www.hendersongroup ltd.com/historybagpipes.asp>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQ8sFRuDyiU>

<https://www.scotclans.com/the-kiltmaking/the-history-of-the-kilt/>

<https://www.highlandtitles.com/scottish-clans-and-families/>

<https://sewguide.com/plaid-fabric/>

<http://www.scotshistoryonline.co.uk/tartan-history.html>

<https://kiltguide.com/articles/tartan-vs-plaid-is-there-a-difference.html>

# Tartan

R H Z S Z T Y N O I T C U D O R P E R I W B B W S  
R E B A G P I P E S S N E V O W K C W O O P O F P  
D P D Q N O F X J Q F Y D W M A N D R X S C K Z I  
T A J N M H N F U R U G V Z R G U D D H Y I B O N  
S H E Y A I N A J C D Q R T S J L T B Q T L G K N  
N C S R E L R S J X M Z D K C K R N L N M E Z Q I  
E A O I H E H C V M Z Q W L C N E V F H S H F L N  
P X R T N T A G N A T R A T O D D G Y U T Q I E G  
V O N R L T U N I J F O P T Y U N M H P G O N R Z  
A J M M O A R Q T H D I O E V Z A G E Y O Z S P Y  
L V V O U P N O U P J Z B S O J L D N R E T T A P  
G R V D X V S D W U L G L E E C W N G W Z F M T A  
L D B E K J G I Z W S A R M R B O R I O G B L L A  
T V M R S Q D H T F E K I Z W S L S O S H O C U M  
C I U N N T A X A I P G Z D L K F H W Z R Z C Z Z  
O Y S D H N E E Y D I W C I F F W E X X W V H F D  
V H M T C B P T E I R W E F T I B E S S P G Q X M  
K T X I L Q X R B F T V G F Z H J P J G S X T N X  
O D E H P C E Z O L S N M S L C G I J R X H V H G  
U N W R I H Y E G W N R F I P Z S S I C I Z B I X  
T G A T T S B U J V N C O S Y D O R L J Z G O B F  
U W L A J I W T F M H U N N M U T E D Y H Z S H U  
D E E N M T A O L U W U H A C E V T B H U I M W O  
C W C O L O R S O I R M T L K T T X J X H J B Y H  
Q S S E J I Q G Z L K K Y C Z X M N F V H R B H Z

ANCIENT  
BAGPIPES  
BOG  
CELTIC  
CLANS  
COLORS  
DEPTH  
DYE  
FIBERS  
HIGHLANDER  
KILT

LOWLANDER  
MODERN  
MUTED  
PATTERN  
PLAID  
REPRODUCTION  
SCOTLAND  
SETT  
SHEEP  
SPINNING  
SPORRAN

SQUARE  
STRIPES  
TARTAN  
THREAD  
WARP  
WEATHERED  
WEFT  
WIDTH  
WOOL  
WOVEN