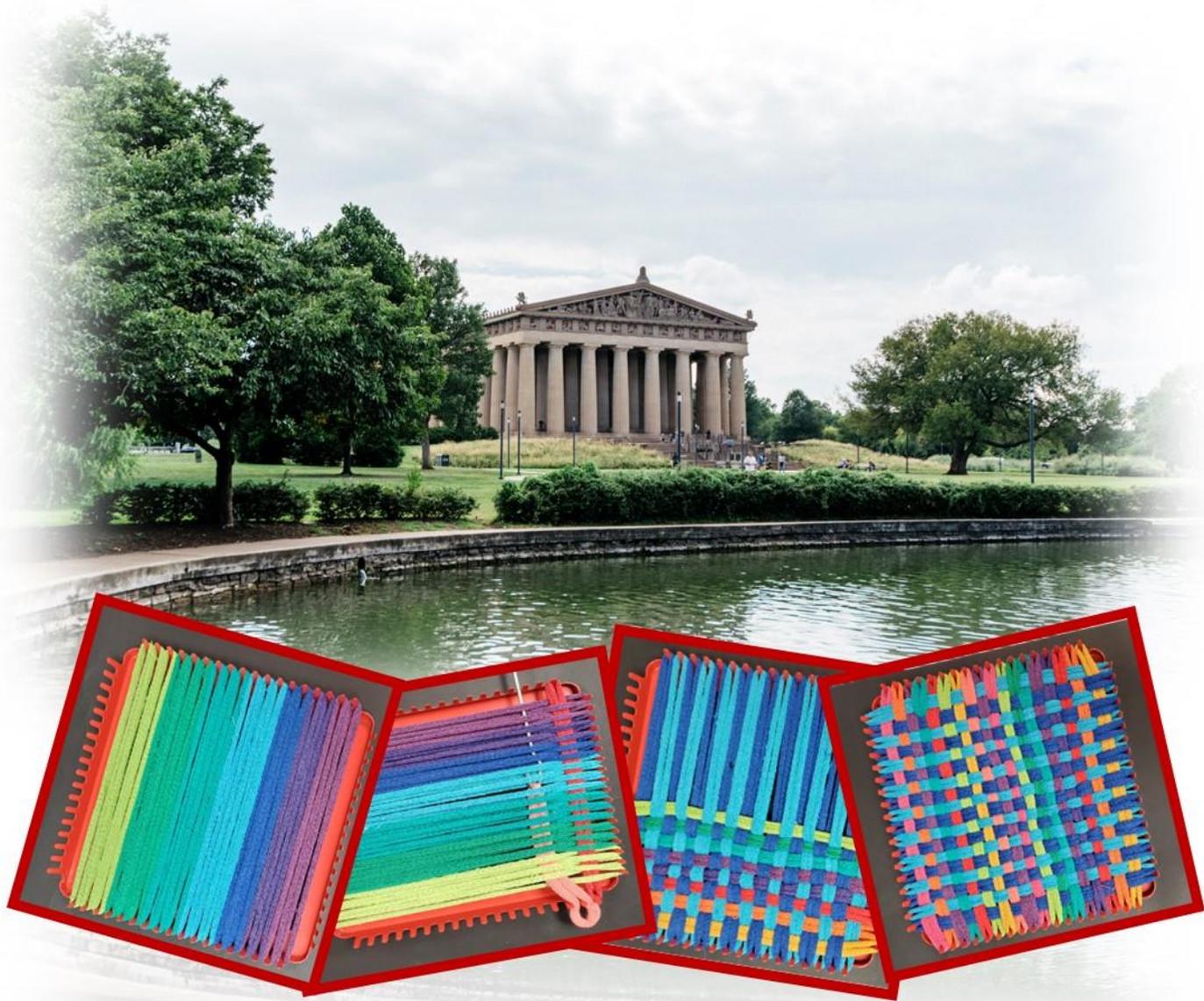




# NASHVILLE PARTHENON EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



## Weaving Like Athena

## Weaving Like Athena

**Mission:** To educate the public concerning the Parthenon and the civilization that built it, both in Athens, Greece, in the fifth century BCE and in Nashville, Tennessee, from 1897 to the present. To exhibit, collect, and care for objects and information related to fifth century BCE Athens, the Tennessee Centennial Exposition, and the rebuilding of the Nashville Parthenon. To exhibit, collect, and care for visual art and to educate the public concerning its various forms.

**Program Title:** Weaving Like Athena

**Target Audience:** All ages

**Exhibit/Gallery:** Naos

**Author:** Parris Robertson, Wesley Paine Intern, The Parthenon

**Editor:** Katherine Petrole, Director of Education, The Parthenon

**Activity Time:** Approximately 10-15 minutes, plus time for visitor questions

**Implementation Date:** Summer 2022

**Staff/Docents Needed:** 1

**Overview:** This program allows visitors to learn about the story of Athena and Arachne weaving contest. During this program, visitors of all ages will be invited to discuss Athena's role as the goddess of arts and crafts and gain hands on experience with weaving. In addition, visitors will draw connections between nature and Greek mythology by discussing the story of Arachne and the origin of spiders.

**Big Idea:** As the Greek goddess of weaving, Athena oversaw one of the most important industries in ancient Greece—but the work is often forgotten. Invite visitors to discover the art of weaving while discussing the mythology of Athena and Arachne.

### Goals:

- Visitors will gain an understanding of Athena's role as a goddess of arts and crafts.
- Visitors will participate in weaving.

### Objectives:

- Visitors will make observations about the story of Athena and Arachne through visual props.
- Visitors will see examples of weaving and learn the basics of weaving in the square loom.

### Family Learning Behaviors:

P. Family members contribute information or ask a question during the program.

*Example: "Why did Arachne challenge Athena to a contest?" "Arachne thought she was more skilled than Athena"*

L. Family member facilitates problem solving to mastery.

*Example: "Here let me help you. Now you can keep going"*

M. Family members verbally and/or physically work on an activity simultaneously to complete it.

*Example: Families work together to weave the polyester bands together on the loom.*

### Education Standards:

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies

Ancient Greece: c. 800 -300 BCE

- 6.46 Explain the polytheistic religion of ancient Greece, with respect to beliefs about human-like qualities of the deities, their importance in everyday life, and the emergence of the Olympic Games to honor Zeus
- 6.47 Explain the historical significance of ancient Greek literature, including how the Iliad and the Odyssey provide insight into the life of the ancient Greeks.
- 6.49 Describe the purposes of major Greek architecture, including the Parthenon and the Acropolis.

## Grades 9-12 Social Studies

### The Classic Civilizations of Greece and Rome: 1000 – 500 BCE

- AH.21 Describe early Greek society, with an emphasis on social classes, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs.
- AH.25 Identify the significant developments and contributions of Greece to the following: architecture, art/drama, history, language, law, literature/poetry, medicine, philosophy, religious institutions, science, and technology.

### **Background information:**

#### **Who is Athena?**

Athena, the daughter of Zeus, is the patron goddess for the city of Athens. You can see Athena's birth on the outside of the building on the east pediment. Athena was born out of Zeus' head after Hephaestus split it open with an axe. Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom, war strategy, and crafts and skill which includes spinning and weaving.

#### **Who is Arachne?**

In Greek mythology Arachne (which means "spider" in Greek) was a weaver who was talented in her skill. She was so talented and boastful; that she ventured to challenge Athena to a weaving competition, which Athena accepts. Athena weaves a tapestry showing the god's majesty, while Arachne weaves a tapestry depicting the gods in humiliating way. Enraged by this offense Athena tears the tapestry to pieces and changes Arachne into a spider so that she may weave her webs for eternity, only for them to be destroyed by mankind.

#### **Mythology of Athena and Arachne**

Sources: GreekMythology.com, The Editors of Website. "Arachne". GreekMythology.com Website, 08 Apr. 2021, <https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/Mortals/Arachne/arachne.html>. Accessed 01 June 2022.

**"Arachne** in Greek mythology was a weaver who challenged **Athena** and was consequently transformed into a spider. There are three versions of the myth.

Arachne infuriates Athena:

One version has it that she was a shepherd's daughter that was particularly skilled at weaving. Boasting about her skill, she infuriated **Athena**, who appeared and contested her. Athena weaved four scenes in which the gods punished those humans that considered themselves equal to gods and committed hubris; **Arachne**, on the other hand, weaved scenes in which gods abused humans. Arachne's work was clearly better than Athena's; the goddess even more enraged due to what the weaving depicted, threw **Hecate's** potion onto Arachne, transforming her into a spider and condemning her to weave for eternity.

Arachne hangs herself:

In a different version, at the challenge, Athena weaved the contest between herself and **Poseidon** over who the patron saint of **Athens** would be, while Arachne did a depiction of **Zeus'** advances to various mortal women. Athena realized how skilled Arachne was but wanted to teach her to be more humble and respect the gods. Touching Arachne's forehead, the woman was filled with shame and hung herself. Athena brought her back to life and turned her into a spider, in order to let her weave all, the time.

Arachne loses:

In the final version of the myth, **Zeus** was the judge in the contest between Arachne and Athena, and whoever lost would not be allowed to touch a spindle or the loom again. Athena won in this version, and

Arachne was devastated that she could no longer weave. Out of pity, Athena transformed her into a spider, so she could continue weaving without having to break her oath."

### **How does this program tie to your gallery content and museum?**

This program introduces visitors to one of Athena's roles as the Greek goddess of skill and craft which is not apparent in the statue and pediments. Discussing mythology and practicing weaving will help extend the memory of the museum visit in an accessible and familiar way.

### **Ideas for Initiating Interaction:**

This program will take place in a visible location in the Naos or Treasury.

- Clearly display the "Weaving Like Athena" sign on the Art Cart.

### **Props:**

- Art Cart
- Stool
- Square Looms
- Polyester Loops
- Weaving hook
- Weaving examples
- Prop spider
- Clicker counter
- Pencil
- Program tracking sheet
- Program sign (Appendix B)
- Laminated page of weaving steps (Appendix A)

### **Advance Preparation:**

- Gather all supplies and set up the Naos to the right of Athena or alternatively set up in the Treasury facing the west doors.

### **Gathering:**

"Hello! My name is \_\_\_ and I brought some things to help us learn about Athena. Come stop by the Art Cart to weave like Athena!"

**Program Script:** *This script is a suggestion of how to initiate a discussion between you (the facilitator) and the visitors. You are welcome to navigate this discussion following your own path, as any dialogue that supports the mission, goals, and objectives is a successful program. All dialogue is plain, notes and stage directions are **bold**.*

Hello, come on up. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a docent here at the Parthenon. Have you been to the Parthenon before? **(Allow for response.)** Welcome! **(Or Welcome back!)**

Who here is familiar with the story of the Athena and Arachne, about their weaving competition? **(Model raising hand. Allow for response. Include all visitors by asking and looking at younger and older visitors.)** As you may know, this museum is a replica of the Parthenon in Greece. The Parthenon is a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, I bet you noticed the 42-foot-tall golden statue! What kinds of things does Athena oversee as a Greek goddess? **(Allow for response.)** Yes! Athena is the goddess of wisdom and skill-- which means she was skilled in everything. One of the skills Athena was known for is weaving. Does anyone know what weaving is? **(Allow for response)** Yes! Weaving is a type of textile production that uses two sets of thread or yarn to create fabrics and clothes. So, weaving is part of the reason how we all can wear clothes every single day! As we see in some of these examples you can create beautiful patterns in tapestry through the art of weaving. Here, hold this. **(Offer for visitors to hold and feel the cotton weaving examples.)**

In ancient Greece, there was a woman named Arachne. Do you know anyone named Arachne? **(Allow for response.)** Yeah, me neither. Arachne was a very talented spinner and weaver. She was so talented that she boasted about her skill and claimed no one, not even Athena the goddess of weaving, could compete with her. One day Athena heard Arachne bragging, so she disguised herself as an old woman and warned Arachne to not compare herself to the gods. How do you think Arachne felt about some old lady telling her what to do? **(Allow for response)** Yes! Arachne did not take kindly to the warning and instead challenged that lady—who secretly was Athena -- to a competition. Then, Athena transformed back to her normal self, and everyone bowed down to her, except for Arachne who was excited to compete against the best. During the competition Athena, wove a picture of the Parthenon and her contest against Poseidon, while Arachne wove a disrespectful scene of the gods, mocking them. This infuriated Athena, so she tore apart Arachne's weaving and transformed her into an animal! What kind of animal weaves something, any guesses? **(Allow for response.)** That's right! Arachne is turned into a spider **(pick up prop spider)** forced to weave for all eternity, just for humans to destroy her work. So, next time you see a spider web, look for Arachne!

We are practicing our weaving skills to make a beautiful pattern on the loom just like Athena and Arachne. Have you practiced weaving before? **(Allow for response)** Okay, then maybe this is familiar to you. Have you ever seen a family member or friend knit, crochet or weave? **(Allow for response)** Okay, well this is similar. **(This helps for younger visitors connect their Parthenon visit to something familiar.)** So here I have a square loom and lots of fabric loops, go ahead and pick a few different colors.

### **Weaving Instructions – See Index Table 1**

Guide visitors to work the a few rows of the weaving activity. There is no need to have them complete the loom unless they are interested in finishing the whole project. The goal of this activity is to familiarize visitors with the art of weaving and connect it to the goddess Athena. Visitors will not take home this project however depending on supplies docents may offer the "Weaving a Peplos for Athena" take home craft.

### **While visitors are weaving, you have an audience to facilitate discussion. Sample questions:**

- Have you tried weaving before?
- Have you made anything else with your hands? **(Sewing, knitting, art, etc.)**
- You picked some cool colors for this loom, what are your favorite colors?
- Have you ever found a spider making a web before?
- What kinds of patterns have you seen in weaving before? Anything from clothes to spiders!

### **Conclusion:**

- Thanks for joining me today! I hope you enjoy the rest of your visit to the Parthenon and please let me know if you have any more questions.
- Thanks for joining me today! Take a good mental picture of Athena's clothing—her peplos while you are here. It'll come in handy for that "Weaving Athena's Peplos" take-home kit!

### **Adaptation suggestions for different audiences:**

#### One Family/Small program size

- Tailor information and tasks to specific ages in the group. Be sure to include all ages in the conversation and ability to hold objects and ask questions.
- Handout out the take home craft (Weaving Athena's Peplos)

#### For younger/preschool audiences

- For younger visitors spend time explaining the story of Athena and the art of weaving are connected. Use the props (the spider and the weaving example) as visual aids when telling the story. Consider what is visible from their viewpoint. Encourage adults to participate equally- perhaps have the child hold the loom and thread while the parent shows them how weave; or you hold the loom while the adult teaches the child how to weave.

#### Larger groups (who may wish to participate but have limited time or space)

- Keep discussions shorter. Include adults by inviting them to answer questions, modeling participation for their group. Encourage groups to come back with family or friends when they have more time to weave

- The “Weaving Like Athena” take-home kit is not a good option for large groups.

#### Adults only

- Adults often look for more detailed background knowledge, including the mythology of Athena and her various roles. Offer them the ability to rekindle some childhood memories on the weaving loom. Ask them when is the last time they saw one of these looms, and if they ever made anyone a super cool potholder? Encourage them to help create part of it.

#### **Following Up:**

- At the end of your session, record the number of visitors on the program clipboard.
- Record comments overheard or memorable interactions (positive or negative experiences).
- Return cart and materials to their proper storage location.
- Report any items that need repair or replacement to Katie.
- Self-assessment:
  - What went well?
  - What is one thing that didn’t go well?
  - What is one thing you will try next time?

#### **Resources:**

“Greek Stories about Athena-Athena, Arachne and the Weaving Contest.” *Greek*, [www.greek-gods.info/greek-gods/athena/stories/athena-arachne](http://www.greek-gods.info/greek-gods/athena/stories/athena-arachne)

Gill, N.S. “Who Won the Weaving Contest Between Athena and Arachne?” *ThoughtCo*, [www.thoughtco.com/weaving-contest-between-athena-and-arachne-117186](http://www.thoughtco.com/weaving-contest-between-athena-and-arachne-117186)

“Greek Stories about Athena-Athena, Arachne and the Weaving Contest.” *Greek*, [www.greek-gods.info/greek-gods/athena/stories/athena-arachne](http://www.greek-gods.info/greek-gods/athena/stories/athena-arachne)

Welch, Marcia. “The Story of Arachne And Athena: Everything You Need To Know.” *Definitelygreece.gr*, 31 Oct. 2020, [www.definitelygreece.com/arachne-and-athena/](http://www.definitelygreece.com/arachne-and-athena/)

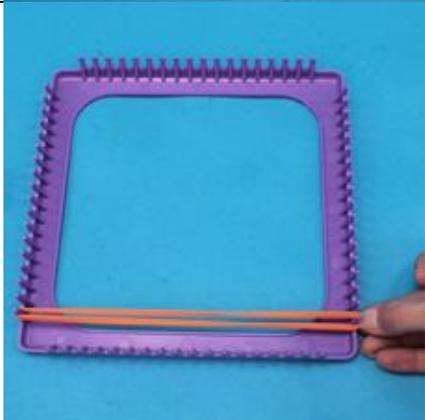
#### **Contact Information:**

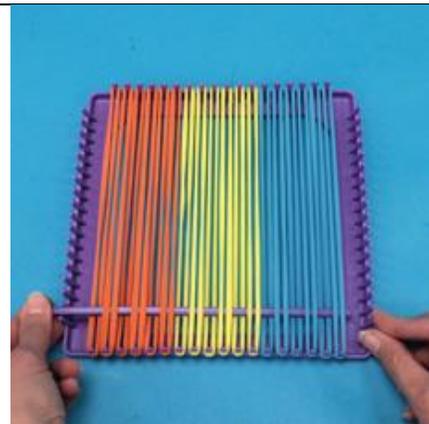
- Phone: 615.862.8431
- Email: [Katherine.Petrole@nashville.gov](mailto:Katherine.Petrole@nashville.gov)
- Mailing Address: The Parthenon, Centennial Park, P.O. Box 196340 Nashville, TN 37219
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## Index

### Appendix A

The activity instructions below were copied from "How to Use a Weaving Loom to Make a Potholder." *Craft Project Ideas*, 19 Apr. 2018, <https://www.craftprojectideas.com/how-to-use-a-weaving-loom-to-make-a-potholder/>.

	<p><b>Step 1.</b> Gather your supplies.</p>
	<p><b>Step 2.</b> Attach a craft loop onto loom by stretching and lining up the loops with the prongs that are across one another.</p>
	<p><b>Step 3.</b> Continue to attach craft loops onto loom as shown.</p>

**Step 4.**

Turn loom so the attached loops are vertical. Take your crochet hook and begin weaving between your attached loops, going over one loop but under the next in a woven pattern. In our example, we were weaving from right to left.

**Step 5.**

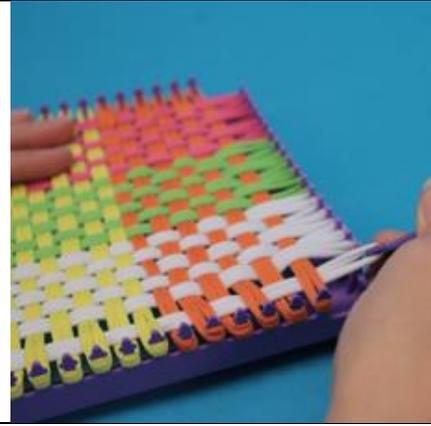
Once your hook is woven through all the attached loops, attach one end of a new loop to the hook and the other to the prong as shown.

**Step 6.**

Pull the hook with the loop attached. This will cause the loop look to be woven throughout the attached loops. Once the hook is pulled all the way through, attach the other end of the loop to the prong. You should now have 1 loop woven through your loom. Tip: Some might also find this easier by using their fingers and not the hook!

**Step 7.**

Repeat steps 4 – 6 with a new loop, making sure to go complete the opposite over/under weaving pattern of the previous loop. For example: if you went under the first loop when weaving your last piece, this time start by going over.



**Step 8.**

Repeat steps 4-7 with additional loops until your loom is completed filled with colorful loops.

**Appendix B**

# The Girl Who Challenged the goddess

Athena and Arachne's weaving contest

