

Feeling the Bern

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After the Bernie mitten meme surfaced back in January, people were making a variety of Bernie-inspired craft items, including crocheted dolls.

My sister Nita, the freestyle crochet artist, was inundated with e-mail requests for similar dolls after several family and friends saw the images on line. She's made several of the dolls already and has more to complete before Santa takes to the sky next Christmas Eve. And she's still fulfilling requests!



Meanwhile, I joined the project in a small way myself when she suggested that her Bernies needed suitable gift bags to travel in.

I got out the Bernie meme design that I posted back in January, and set to work.

I don't have one of her dolls here, but she tells me they're roughly 11-12" tall.

Luckily I had a perfect fabric in my stash – it's a cozy flannelette in a pattern reminiscent of a handknit sweater, just like the one Bernie's original mitts were made from.



The fabric is quite busy, and the redwork design would be difficult to see if stitched directly to it, so I decided to float a piece of white felt over the base fabric, and stitch the design on top. When it was done, I trimmed the felt around the edge of the stitched design, leaving about 1/8" border of white around the figure. If you're using this technique, you need to trim the felt carefully, being sure not to cut the background fabric. The narrow white border will make the design stand out against the busy background. It looks great!



To make the bag, I used two pieces of fabric approximately 8" wide by 16" long, allowing for 1/4" seams and a 1" turn-down along the top to make the drawstring channel. I serged all edges of both pieces before doing the embroidery, which I completed before assembling the bag. I placed him slightly below the centre, so he'll still show up plainly when the drawstring is pulled closed.

I added a buttonhole at the top centre, positioning it so it will fall within the top hem/drawstring channel. Then I added a button in the upper right quadrant, to give an anchor for tying on a string tag.



I assembled the bag by stitching the side and bottom seams with a 1/4" seam allowance. (This fabric is a one-way design, so I had to take care that both sides were right way up.)

Finally, I turned down and pressed the 1" hem at the top, making sure the buttonhole landed within the hem allowance. Then I stitched the hem and ran a second row of topstitching around the top of the bag, to give the drawstring channel a crisp edge.

I inserted the drawstring – one of my t shirt strings – and selected beads in coordinating colours to finish off the look.

When I first looked at the fabric, I took the dark stripes to be a deep purple, which is why I stitched the first Bernie using purple thread. But in other light, this colour looks more brown, so I stitched the rest of the Bernies in unambiguous dark blue. I love the way they look!



All told I've so far made seven of these custom Bernie bags, designed specifically to hold my sister's dolls. She's quite pleased with them, and we're both sure the recipients will be thrilled with their dolls in their coordinating bags.

It's been fun to collaborate with my sister on a project -- something we haven't been able to do for many years because we live at a distance from each other. With any luck, one of these days we'll be close enough to make this a regular thing.