

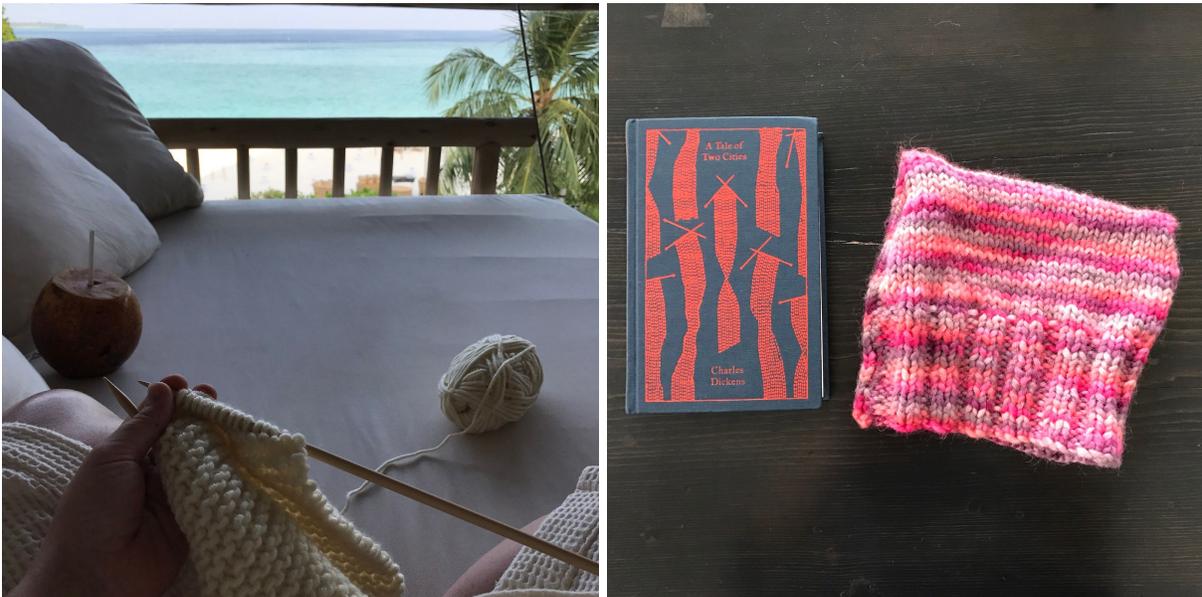
The Warp and the Weft

or

Madame Defarge's Pussy Hat

by Bluebird, December 2017

I went on a beautiful beach vacation with my family over the holidays, and spent most of my time furiously knitting and expressing my increasingly-radical leftist politics. Mom started calling me Madame Defarge.



Thank you to Emily O'Neil for the knitting lessons, Albatross and Penguin Classics for the book, and Valerie Hartshorn for the hat

Madame Defarge is a character in *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. She represents the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, when those revolting against the nobility became violent. Madame Defarge was one of the tricoteuse: women who would sit at the guillotine and knit as the heads rolled. She even encoded kill lists into her patterns.



I'm so excited to read this book; I remember being fascinated by the French Revolution in high school history class, and the French Rebellion in high school existentialism (which should be a requirement, by the way). Americans need to collectively study history right now, and France, our oldest ally, is an important place to look. I sympathize with Madame Defarge — at least from the summary, even though it labels her a villain — but I am not a violent person. She is deeply traumatized and we have to understand what that does to a person, how it can make them violent, how trauma and violence get passed through generations. I do understand the strategy of punching a bully in the face, but it's only a short term solution; they're often traumatized too. Giving a bully a safe space to talk about their problems, to meditate even, works much better. I don't want to help usher in an era named something like *the Reign of Terror*.



I love the symbolism of the knitted hats at the Women's March. First of all, they honor the history of revolutionary women and textiles, like the suffragettes and their flags. Second, they are such a perfect antidote to the made-in-China, polyester red slogan caps. They are a softer in color and texture, they keep you warm, they were hand-crafted by a citizen with aspirational love. The photos of old women smiling and knitting them, and of young women out in the streets singing and dancing in them, and vice-versa, are beautiful.



Finally, as I begin to learn these cozy crafts, I really appreciate the immense patience and skill they require. Learning to read the patterns alone is a challenge, and it's an unforgiving medium. The textiles women have created to wrap their loved ones in are even more lovely to me now. Props to the men who brought us sewing and knitting machines as well; beautiful and fascinating in their own right. And thank you to everyone for the internet tutorials.



Pussy Power Hat

By Kat Coyle, The Little Knittery, Atwater Village, CA

Yarn: Malabrigo Worsted (210 yd per 100 grams), in Fuchsia Pink, 1 skein

(any shade of PINK & any worsted weight yarn will do)

Needles: US 8/ 5mm straight

Gauge: 18 sts and 23 rows = 4" in St st

Finished size: before seaming 11" wide and 17 1/4" long

Pattern:

To fit: medium/large

CO 50 sts. Leave a long tail for seaming.

Rib: K1 * k2, p2; rep from * end p1.

Work Rib for 4 1/4".

Work in Stockinette (knit right side rows, purl wrong side rows) until piece measures 13" from cast on edge. Begin Rib on right side row.

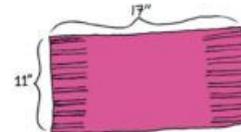
Rib: P1 * p2, k2; rep from * end k1.

Work Rib for 4 1/4". Piece measures 17 1/4" from cast on edge.

Bind off all stitches. Cut yarn leaving a long tail for seaming.

Fold hat in half and sew each side seam. Weave in loose ends.

Put on hat, and the cat ears will appear!



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