Navajo Beads

Written by Beverly J. Ahlstrom • Illustrated by Amy Bates
Shandiin (shon-DEEN) watched Grandmother make silver jewelry. “Grandmother,” said Shandiin, “can I make jewelry?”

“Yes,” Grandmother said. “Let’s start with beads.”
Grandmother showed Shandiin the bead box and gave her a silver wire.
Shandiin chose yellow beads. She counted by ones, “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.” She used 11 beads. Grandmother twisted the wire closed. Now Shandiin had a ring to wear.
“What next?” asked Grandmother.

“Earrings,” said Shandiin. On 2 small pieces of thread she put black and white beads. She counted by twos, “2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24.” She used 24 beads for each.
Grandmother made a loop and put on clips to hold them to Shandiin’s ears.
“What’s next?” asked Grandmother.

“A bracelet,” said Shandiin. She looped the string through holes in the beads to make them lie flat.
She counted the beads by fives, “5, 10, 15, 20.” She used 20 beads. Shandiin had a bead bracelet to wear!
“What’s next?” asked Grandmother.
“A necklace,” said Shandiin.
She strung 10 beads together, then tied a knot, then strung 10 more beads, until the necklace was long enough. She counted the groups of ten, “10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60.” 60 beads grouped in tens.
Grandmother tied the necklace. Shandiin put it on. “Thank you,” said Shandiin. “Do you think I can become a jewelry artist like you?”
“Yes,” said Grandmother, hugging her close. “I asked my grandmother the very same question.”