

MATERIALS

- fabric pieces (yellow or red) 6" x 16"
- wooden dowels 1/8"x18"
- craft foam 4 1/2" x 6" (adhesive backed)
- cardboard 5" x 7"
- pencils
- erasers
- scissors
- glue sticks
- black water soluble printing ink / acrylic paint
- brayers
- ink trays
- newspaper

RESOURCES

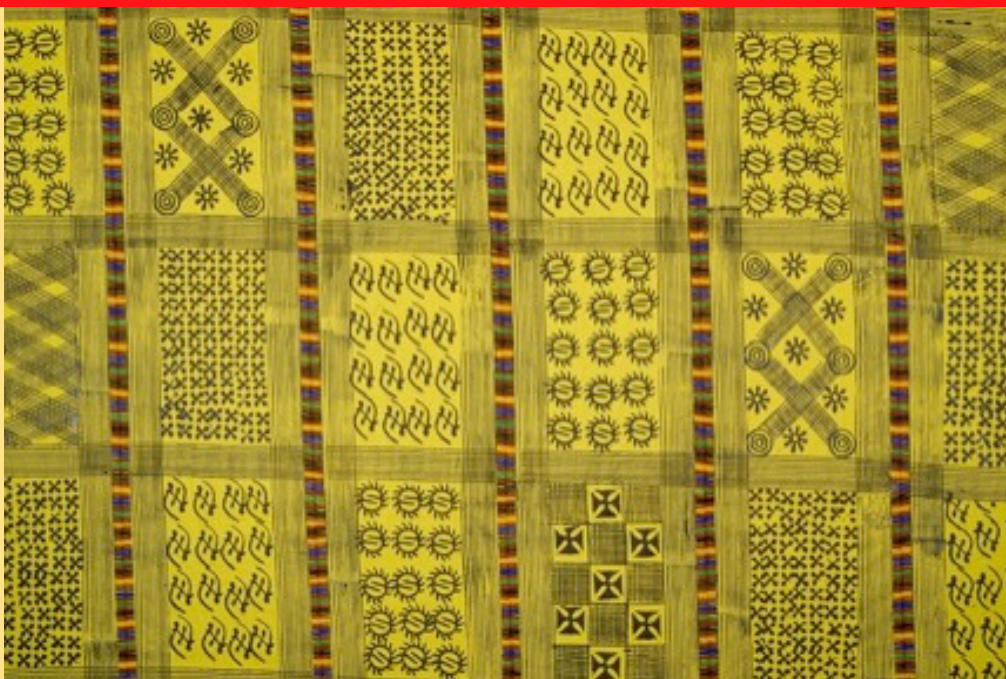
- Adinkra Symbols of West Africa
http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm
- National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian
<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/inscribing/adinkra.html>

VOCABULARY (Definitions on page 4)

- **Adinkra**
- **Ceremony**
- **Ancestors**
- **Calabash**
- **Pattern**
- **Gourd**
- **Proverb**
- **Symbol**
- **Repetition**
- **Tradition**

NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

- **Creating:** Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.
- **Presenting:** Interpreting and sharing artistic work.
- **Responding:** Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.
- **Connecting:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.



Adinkra Cloth. Ashanti, Ghana, Africa. ca. 1960. The Girard Collection. Museum of International Folk Art. Photo by Ricardo Martinez.

Adinkra Banners

INTRODUCTION

Adinkra cloth is a stamped fabric that is made in Ghana, Africa. Symbolic motifs which represent proverbs are carved from calabashes, a type of gourd, and are dipped into a black dye made from the bark of the badie tree.

OBJECTIVES

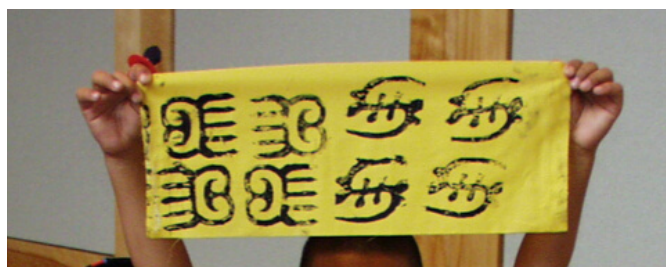
- To understand the way that adinkra cloth has been used traditionally and how the adinkra stamps are used today (historical and cultural understanding).
- To describe and discuss the process of making adinkra cloth, including the use of symbols and their meanings and the materials that are used (perceiving, analyzing and responding).
- To explore graphic design, pattern, sequence, repetition and printing techniques to make an adinkra banner (creating and performing).

MOTIVATION

- Show images of *adinkra* cloth or an actual piece of *adinkra* cloth if you have access to one. What do the students see? Are there graphic elements that are repeated? What do the symbols remind them of? If the students had to assign the symbols meaning, what would the significance of the symbols be? Explain the traditional use of *adinkra* cloth and the way that the stamps each have a meaning and often a proverb associated with it.
- Tell the students that they will be making their own *adinkra* banners and encourage them to use shapes and/or invent symbols that have meaning for them. They can think about values that are important to them, ideals that they have, issues for world leaders to keep in mind and philosophies they hold dear.

PROCEDURE

1. Each students gets a piece of craft foam and draws their idea for their symbol on the paper back. (Because they are drawing on the back, they do not have to reverse the image.)
2. The students cut out the foam and adhere the pieces to the cardboard.
3. When they are ready to print, they place their “adinkra stamp” with the foam side up on a stack of newspapers. They roll the brayer in the ink and apply it to the surface of the foam.
4. When they are ready to lay the fabric on top of the inked foam, make sure any excess ink has been removed from the surrounding newspaper (just throw it away).
5. Place the fabric on top of the inked foam and rub gently without changing the placement of the fabric.
6. Peel off the fabric and enjoy the results!
7. Repeat as desired.
8. Determine where on the dowel the cloth is going to be placed. Mark each edge with a pencil. Apply glue stick to the dowel in the designated area.
9. Place the fabric on top of the glued dowel and press into place. Set aside to dry.



Adinkra Symbols



ADINKRAHENE
"Chief of the adinkra symbols"
Symbol of greatness, charisma and leadership.



ANANSE NTONTAN
"Spider's web"
Symbol of wisdom, creativity and the complexities of life.



KWATAKYE ATIKO
"Hair style of an Asante war captain"
Symbol of bravery and valor.
This symbols is said to be a special hair style of Kwatakye, a war captain of old Asante.



DWENNIMMEN
"Ram's horns"
Symbol of humility together with strength.



NYAME YE OHENE
"God is king "
Symbol of majesty and supremacy of God.



OWO FORO ADOBE
"Snake climbing the raffia tree"
Symbol of steadfastness, prudence and diligence.



NSOROMMA
"Child of the heavens (stars) "
Symbol of guardianship.



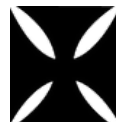
OSRAM NE NSOROMMA
"The moon and the star"
Symbol of love, faithfulness, and harmony.



PEMPAMSIE
"Sew in readiness"
Symbol of readiness, steadfastness, and hardiness.



WO NSA DA MU A
"If your hands are in the dish"
Symbol of participatory government, democracy and pluralism



MMUSUYIDEE
"That which removes bad luck"
Symbol of good fortune and sanctity



AKOFENA
"Sword of war"
Symbol of courage, valor, and heroism.



AKOKO NAN
"The leg of a hen"
Symbol of nurturing and discipline.



AKOMA
"The heart"
Symbol of patience and tolerance.



NYAME NTI
"By God's grace"
Symbol of faith and trust in God.



ODO NNYEW FIE KWAN
"Love never loses its way home"
Symbol of the power of love.



SANKOFA
"Return and get it"
Symbol of importance of learning from the past.

For more symbols

Source: Adinkra Symbols of West Africa

http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm

EVALUATION

- The students can write labels for their banners which describe the symbols and their meaning, explaining what they were thinking about when they made them. Make a display with the banners and labels.
- Students can work in small groups to create banners with a specific theme. These can also be displayed with explanations.

EXTENTIONS & CONNECTIONS

- Students can research the history and use of adinkra cloth and report back to the class on their findings. (Social Studies)
- The history of Ghana can be a topic for research. Students can explore the way that Ghanaian society has evolved and developed under different types of governments. (Social Studies)
- Students can explore different African textile traditions, such as kente cloth, adire, or indigo dyed fabric and make a presentation to the cloth with examples of the textile techniques. (Visual Arts)



Adinkra stamps

VOCABULARY

1. **Adinkra** - a Ghanaian textiles created by printing with carved calabashes on fabric.
2. **Ancestors** - people from whom one is descended.
3. **Calabash** - a gourd
4. **Gourd** - a family of plants that includes pumpkin, melon, squash and cucumber.
5. **Ceremony** - a formal act or acts prescribed by ritual, protocol or convention.
6. **Pattern** - a grouping of shapes, forms, objects, concepts or behaviors that repeats.
7. **Proverb** - a brief saying that is a general truth, fundamental principle or rule of conduct.
8. **Repetition** - something that happens more than once.
9. **Symbol** - something that stands for something else.
10. **Tradition** - behaviors that have been passed down through generations.



Adinkra stamps

Printing & Painting

The art and technology of permanently coloring cloth with dye originated in India and spread throughout the world via trade. As early as 3000 BCE, Indian dyers were producing solid colored and patterned cloth using vegetable dyes and mordants. Some of the cloth was patterned through printing, a technique that uses very simple tools. Printing, painting, and *batik* share some common principles.

Hand printing and painting is done by three methods. Dye is applied directly to the cloth by means of a printing block or a paint brush. *Adinkra* cloth from Ghana is an example of direct printing.

When wax or a starch that blocks dye penetration is applied by either brush or block it is called resist printing. When the cloth is put into the dye solution, the resist areas remain the original color. *Batik* from Indonesia, *adire* and stencil patterns from Nigeria and drawn and stencil patterns from Japan use this technique. The *tjanting* and *tjegul* are batik tools that originated in Indonesia. Brushes, feathers, combs and other implements have been used to create resist patterns.



Adire resist cloth wall hanging. Nigeria, Africa. 20th Century AD. Gift of Lloyd E. Cotsen and the Neutrogena Corporation, Museum of International Folk Art.

In India and Iran, another method is used whereby mordants—the chemical agents that create the bond between fiber and dye—are applied to the undyed cloth either by printing or painting with a brush or pen. When the cloth is immersed in the dye bath the areas with mordant take on color while the rest of the fabric remains undyed. In India the resulting fabric is called *kalamkari*, meaning pen work. In Iran it is known *asqalamkar*.



Adinkra Cloth. Ashanti, Ghana, Africa. ca. 1960. Gift of the Girard Collection. Museum of International Folk Art. Photo by Ricardo Martinez.

Adinkra cloth is a stamped fabric that is made in Ghana, Africa. *Symbolic* motifs which represent proverbs are carved from *calabashes*, a type of gourd, and are dipped into a black dye made from the bark of the badie tree. *Adinkra* artists divide the fabric into squares and then create patterns and repetitive designs using the inked stamps. When it is used for funerary or ceremonial occasions the cloth is yellow or red. However, the stamped designs are always printed in black. *Adinkra* cloth has been used traditionally for funerary occasions, but has grown in popularity and the symbols can be seen on a variety of clothing and objects.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blier, Suzanne Preston. *The Royal Arts of Africa, the Majesty of Form*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Gillow, John. *Printed and Dyed Textiles from Africa*. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2001.

Gillow, John & Bryan Sentence. *World Textiles, A Visual Guide to Traditional Techniques*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1999.

Horn, Diane. *African Printed Textile Design*. Owings Mill, MD: Stemmer House Publishing, Inc. 1998.

Owusu, Heiki. *Symbols of Africa*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. 1998.

Robinson, Mimi. *Adinkra! West African Symbols*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1998.

Schuman, Jo Miles. *Art from Many Hands*. Worcester, MA: Davis Publications, 1981.

Williams, Geoffrey. *African Designs from Traditional Sources*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Diakit , Baba Wagu . *The Magic Gourd*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2003.

O.Malia, Carol. *The Royal Drum, an Ashanti Tale*. New York: MONDO Publishing, 1996.

Skivington, Janice. *How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1991.

Williams, Karen Lynn. *Galimoto*. New York: Lothrop Lee & Shepard Books, 1990.

WEBSITES

Adinkra Symbols of West Africa
http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm

National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian
<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/inscribing/adinkra.html>

Adinkra in Ntonso-Ashanti,
Ghana <https://carolventura.com/Adinkra.htm>

VIDEOS

Traveling Black - visiting a village in Ghana
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=87&v=FkmlOs_FouM&feature=emb_title

OpenLearn from The Open University - What is Adinkra?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8ksngjv9c4&list=PL910CE74BB2D54A9F&index=10&t=0s>