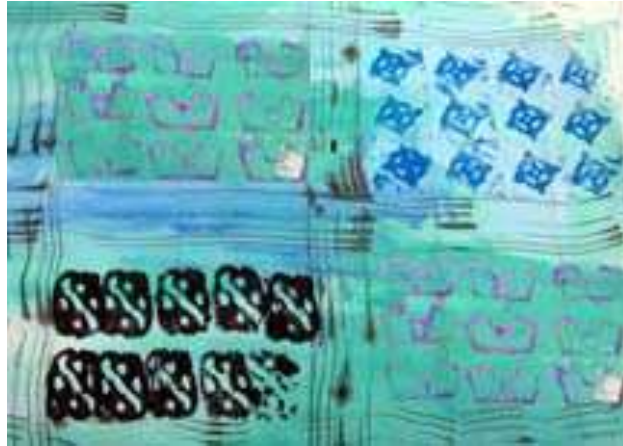


## **Cultural Symbolism -- Adinkra Cloth**

Cultural symbols represent the most significant stereotype values of a particular culture which have inherent associations with the philosophical traditions, thinking patterns, nationally shared values, national characters as well as historical and economic realities.



**Target Grade:** 11

**Goal (Terminal Objective):** The student will enhance creative and descriptive vocabulary skills in a study of the use of cultural symbols.

### **Objective:**

The student will identify the use of symbolism as a form of communication.

The student will provide examples of the three kinds of symbols: the conventional, such as the signs used in industry, in mathematics and in other fields; the accidental, resulting from temporary association whereby one thing symbolizes another; the universal, where there is an intrinsic relation between the symbol and what it represents.

The student will identify and describe the relationship of art elements such as line, shape, and color in creating visual symbols.

The student will explain how artworks reflect and influence beliefs, customs, and values of a society.

The student will identify the use of symbols as they relate to Adinkra Cloth.

The student will create four symbols with personal meaning and print that symbol in the style of Ghanaian Adinkra Cloth.

### **National Standards:**

Visual Arts Grades 9-12 Content Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Visual Arts Grades 9-12 Content Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

Visual Arts Grades 9-12 Content Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Visual Arts Grades 9-12 Content Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

**Language Arts, Social Studies Cross Curriculum Connection**

**Purpose:**

The student will learn that Adinkra is the only African cloth printing tradition of Pre-colonial origin. It is one of the prestigious royal crafts produced in villages around the Asante capital Kumase. According to Asante legend it was introduced in 1818 following the capture of a rival monarch by the name of Adinkra, who wore the cloth to express his sorrow on being taken to Kumase.

Students will understand that Adinkra cloth is an important art object that constitutes a code in which the Ghanan culture has deposited some aspects of the sum of their knowledge, fundamental beliefs, aspects of their history, attitudes, and behaviors towards that which they believe to be sacred. The student will identify how the art object shows the structure of the Ghanan tribal society. The student will identify how the symbols used in our lives today will intrigue and teach the future generations.

The student will discuss Adinkra symbols, their variations and various themes encoded in the texts of proverbs, aphorisms and other verbal expressions related to Adinkra symbols. The student will create personally meaningful symbols to print on a cloth.

**New Vocabulary:** motif, pattern, repeat, elements of art, principles of art, emotional response, geometric shapes, organic shapes, stylized, distortion, unity

**Materials:**



#22-1103 Craft Glue



#22-2000 Sculpt-It! White Re-sealable Tub



#66-5421 Acrylic Jar Sets



#56-3101 40 ct. Flat Jumbo Brush Best-Buy Set



#22-7244 144 ct. Graphite Pencils



## #23-9111 11 ct. Sculpting Tool Set

Muslin, brayer, inking tray, and pens

**Time:** This lesson may be modified from one to three hours, depending upon the size and complexity of expectations.

### **Introduction and Motivation (Set):**

View a map of Africa, identify the geographic location of Ghana. View exemplars of Adinkra cloth and a visual of many of the samples of symbols used to adorn the cloth and give the cloth cultural significance.

Pose the following questions for discussion:

- What is a symbol?
- When do we use symbols?
- Provide examples of symbols used in everyday life?
- Why do cultural groups develop symbols?

Use these questions to initiate a student-driven review and discussion of the use of symbols in our culture. The level and series of questions should be aimed at having students access their prior knowledge of this topic.

The students will discuss examples of the three kinds of symbols: the conventional, such as the signs used in industry, in mathematics and in other fields; the accidental, resulting from temporary association whereby one thing symbolizes another; the universal, where there is an intrinsic relation between the symbol and what it represents.

- Students are placed in groups to list examples of symbols.
- Students share the results of this collection of lists.
- Teacher displays an Adinkra symbol and asks the symbol's meaning. After eliciting student responses, the instructor may do the following:
  - Explain that other cultures also use symbols as a means of communication.
  - Identify the location of Ghana on a map of the world.
  - Provide historical background of the culture and the use of Adinkra designs.
  - Stress that the designs are not only decorative, but each one has a symbolic meaning which carries a message that the person wearing the garment wants to communicate.

### **Instruction:**

Teacher will demonstrate sketching a symbol with personal meaning in preparation for making a stamp. Teacher will provide examples of cultural symbols of various cultures and ask students to compare and contrast those symbols with reference to the elements and principles of design. The teacher will lead a discussion on the how to create a symbol with personal meaning. The teacher will demonstrate carving a stamp and printing the symbol on a prepared background in the style of Ghanaian Adinkra Cloth.

### **Activities:**

#### **(1) Guided Practice:**

1. Students generate sketches on 2" x 2" scrap paper for four

personally meaningful symbols in the style of Adinkra symbols.



2. After symbols have been generated, black the back of the scrap paper with pencil lead.



3. Lay scrap sketch on top of a block of 2"x2" Sculpt-it facing up. With a ball point pen, trace over the sketch so that indentations of the symbol design are produced on the block of Sculpt-it. Remove the paper and go over the design again deepening the outline of the symbol.



4. After outline is indented, use a pencil eraser to lower the background of the stamp leaving the image of the symbol in relief.



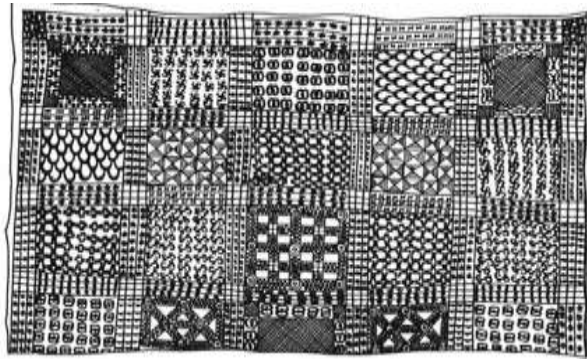
5. Students use a variegated wash of two colors of acrylic paint to completely cover a 24" x 18" piece of muslin. (White drawing paper can be substituted.)



6. After acrylic wash is dried, students use a hair pick, fork, or garden rake dipped in black acrylic to form a grid in the style of Adinkra cloth.



7. Students apply paint to stamps and repeat print each symbol into one quadrant of the prepared background.



(2) Independent Practice and Check for Understanding: Teacher circulates among working students visually recording students demonstrating understanding of objectives and provides reinforcement.

(3) Closure: Students record the symbolic meaning conveyed and the elements used to convey those feelings. They will include innovations they provided to the piece.

### **Evaluation:**

Level One -- The finished Adinkra cloth very successfully demonstrates the student's understanding of personal and cultural symbols. The student is able to list the three types of symbols and provide instances of their use. The student has created a replica of Adinkra cloth using four symbols. The student has shown a high level of craftsmanship and technical skill. The student successfully completed the writing component describing, in depth, the symbols chosen for personal meaning.

Level Two -- The finished Adinkra demonstrates the student's understanding of personal and cultural symbols. The student is able to list two types of symbols and provide instances of their use. The student has created a replica of Adinkra cloth using four symbols. The student has shown a craftsmanship and technical skill. The student completed the writing component describing the symbols chosen for personal meaning.

Level Three -- The finished Adinkra shows limited use of the student's understanding of personal and cultural symbols. The student is able to list one type of symbol and provide instances of its use. The student has created a replica of Adinkra cloth using three symbols. The student has shown limited craftsmanship and technical skill. The student completed the writing component briefly describing the symbols chosen for personal

meaning.

Level Four -- The finished Adinkra demonstrates limited understanding of personal and cultural symbols. The student is not able to list the two types of symbols and provide instances of their use. The student has created a replica of Adinkra cloth using at least one symbol. The student has shown poor craftsmanship and technical skill.

**Extension:** Students may use their symbol stamps to produce a group project.

**Resources:**

<http://africanhistory.about.com/library/weekly/aaAdinkra.htm>

<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/CliffsReviewTopic/Symbols-and-Language-in-Human-Culture.topicArticleId-26957,articleId-26851.html>

<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/>

<http://www.fulbright.org.nz/events/fulbrighthays-projects/docs/smithj.pdf>

[http://www.statesymbolsusa.org/Lists/arts\\_culture.html](http://www.statesymbolsusa.org/Lists/arts_culture.html)

[http://www.fortbend.k12.tx.us/campuses/documents/Teacher/2007%5Cteacher\\_20070921\\_0927.pdf](http://www.fortbend.k12.tx.us/campuses/documents/Teacher/2007%5Cteacher_20070921_0927.pdf)

BY JANE STRICKER  
Art Consultant

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