Make your own Adinkra cloth

Adinkra (ah-DEEN-krah) cloth is a hand-printed fabric made in Ghana. Adinkra cloths were traditionally made for royalty to wear at religious ceremonies. Through the years, people have also decorated the cloths to tell a story or to express their thoughts or feelings. Adinkra cloth is stamped and patterned with traditional Ashanti symbols. Each symbol has its own meaning. People in Ghana decorate the cloth by using a black dye made of bark. This dye is called Adinkera aduru, and it is what gives the cloth its name. Using the dye, they draw lines on the cloth to divide it into squares. Next, they carve symbols into calabash gourds, press the gourds into the dye, and stamp the symbols onto the fabric.

Source: this craft was originally appeared on pbs.org/wonders

You Try It! Tell a story! Make a cloth about your favorite places, things you like, or about your family! Tell a Story with Your Cloth!

When people in Ghana make Adinkra cloth, they often create several different designs. By alternating stamps or using different stamps on different parts of the cloth, these designs can tell a story. Create a few different designs and make stamps for each one. Here is another way to make Adinkra cloth! (if you have an adult helper)

If you would like to stamp your designs on real cloth, you may want to use fabric paint or acrylic paint so that you can wash the cloth later. Before stamping the material, put the cloth on top of a layer of newspaper. This will help the image stamp more clearly and keep the table or floor clean.

Things you’ll need if using paper:
- Pieces of hard foam, but you can also use a sponge
- Plastic knife
- Tempera paint
- Felt-tip marker
- Construction paper
- Ruler or straight edge

Things you’ll need if using cloth:
- Pieces of hard foam, but you can also use a sponge
- Plastic knife
- Fabric paint (or acrylic paint) so you can wash the fabric later, if you have to
- Felt-tip marker
- A square of solid color cloth (cotton is good)
- Newspaper as a work surface in case the paint seeps through the fabric
- Ruler or straight edge
Think about what each of the stamps could mean and of how you will stamp them in an order that tells a story. If you use paper, you may want to leave room at the bottom of the paper to write your story down when you are finished.

Think about the order of your designs and how they will tell your story.
How to Make an Andinkra Cloth

Step 1:
Draw your design on paper first, and cut it our to make your pattern. Remember that your symbol needs to be simple enough that it will print clearly. (If you use a sponge for the stamp, you can cut it into your design by using scissors)

Step 2:
Trace the design onto your foam or sponge.

Step 3:
Using the plastic knife, carve a symbol or design into a piece of foam to make a stamp.

Step 4:
Once you have finished your stamp, choose a piece of paper to be your “cloth,” or use your fabric. Using the felt-tip marker, draw lines or designs on the paper to divide it into squares.

Step 5:
Pour tempera paint onto a plate or tray, so that the paint is just covering the bottom. Dip your stamp into the paint and stamp it onto the paper. Continue stamping in your square, and then change the stamp design in the next square.

Let it dry and you have a beautiful Andinkra “cloth”!