

Global Culture- India Cultural Art- Henna Hands K-5

Objective: Students will design decorative doodles in the style of Indian cultural hand markings known as henna.

Materials: pencils, markers, scissors, glue, copy paper, construction paper.

Opening Activity: Henna is a dye that comes from a small shrub-like plant. Many cultures and regions of the world use henna ‘tattoos’ for celebrations and rites of passage. Hinduism is one of the main religions of India, and in Hindu wedding ceremonies people traditionally see henna designs painted on the bride to symbolize joy, beauty, spiritual awakening and offering.

Opening Activity: It will help to get a head start on HAND TRACING, have students trace ONE of their hands, twice. Cut out each traced hand and glue them to a colorful background.

Core Activity: Decide what style of design you want to create: henna tattoos often look like complex doodles, incorporating leaf and floral shapes and styles. You may want to briefly sketch with pencil on some scrap paper to test out ideas before you begin with marker on your blank cut-out hands. When artists use henna paint they have to be VERY careful and skilled in applying the paint: because the henna dyes the skin pretty quickly. We’ll create our ‘henna’ designs on the paper hands with markers to get a feel for how complicated this art form can be! Remember, the markers are ONLY for the PAPER HANDS, do NOT color on your skin with markers!

Reflection: What do your hands express? Are hands important symbols in American culture? Why or why not? What is the difference between how hands are seen in Indian culture versus American culture?

