



A sample of Adinkra Cloth



Sankofa: The importance of learning from the past

ADINKRA: AFRICAN SYMBOLS FROM GHANA

The Adinkra symbols are part of a rich tradition. They were developed by the Ashanti people of West Africa and can be traced back to the 17th century. Initially, clothes adorned with Adinkra symbols were only worn during ceremonies to honor the dead. The symbols worn on the mourner's clothing expressed the qualities s/he attributed to the deceased.

Over time, the number of symbols grew. In modern times, they have been used for every-day wear, as well as for special occasions. Adinkra cloth provides a remarkable display of the values of the Ashanti people, developed over many generations. The tradition continues to flourish in Ghana, today.

The symbols are created by cutting a stamp out of the thick skin of a calabash gourd (a plant similar to a pumpkin). The stamp is dipped in dye, made from tree bark, and then repeatedly pressed onto cloth to create patterns.

Ghana is a West African Country located next to the Ivory Coast, Togo and the Atlantic Ocean. In 1957 Ghana became a self-governing country and broke with the British colonial empire. Ghana is also known for Kente Cloth and Highlife music.

KEY WORDS

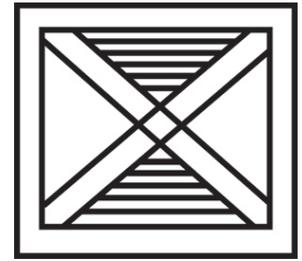
Adinkra: An African system of symbols developed by the Ashante people of Ghana

Ashanti (or Asante): An indigenous ethnic group of people from Ghana

Ghana: A West-African country located next to the Atlantic Ocean



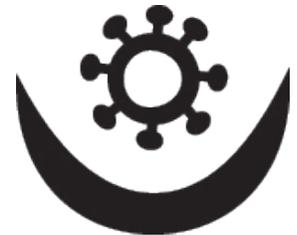
ADINKRAHENE
 “chief of adinkra symbols”
 symbol of greatness,
 charisma and leadership



MFRAMADAM
 “wind-resistant house”
 symbol of fortitude and
 readiness to face
 life’s challenges



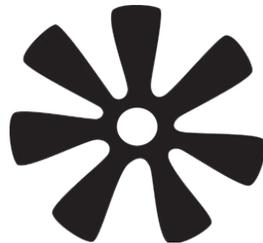
**OYANKOPON
 ADOM...**
 “by God’s grace,
 all will be well”
 symbol of hope,
 providence, faith



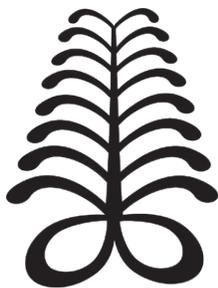
**OSRAM NE
 NSOROMMA**
 “the moon and the star”
 symbol of love, faithful-
 ness, harmony



DWENNIMMEN
 “ram’s horns”
 symbolizes humility and
 strength



ANANSE NTONTAN
 “spider’s web”
 symbol of wisdom, creativity
 and the complexities of life



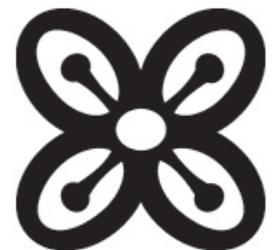
AYA
 “fern”
 symbol of endurance and
 resourcefulness



DUAFE
 “wooden comb”
 symbol of beauty and
 cleanliness;



**NYAME NNWU NA
 MAWU**
 “God never dies, there-
 fore I cannot die”
 symbolizes the immor-
 tality of man’s or
 woman’s soul



BESE SAKA
 “sack of cola nuts”
 symbol of affluence,
 power, abundance,
 plenty, togetherness
 and unity

REFLECTION: ADINKRA SYMBOLS

NAME:

PERIOD:

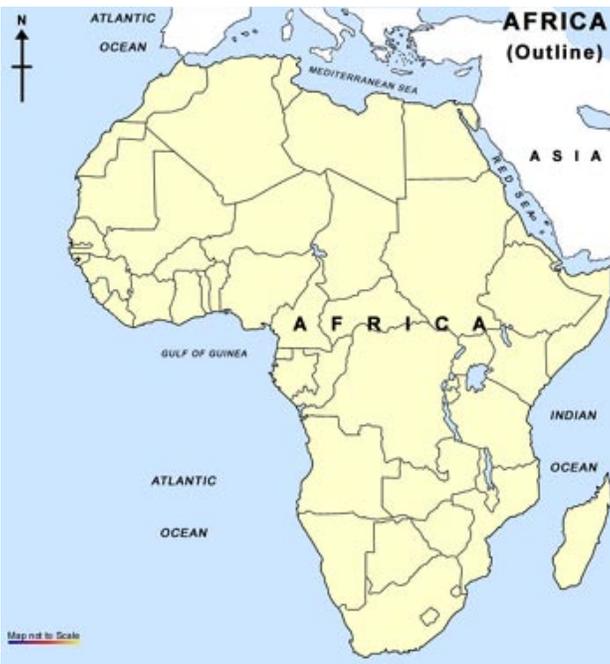
Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. What is Adinkra? Where does it come from? *(be specific)*

2. How is adinkra cloth made traditionally?

3. Circle Ghana on this map of Africa:

4. Which Adinkra symbol do you like best and why?



REFLECTION: DESIGNING YOUR OWN SYMBOL

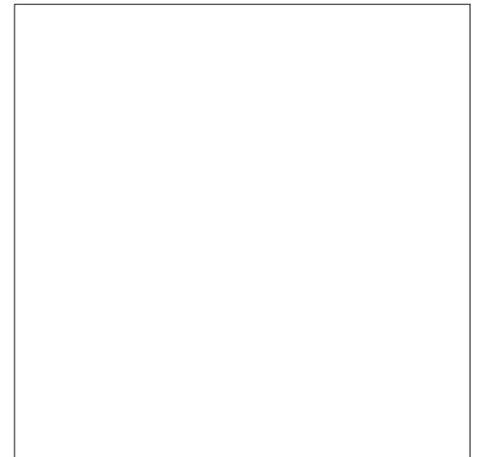
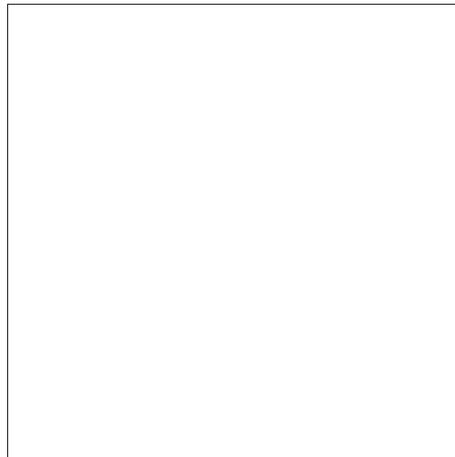
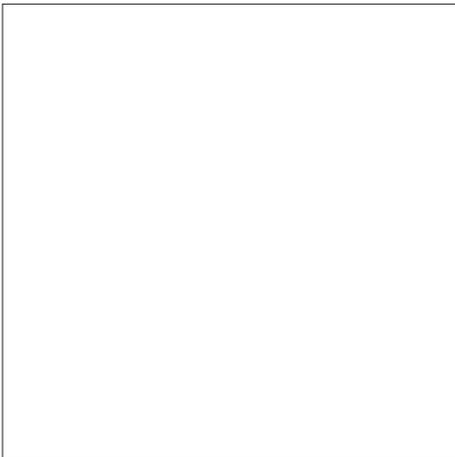
NAME:

PERIOD:

1. List 7 adjectives or words to describe yourself:

2. Of these 7 words circle the 3 you like best.

3. In the boxes below draw 3 symbols for the 3 words you chose:



4. Now in the box below, draw a new symbol that has elements of all three of these symbols:

