

Black History Month Activity Bag

Kente Cloth Coloring Sheets

Includes coloring page with DIY photo frame, crayons

[Watch this video](#) to learn how to make a 3-D paper photo frame!

Learn about the significance of colors and patterns in woven Kente cloth from the [Smithsonian National Museum of African Art](#) before coloring your own design:

Kente cloth is a Ghanaian woven textile worn contemporarily throughout the African Diaspora to commemorate special occasions such as graduations and weddings. Kente comes from the word kenten, which means "basket" in the Asante dialect of Akan language, referencing its basket-like pattern. Colors and patterns in Kente cloth are intentionally selected by the weaver to convey a message. Each color has a significance in the tradition of Kente weaving:

- black: maturation, intensified spiritual energy, spirits of ancestors, passing rites, mourning, and funerals
- blue: peacefulness, harmony, and love
- green: vegetation, planting, harvesting, growth, spiritual renewal
- gold: royalty, wealth, high status, glory, spiritual purity
- grey: healing and cleansing rituals; associated with ash
- maroon: the color of mother earth; associated with healing
- pink: associated with the female essence of life; a mild, gentle aspect of red
- purple: associated with feminine aspects of life; usually worn by women
- red: political and spiritual moods; bloodshed; sacrificial rites and death.
- silver: serenity, purity, joy; associated with the moon
- white: purification, sanctification rites and festive occasions
- yellow: preciousness, royalty, wealth, fertility, beauty

Cowrie Shell Bracelet

Learn about the significance of cowrie shells from the [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) before making your own cowrie shell bracelet:

Cowrie shells were traded for goods and services throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania, and used as money as early as the 14th century on Africa's western coast. Because the shells were small, portable, and durable, they served as excellent currency and were almost impossible to counterfeit, appearing in standard weights. King Gezo of Dahomey, now modern Benin, said he preferred cowries to gold for this reason, he

would always receive a fair price. However, cowrie shells were more than money. They also represented power in trade. Europeans in the 16th century were able to use cowries to enter the valuable African trade markets, where they used shells to buy goods, including people. In America, cowries appear in spirit bundles, as parts of jewelry, and on clothing, hinting at their use as amulets. Knowing that Africans used cowries as charms for protection, historians speculate the cowries may have been brought to America as talismans to resist enslavement.

Cowrie Shell Bracelet Directions

From [Crafting on the Fly](#)

Included: 1 yard of cord, 3 cowrie shell beads

You need: scissors, ruler, matches or lighter

1. Cut a 24" section of the cord and fold it in half. Then make a regular knot about 4" from the loop.
2. Now pull one end of the string through the shell and then the other side of the string through the shell as well but from the opposite direction. This will secure the Cowrie shell between the 2 strings.
3. Pull the shell tight to the first knot and secure it with another knot. Now the shell is sandwiched between the 2 strings.
4. Repeat this with the rest of the shells. Hold the bracelet against your wrist to check the length. Make sure it leaves about 1.5" on the back between the 2 ends for the knot to slide the bracelet on and off your hand.
5. Now all you need to add is the macrame knot closure. For that, you need another 10" section of the string.
6. Wrap the bracelet so that the 2 ends overlap, so all 4 strings come together- 2 from the left side and 2 from the right side.
7. Now place the new string under the 4 strings and tie a knot in the center. It should be tight, but not so tight that you can slide it up and down.
8. make a square knot by placing one string above and one under the 4 strings and pulling them through the opposite strings.
9. repeat the same thing but the opposite way to complete 1 square knot.
10. Repeat step 3 and 4 until you have a total of 4 knots.
11. Pull the string to the back and cut them off.
12. To finish the bracelet, cut the 4 ends to the same size and tie a double knot in each end, so a total of 4 knots.
13. Since this is a polyester cord, it is best to use a match or lighter to singe the ends and seal them off. Do that to all 4 knots and the back of the macrame closure on your bracelet.

Mancala

Learn about Mancala from the [University of Maine Hudson Museum](#) before creating and playing your own game:

Mancala is a generic name for this type of “count and capture” game and stems from the Arabic word which means “to move.” It is considered the oldest board game in the world, and has been found in Egyptian ruins dated from 1400 B.C.E. — carved into the temple roofs of Memphis, Thebes and Luxor. It is played all over Africa with two basic variations. North of the equator they use a “two-rank” board; south of the equator, a “four rank” board is used.

A traditional Mancala game called Warra was still played in Louisiana in the early 20th century, and a commercial version called Kalah became popular in the 1940s. In Cape Verde, Mancala is known as "ouril". It is played in the Islands and was brought to the United States by Cape Verdean immigrants. It is played to this day in Cape Verdean communities in New England.

The decoration and creation of Mancala boards is said to represent agriculture and landscape; a depiction of land being turned into a productive field through clearing plowing, irrigation, and harvesting. The number of pieces used to play is very symbolic. It's usually 48, which in a large majority of West African societies was traditionally a sacred, universe unlocking number.

Mancala Game Directions

Adapted from the [University of Maine Hudson Museum](#)

Included: egg carton, 48 beads (be sure to count because we gave you extra)

You need: scissors, markers, 2 cups

1. Carefully cut off the top of the egg carton. The bottom will serve as your Mancala board, and you can decorate it with pens and markers if you'd like. Keep in mind that symbolism in Mancala represents agriculture and harvesting.
2. Place four beads in each of the 12 wells of the egg carton.
3. Place the game board between the two players. Place a cup at each end of the board. Players will place their points in the cup to their right.
4. Players take turns picking up all the beads from one of the wells, and redistribute the pieces around the board in a clockwise direction one-at-a-time, beginning with the well to the right of the one from which the player took the beads. As the player passes the cup to their right, they place a bead in their cup to gain points, but not in their opponent's cup.
5. If the player drops their last bead in a well that is already full, they can take another turn. If the well is empty except for their last bead, their turn is over.

6. The game ends when all the cups on one side empty. The winner is determined by who has the most beads in their cup at the end of the game.

There are many variations on the rules to Mancala, and we encourage you to [learn about them all!](#) [Watch this video](#) to see how Mancala is played!