LESSON PLAN - BODY DECORATIONS



**Discussion, design and drawing** – Students learn why people from a range of cultures decorate their bodies and are introduced to Indian (Hindu) customs of henna hand painting.

Aims

* To assist students’ understanding of how and why people from a range of cultures decorate their bodies.
* To introduce students to Indian (Hindu) customs of painting hands for special occasions.

Preparation

* Read ‘Background Sheet’ (for teacher information).
* Copies of ‘Patterns’ sheet  
  **Note:** teachers may wish to source additional patterns for student inspiration.
* Pictures of henna painting
* Sheets of A4 paper.
* Coloured pencils, crayons or textas, scissors, glue.
* Large piece of paper/card in the shape of a hand for display of students’ hands.

What to do

1. Teacher facilitates a whole class brainstorm on the ways people decorate their bodies. Students suggest why people might do this. Teacher records student responses on black/white board.  
   **Example:** ochre paint, wedding bands, tattooing, jewellery, different types of clothing, hair styles and colours, sun-tanning, nail polishes, decorative glasses, body piercing such as earrings, nose rings and belly rings.
2. Encourage students to tell stories of themselves or people they know who use body decoration.
3. Teacher shows pictures of henna painting and asks students to speculate on reasons for doing this.
4. Teacher explains the role of henna painting (Mendhi) for women in India and for Muslim women during Eid.
5. Students are introduced to the activity and shown examples of patterns they might use.
6. Students trace around their hand onto a piece of A4 paper with a pencil.
7. Students individually fill their hand shape with designs of their choice.
8. Hand shapes are cut out and displayed on large hand shape.

Extension activities

* Invite a guest speaker from a local cultural group (eg Aboriginal elder or Maori representative) to speak about the significance of body decoration or markings in their traditional culture.
* Paint designs on bodies (faces, arms, legs) with body paint.
* Display the students’ hand designs at a local venue such as a community library or shopping centre.

Background Sheet

Learning Activity: Body Decorations

* Some women in India decorate the backs of their hands and their arms right up to their elbow on the day they are getting married. This henna paste painting is called Mendhi and is linked to Hindu worship.
* A special kind of red paint (Sindhoor) is used by Indian women to distinguish themselves as married. They put a red dot in their hairline and decorate their hands for special ceremonies related to their culture.
* The Muslim celebration Eid-ul-Fitr comes at the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting and prayers. It is a celebration for all Muslims. Eid-ul-Fitr means ‘Feast of the Breaking of the Fast’. During this time, houses are cleaned and decorated.
* As part of Eid, patterns are painted onto the palms of women’s hands with paste made from the henna plant. The paste dyes their hands a dark, golden-red colour. It stays on the women’s hands for two to three weeks. The patterns are sometimes put on the hands by using stencils.

Patterns Sheet



