

Hausa Hats

The Hausa people of Mali and Niger are artistically influential. Their men's hat design has become popular in many parts of Africa and the western hemisphere. In America this hat style is called *Kufi*, which is an African word meaning crown. These hats which the Hausa call *fulans* or mens's hats, are traditionally made from strips of elaborately embroidered cloth, or are knitted. The designs on Hausa hats are usually made of lines and shapes which symbolize either important political events or are religious in nature. There is a Hausa hat design with stylized plant motifs that is a visual prayer for rain. The designs are Islamic in inspiration with an emphasis on geometry and pattern.

Materials needed:

White or brown paper lunch bags in various sizes
Pencils
African pattern sheet
non-toxic water color markers

Procedure:

Step 1. Ask the child if she can tell you what *pattern* means. Answer: A pattern is an overall design which uses the repetition of a line, color, or shape. Point out the examples on the table. Explain to the child that beautiful pattern is one of the most important and well known features of African art. Ask the child to see how many different patterns she can find in the art in the African galleries.

Step 2. Have the child try on one of the sizes of bag to fit. Small slits can be cut into a bag to make it fit, but do this after steps 4 and 5.

Step 3. Before the child decorates his hat show him (many children will require an adult to do this step) how to roll down the bag from the opening outward. This forms the band of the hat. Keep rolling down the band, straightening it up each time, until you are about 4 inches from the end of the bag. You have formed a kufi hat!

Step 4. The child then can decorate their hats with a pattern or a weaving design which resembles cloth. The child can use the African pattern sheet provided or create one of his own. The child may use a pencil to lay out his pattern. Encourage the children to draw large patterns and to keep them simple. Tell the children to color solidly rather than sketchily.

Step 5. Once the designs are are completed the children can proudly don their creations.