

Kwanzaa Activities

Use the following activities as you learn about the Kwanzaa celebration or as part of a cultures day activities and displays.

Mkeka

In Africa, a mkeka would be made from straw and woven by hand. In this activity, you will make a paper mkeka.

Materials: 18" x 12" (46 cm x 30 cm) pieces of construction paper (one red, one green, one black), scissors, glue

Directions

1. Cut four strips of paper that are 18 inches (46 cm) long and 1 inch (2.54 cm) wide from each of the three colors of construction paper (red, green, and black). You should have a total of 12 strips.
2. On a flat surface, place the strips next to each other so they look like vertical lines with alternating colors. Be sure the ends of the strips are aligned.
3. Cut six strips of paper that are 12 inches (30 cm) long and 1 inch (2.54 cm) wide from each of the different colors of construction paper (red, green and black). You should have a total of 18 strips.
4. Glue one 12 inch (30 cm) strip along the top edge of the 18 inch (46 cm) strips. Allow the glue to dry. This will help you hold the long strips together as you weave in additional strips.
5. Starting next to the 12 inch (30 cm) strip you glued, weave in each of the other 12 inch (30 cm) strips. Weaving means you go above and below alternating strips of paper and continue with that pattern until you reach the end.
6. Secure the ends of the strips that you have woven by gluing them to the long strips.

Kinara

No Kwanzaa celebration would be complete without a kinara. Here is how you can make one to display at school.

Materials: a wooden board about 12" x 3" x 1" (30 cm x 8 cm x 2.54 cm), seven bottle caps from 2 or 3 liter bottles, modeling clay, 1 black dinner candle, 3 red dinner candles, 3 green dinner candles

Directions

1. Cover the top of the board with a layer of clay. You may wish to use different colored clay, make designs, or use a variety of tools to add texture.
2. Press each bottle cap into the clay on the board until all seven are in a row.
3. Mold additional clay around the outside of the bottle caps. Be sure you use plenty of clay to secure the bottle caps to the board, since this will be the stand for your candles.
4. Carefully place the candles into the stand in the following order: black candle in the middle, 3 red candles to the left of the black candle, and 3 green candles to the right of the black candle.
5. Use additional clay to connect the candles to the bottle caps. Be sure the candles cannot fall over or shift position.
6. Display your kinara at school. Then take it home and tell your family about it. Have an adult in your family light the kinara so everyone can enjoy it.