

Temporary Tattoos

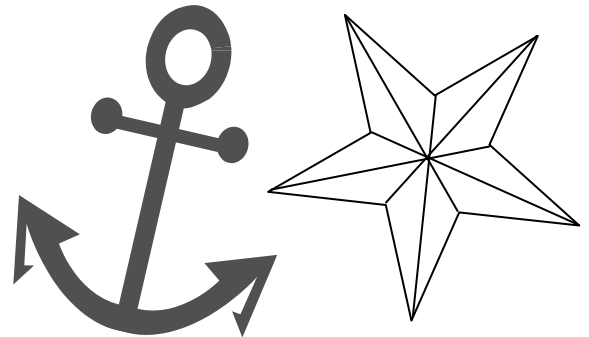
In this activity, you will have the chance to design and apply your own (temporary) tattoos, just like sailors a long time ago did.

Materials

- Wax paper cut to size
- Washable markers (thick tip)

Process

1. Draw a picture on your wax paper.
TIP Use a lot of ink to fill in your design, be careful not to smear your picture as you're drawing
2. Very carefully press the wax paper, ink side down, onto your skin where you want your "tattoo."
3. Let the ink dry on your skin for about 5 minutes or gently dab it dry with a tissue so it doesn't smear or get on your clothes.
4. When you are ready to get rid of your "tattoo" just wash it off with some warm water and soap.



So What's Happening?

Historically, sailors have been known for their tattoos. It was a way of showing pride in what they did and made them easily recognizable as seamen. Sailors would often design their own tattoos, and sometimes even tattoo each other. Common designs – or *motifs* – included naval and maritime images like anchors and fish, patriotic symbols like flags and eagles, pictures of or a list of ships served on, and often racy pictures of women. Eleanor Barnes of the Seaman's Institute once said, "The sailor enlists the tattooers needle upon his own body in dull blues, vivid reds, greens and yellows to record the story of his loves and hates, his triumphs, his religion, and his patriotism."

The US Navy did not allow sailors to have inappropriate tattoos. In fact, in 1909 the US Government made the following ruling: "Indecent or obscene tattooing is cause for rejection [from military service], the applicant should be given an opportunity to alter the design, in which he may, if otherwise qualified, be accepted."



Vocabulary

- **Tattoo** – an image drawn by inserting ink under a person’s skin. Tattoos are permanent marks on the body.
- **Motif** – a repeated design or color, common theme.
- **Symbol** – a picture or word used to represent something else.

For More Information

American Museum of Natural History. “Body Art: Marks of Identity,” Last Modified 2011.
<http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/bodyart/index.html>

Clerk, Carol. Vintage Tattoos: The Book of Old-School Skin Art. New York: Universe Publishing, 2009.

Collins, Jerry. Sailor Jerry Collins: American Tattoo Master, In His Own Words. Edited by Donald Edward Hardy. San Francisco: Hardy Marks Publications, 2005.

Tattoo Archive. “Tattoo History: From A to Z,” Last Modified 2011.
http://www.tattooarchive.com/tattoo_history.htm

NOTE: Reference materials may contain images inappropriate for children.