

Simple Printmaking Activities:

These activities are designed to help students learn the basics of the four main types of printmaking: relief, intaglio, stencil, and planography.

Relief Printmaking:

Relief means “from the raised surface.” In relief printmaking, “ink” is placed on the raised surface of the object or block to be printed. The object is then pressed onto a piece of paper, transferring the image to the paper. The printed image will be reversed left to right.

Activity #1. For children in grades 4-6.

Give each child a sheet of Styrofoam like the Styrofoam trays available in the meat department of your local grocery store or available through school art material distributors. I prefer high-density foam when I do this project. Using pencils and /or pens have the children draw a picture on the **block**. Have them press hard or go over the drawing pressing hard to incise the lines deeply into the foam, the deeper the better, but don’t go all the way through. Remember the image will reverse when printed, so any lettering must be done backwards.

Using a **Brayer**, roll water based printing ink over the surface of the block. I find dark colors like black, blue, brown, and indigo work best. While the ink is still wet, place a piece of rice paper or other printing paper over the **block**. The paper should allow for a margin of at least an inch on every side. Using a wooden spoon or a “**D Press**,” transfer the ink from the **block** to the **printing paper**. The image will be reversed. Set the prints aside to dry. Repeat inking & printing several more times to create an **edition**.

Teachers should try out the activity and create some prints of their own before having the kids do it. They may also need to demonstrate inking and printing the blocks.

When the prints are finished set them aside to dry. When dry, have the children title, number and sign the prints just below the “bottom” edge of the print and have the students trade prints with friends*. Save one copy from each student to **mat** and display.

SAVE the block for use in intaglio printmaking.

This project results in an **edition**, where more than one copy is made.

Note: Bold face terms are printmaking vocabulary.

* See the separate lesson on Signing and numbering prints.