
Easy Dyed Play Silks and Capes with Melissa Lang Lytle

Chapter 1 - Easy Dyed Play Silks and Capes

Overview

- Welcome to my world of multi-colored play silks and capes. I'm Melissa Lang Lytle of Hex House Crowns. I'm a fiber artist, handwork teacher, and dye enthusiast. We're gonna take white, square, blank silks, and dye them in an array of colors and shapes. These silks can be created to be play mats, something that your child can play on, become a blanket, and even a special cape. Mixing the dye is really easy. I'll show you how to use a rubber band and a washable marker to create some special shapes. We'll dip the silk in dye, rinse, and believe it or not, you'll then have a magical cape or play silk. It's really that simple. You and your child can do this fun project together. I know you're "dyeing" to check it out. (laughs)

Materials

- Let's go over the materials for this class. White silk blanks. I have a 22-inch square and a 36-inch square. I buy my silks at either Dharma Dyes or Sarah's Silks, and I love it because Sarah's Silks often have big sales and 50% off on their blank white silks. Rit dyes or food coloring, rubber bands, a spoon that measures to a tablespoon, or a tablespoon. Measuring cups, glass bowls, one for each color. You'll also need a microwave to heat the water. Washable markers or a pencil, distilled white vinegar, plastic gloves. You'll also need a sink for rinsing as well as an iron and an ironing surface.

Prepare dye

- The first step is preparing the dye. I'm gonna put on my gloves. This is a good time to put on an apron. Make sure you have your play clothes on. There is some splash back with the dye, so nothing fancy. We're mixing the dye in a bowl today. If you decide that you wanna do additional or more silks you can always do this on a pot on your stove or a bigger bowl. For this small project, we're gonna use bowls and you can warm your water in the microwave. Pour two cups of water into the bowl. (water whirring) Two tablespoons of vinegar. I wanna share that sometimes you can fudge the vinegar. If you're finding that there's not enough vinegar, enough dye, I want you to have the freedom to add a little bit more of both. I'm gonna use the Rit dye today but the recipe I shared is the same for food coloring. One ounce Rit dye. I have a little ramekin and I know what an ounce is but you might wanna make sure that you have the correct measurement. Always make sure you cover your dye. If by chance your arm hits it and it spills, it's a disaster. Go ahead and use your spoon and mix the vinegar, dye and water together. I like to test a small piece of silk so if you have a handkerchief or a sample piece, this is a good time to see if the dye is the color that you want. I'm just gonna test a small piece. I'm gonna hold it in for about 30 seconds. It's pretty light. This is the perfect color. Go ahead and squeeze out your work and set it in a bowl or down somewhere that you don't mind getting some dye on. If you want a darker or bolder color, go ahead and be experimental at a little more vinegar and a little bit more dye and find the perfect color for you. This also applies when you wanna blend colors.

Dye silks

- We're gonna make a rainbow silk. This silk is really fun and it's wonderful to do with your children, and all you need are the primary colors of dye. So I have blue, yellow, and red in a bowl, and I'm

gonna show you how fun and easy this is. To protect my table, I put a piece of plastic down. You can just as easily use a trash bag or some rags. I have a 22 inch width piece of silk, and take your silk and fold it in half. Because it's a square, it's fine either way. And fold it again and grab the middle so that the two ends are equal. Take the middle portion and dip it down into the yellow about three quarters of the way. You don't wanna drop it in, so just dab it as the water and the dye starts to grab the silk. You can use your fingers. Just be mindful you'll have dye on your fingers even though you have a glove on. And I say at least 30 seconds, if not more. It really depends on how dark or deep you want your yellow. One end is gonna go into the blue. Drip it over your bowl, swirl it a little bit, dip it down into the blue. You want the blue to cover a portion of the yellow. That's gonna make that beautiful green color. You can see it start to making the green. If you want the green to go a little more, just keep dipping down. And just squeeze out. Take a look at your color. The longer you leave it in the vinegar and dye, the brighter the color will be. Take your other end and dip it into the red. Swing your soak around so that your blue doesn't dip into the yellow. Otherwise, you'll have a bowl of light green. Same technique on the red. And dip it down into the yellow. Squeeze it out. You can start to see the rainbow. This red is pretty dark, so I might try it again to get that orange a little brighter. Or you can take the yellow portion and dip it back down into the dye again. Let's try that. This is really fun and experimental. And while you'll have rainbow play silks and capes, no two rainbows are exactly the same. You can take your freshly dyed silk, lay it in a glass bowl with each edge over the sides, and take this bowl and run it under cold water or take your silk out and run it under cold water. Either way is wonderful. As soon as you're finished, squeeze it out as much as you can and lay it over a drying rack or somewhere where it can get some air. Most of the time on a project like this, you'll have extra dye in bowls. I like to utilize the dye as much as possible, so I'll take any extra silk I have, if I wanna make a solid color, and I'll just put the silk into the dye and I'll leave it there for a couple minutes. Make sure you wipe your hands if you're gonna be moving from one color to the next. I do a lot of projects with wool, and I like the silk and the wool to match, so I'll put them in the bowl at the same time. The trick with wool is it doesn't grab the color as quickly as silk, so go ahead and take your wool, and I would leave it in the dye anywhere from 12 to 24 hours. Usually I leave mine overnight. You can see it starting to pick up the color and how nice this is gonna be together. So I'm gonna dab my hands. Then I'm gonna drop a piece of wool into the red. It's also wonderful to use any kind of old rags, towels, or T-shirts just to suck up the extra dye that you have.

Make a heart tie-dye

- Another popular design is creating a heart on your play silk or cape. We're gonna use rubber bands and a washable marker. Take your silk square. I'm using a 22-inch. You can also do this on 36-inch. You're gonna fold your silk in half, so corner to corner. Make sure that it's even, but it doesn't need to be perfect. I'm going to draw half of a heart starting at the fold. Up and around. Don't worry if you mess up. This is a washable marker. Gonna come down and make sure you end at the fold. So that you're gonna draw half of a heart. Now, the trick to this is keeping your line straight. So you're gonna take both pieces of the fabric in your fingers, and your goal is to keep the line straight. So just scrunch the fabric and keep that orange line or whatever color marker you used. You may have used a pencil. Just keep it straight. You can go a little slower around the curve to make sure that your line is lining up. Almost like you're in the middle of a street. Make sure you're catching both sides of the fabric. It'll get a little scrunchy at the end, that's okay. This is where we're gonna put the rubber band. So hold the fabric between your fingers. Keep it straight and steady.

We're just gonna tighten the rubber band right around that line. Just take a peek. Then I kinda fluff the silk so that the dye will dye evenly. I'm gonna put on my gloves. Depending on what color you want the heart, some people like purple, red, pink, or maybe even blue. I'm using pink and blue to keep it lighthearted and fun. So I'm only going to dye up to where the rubber band is. Gonna dip my silk just like we did with the rainbow. Gonna swirl it around right up into that rubber band line. Again, I like to keep it in the dye for 30 seconds. You'll notice it's starting to bleed just a little bit, but that's also the washable marker. That's so pretty already. Okay. Dip the other side in the other color. I'm using light blue. Same technique, swirl it around. You can also start with wet silks. It's harder to draw the heart on, but some people like to use wet silks. I actually like to use dry because the silk doesn't always grab the dye evenly, and I like having kind of a, an uneven look. That's pretty to me. I'm gonna let all of the dye drain and squeeze it out. And it's ready to be rinsed. You can take the rubber band off before you rinse or you can rinse it with the rubber band on and take it off right before you lay it out to dry. I have extra dye in my bowls. I'm just gonna place the extra silks I have, if I want it one solid color. A fun technique is if you wanna leave a few pieces of the silk outta the bowl. Some of the silk won't pull as much of the dye that's on top as the silk that's on the bottom, and it really gives a pretty speckled look, much like an ice dye. Once your silks are dry, you'll noticed they're a little crumpled and wrinkly. Just run an iron over them quickly and they'll be smooth and shiny in no time. Let's take a look at what we made. This can double as a play silk or a cape. And as you can see, each rainbow cape turns out a little bit differently. The heart, I think, turned out really sweet. One thing I noticed was that the washable marker didn't wash out all the way. I actually think it's really beautiful, but I would test your washable marker first. Each washable marker is a little bit different. Didn't show up as much on the red and the white. But I still think it looks really pretty. I wanna show you some alternatives to using the rubber bands. This is a traditional play silk where your children can either put their dolls or their stuffies or even their wooden figures. This is a nice green meadow with a water feature. So you would just rubber band like 1/3 of your silk, dip one side in the blue and the other 3/4 in the green. I also used rubber bands with this play silk. I would just pull the middle up. I would just pull the middle and tie off your rubber band and dip it into the red or the orange and the yellow. This could either be fire, a meteor, and can have a lotta fun with that. This technique is similar, so I also used rubber bands, but I scrunched my play silk and I placed my rubber bands evenly all throughout the silk. I spread ice all over it, and I put my dye into small water bottles and I just sprayed a little bit of dye all throughout each portion of where the rubber bands were to get this beautiful effect. This is the silk we dyed together. I wanted to show you the difference between when your silk is dry versus ironed. It's nice and smooth when it's ironed, but it's a little bit wrinkly when you leave it to dry. Here's the beautiful golden cape of light. This is a tradition in the Waldorf schools where each fall, right before we go into the deep winter, children make their golden capes of light to forge into the darkness. This is a silk we also dyed together. You see all the little bits of light? This is what was crumpled into the bowl, and little pieces sticking up that didn't dye as dark as the others. And I think it looks really beautiful and speckled. This can also double as a water feature or lay over a dolly's crib. There are so many options with play silks. Take your capes and fly away on a grand adventure.