

Stick Painting

Objective:

Students learn about the artistic potential in natural objects.

Method:

Students paint with a stick and natural paint.

Materials:

Sticks, rocks, natural clay, small bowls, water, white glue, cardboard or brown paper bags.
Optional: food coloring.

Background:

Native Americans painted beautiful works of art on boulders and animal hides. Their paints and brushes were taken from nature: they were often made from sticks and clay. These paintings are called petroglyphs. They often contained great religious meaning or recorded significant events, such as a great hunt or the gods.

The most famous petroglyph in our area is called Hospital Rock. Hospital Rock is in Sequoia National Park. Gigantic red symbols are painted on an enormous boulder that was a Native American village site for hundreds of years. Many petroglyphs are also located in Yokohl Valley, between Exeter and Springville.

Procedure:

1. Tell your class about the background information. Show them some photos of petroglyphs from Hospital Rock (find them online).
2. Take your class outside, and have them break sticks off bushes or trees.
3. Then, have them find rocks to mash the ends of their sticks. Small, green sticks work the best. The old dried ones you find on the ground probably will not work.
4. Have your class mash the ends of their sticks until they are soft and bristly.
5. Tell your students find clay soil—soil that sticks together when you pinch it with your fingers.
6. Have them collect a handful of it.
7. Have the kids put the clay in a small bowl. Add water and a drop of glue, then stir with the stick until a makes a paint-like paste. Add a drop of food coloring to the paste—now you have paint!
8. Next, they can paint their own petroglyphs on cardboard or lunch bags with their stick paint brushes and natural paints.

