

Ancient Art Practical

Key Stage 1

Scheme of work unit:

2D Grouping and changing materials
(Can be related to Art & Design 1B, Investigating Materials).

Intended learning: 2D

To understand that some materials occur naturally and some do not, and relate this to pigments and paints.

Suggested Discussion:

- Discuss with children how they think cavemen painted pictures on their cave walls.
- Invite them to give ideas about what they would use for paints, brushes etc.
- Compare and contrast the colours obtained naturally with the man-made pigments available today.
- Explore how a caveman might “lighten” the colours he was using.

Information:

- Cave paintings have been found throughout the world, from dark limestone caves in the South of France to rock shelters in Zimbabwe.
- Cavemen had limited knowledge about pigments, and few tools with which to make them. So they used the minerals around them to obtain colours.
- They would grind the minerals to a fine powder, and then use saliva, ear wax or animal fat to make the paint stick to the surface.
- They used chewed twigs as brushes.
- By the time of the Ancient Egyptian era, there were more colours available. These were made by heating natural materials.
- The Egyptians traded new brightly coloured minerals, such as Saffron. The Egyptians also developed better tools to grind them with.
- Egyptians found ways of extracting sap from plants, as well as using milk from cows to bind their pigments together to form paint.
- By Medieval times, people travelled and traded even more widely across Europe. A large variety of colours were now becoming available.

Resources Required:

For detailed information about sourcing the materials please see our resources sheet. For this experiment it is only necessary to have an example of a natural pigment and one of a man-made pigment.

- Natural pigment (Ancient):
 - Iron Oxides (yellow, red)
 - Malachite
 - Chalk Rock
 - Ultramarine Blue
 - Chalk Sticks
- Man-Made pigment (Modern):
 - Powder Paints
- PVA Glue
- Eggs (Optional)
- Pestle & Mortar (if grinding is required)
- Plastic Cups
- Spoons
- Paint Brushes

Practical Notes:

If using eggs as a binder check that there are no allergies towards them. Care must be taken when grinding to avoid significant inhalation of any dust.

Further Work:

Children can make their own “cave chalk stick” using egg shells. Information about this is available on our website – www.creatingacolourfullife.com, under the experiments section. Relates to the concept that materials can be mixed together to form a new, usable item.

The ancient and modern paints that the children have made can be used to make a display, outlining what they have learned.

Answers:

1. Minerals and rocks
2. Spit, animal fat and/or ear wax.
3. Browns, dark oranges, dark reds.