

Making Elemental Drawing Materials

(art + history)

Blick Art Materials was not around to provide art supplies 32,000 years ago, but, somehow, the earliest humans found a way to draw and paint on cave walls using materials made from basic elements all around them. For example, burnt wood (charcoal) was discovered to be an effective drawing tool. Paint was made using natural pigments found in dirt, clay and rocks that were then mixed with a binder of spit or animal fat. Cave walls provided endless opportunities for artists to communicate using symbols that represented family, community and hunting.

This lesson will give students an awareness of the early humans' desire to communicate through images, as well as their innovation in finding materials from their surroundings to do so. Students will be surprised that some of the raw materials used in prehistoric art are still used today. Also, many paints and drawing tools are made up of the same basic ingredients — pigment and binder — although today they are formatted differently to create various media.

Similar to the Paleolithic era, students will make their own drawing tools by transforming simple materials from the classroom, and then using them to communicate through images.

Grade Levels K-12

Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View examples of cave paintings and discuss symbolism and materials used. Recommended poster: Lascaux Cave Prints, set of 12 (72241-1002).
2. Tear sheets of Kraft paper approximately 18" long.

Process for Making Drawing Materials from Clay

1. Divide the clay so that each child can roll a strand or "snake" approximately 1/2" x 4". Have each student roll out one of each color of clay, including gray, red and white. (Note: Use air-dry clay only. Kiln-fire clay will not work properly for this project.)



Materials

Blick® Brown Kraft Paper, 24" x 1000-ft (11503-1024); share across class

Amaco® Marbled Gray Clay, 5 lbs (33204-2505); share across class

Amaco® Mexican Pottery Clay, 5 lbs (33205-3005); share across class

Amaco® Stonex White, 5 lbs (33247-1005); share across class

Blick® Premium Grade Tempera, 6-pack, pints (00011-0069); share across class

Heavy-Duty Aluminum Foil; 12" wide, one roll

Optional Materials

Grumbacher® Vine Charcoal, package of 12, Medium (22095-2120)

Gray Paper Stumps, assorted size, package of 48 (22856-1048)





2. Place clay on a piece of paper or board to dry overnight (drying time will vary depending on thickness of clay and humidity).

3. When dry, these “chalky” sticks are ready for drawing.



Process for Making Drawing Materials from Blick Premium Tempera

1. Have students fold a sheet of 18" x 12" heavy-duty aluminum foil in 1" accordian folds.
2. Fold both ends (short side) approximately 1/2" at least two or three times and crimp them securely so the liquid will not escape. This boat-like tool will be used as a form or mold for the tempera paint.
3. Separate each of the five or six “channels” that have been created in the aluminum mold. Students should then form the mold so that the Blick Premium Tempera Paint can be poured into each channel safely and without tipping over. (Note: Blick Premium Tempera Paint has a highly pigmented, rich formula and offers the best results. Metallic colors are not recommended.)
4. Fill each channel with a different color of Blick Premium Tempera making sure not to over-fill. Set aside to dry. This could take 24 to 48 hours to dry completely. The paint will crack and dry in a few pieces. Once dry, it is ready to draw!

Process for Drawing

1. Tear uneven edges from the 18" x 24" piece of Kraft paper. Crinkle it up in a ball and then flatten. This sheet will represent the cave wall.
2. Use the newly created drawing tools to draw images and create a story.

Options

- Enhance the drawings using vine charcoal or blending stumps.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

Content Standard #4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art

5-8 Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts

9-12 Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art

Content Standard #6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

K-4 Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

5-8 Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

9-12 Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or sciences