

# Archaeology Summer Camp



## Lesson 4: Prehistoric rock art



In previous lessons, we learned that archaeologists study artifacts, ecofacts, features, and sites in order to learn about the ways of life in prehistoric times. These objects are like clues to the past that can tell us a lot about the people that were here before us, yet this is not the only thing they left behind. While writing did not exist during this time, stories, calendars, specific events, and other information about the everyday life of prehistoric people were recorded in rocks and caves in forms of images. Archaeologists refer to these as **rock art**, and there are different ways in which rock art was created in prehistoric times.

### ► What are the different types of rock art in the Southwest?

#### PICTOGRAPHS

A pictograph is an image created on a rock using natural pigments. The people who created these images used different colors made out of natural materials found in their environment and used their fingers or brushes made out of human hair to paint on the rock. Because of different weather conditions like rain and exposure to the sun, pictographs fade over time making them difficult to see. Those recorded inside caves or in locations hidden from the sun, tend to last longer than those more exposed. Still, many of these images remain in rocks and caves and archaeologists often study them to learn more about the people that created them.

#### PETROGLYPHS

Like pictographs, petroglyphs are also images that were created in order to record different information like stories, beliefs, and specific events. But unlike pictographs that were made using natural pigments, petroglyphs were made by pecking, scraping, or carving on the surface of rocks. Different stone tools were used to carve these images and although fading can also occur over time due to weathering, many petroglyphs remain visible allowing archaeologists to study them today. Archaeologists also work hard to preserve both petroglyphs and pictographs and to protect them from vandalism.



ANTELOPE HOUSE PICTOGRAPH - CANYON DE CHELLY  
KOLK, MELINDA. [DECHE37502.JPG](#). 1-OCT. PICS4LEARNING.  
7 MAY 2021



CHACO PETROGLYPH  
KOLK, MELINDA.  
[CHACOPETROGLYPH1.JPG](#). 1-OCT. PICS4LEARNING.  
7 MAY 2021

# Activity: Create your own natural pigments at home!

The colors used in prehistoric times to create pictographs depended on the natural materials found in the environment around them. Black was usually created using charcoal and different tones of reds, browns and yellows were made using different types of minerals like hematite, ochre, and limonite.

Use natural ingredients around your house to create your own natural pigments!

## Materials:

- 1 cup of water
- ¼ cup of flour
- 4 tsp of cornstarch
- 1 tbsp of spice  
(cinnamon for brown and turmeric for yellow)
- Small bowls, one for each color you will make.

## Steps (parent/guardian and participant):

- Add the flour and the cornstarch to a cup of water and mix.
- Divide the water into two bowls for each color you will be making.
- Add 1 tbsp of spice to each bowl and mix.
- Now you are ready to paint!

Turmeric is hard to come off, so use a bowl that you will not need afterwards.

## YELLOW AND BROWN PAINT

## Materials:

- Cranberries and strawberries.
- Sifter
- A bowl for each color you will make.
- Water

## Steps (parent/guardian and participant):

- Smash the berries in a bowl and add water.
- Use a sifter to strain the colored water into a clean bowl.
- Your red paint is ready!

## RED PAINT

## Materials:

- 1 cup of spinach
- Small saucepan
- Water
- Sifter
- Small bowl

## Steps (parent/guardian and participant):

- Strict Adult supervision is required! Chop up the spinach and add it to a small saucepan with water (you will need twice the amount of water as you have of spinach. Bring to a boil.
- Allow it to sit for a while.
- Once it is cool, use a sifter to strain the colored water into a clean bowl.
- You can start using your green paint!

Although the color green was not quite common in the Southwest, some greens have been found in pictographs.

## GREEN PAINT

### ▶ Bonus Activity ◀

Did you know that Hueco Tanks State Park has over 3,000 rock paintings?

Download the activity below and head over to Hueco Tanks to complete it. Explore the site and learn about 10,000 years of history while having fun!

FREE ADMISSION FOR 12 YEARS AND UNDER.

# PICTOGRAPH GUIDE

There are over 2,000 individual pictographs throughout Hueco Tanks! Use this pocket guide to discover more about these amazing archeological deposits! Pictographs at Hueco Tanks represent over 8,000 years of human inhabitants.

**Pictograph:** Painted images on the rock's surface. Almost all of the images found at Hueco Tanks are pictographs.

**Petroglyph:** Images that are pecked, scraped, or chipped into rock.



## Where to Look

Observe like an archaeologist! Look for artifacts or evidence that people have used an area.

Mortars or *molcajetes* were used for grinding food and possibly pigments. Polished rock shows that an area has been walked, touched, or slid on for hundreds or thousands of years! These are great places to look for pictographs.

## What other clues tell you people were here?



## Remember!

**Look don't touch.** Touching or rubbing against images can potentially damage them.



**Leave what you find.** Everything here is a part of the story. Leave all plants, animals, and artifacts undisturbed.



**Never mark the rock.** Defacement in any form is never acceptable and is punishable by law.



## Who made them?

Many different cultures have called Hueco Tanks home and left images on the rock.

### 6,000 BCE

**Desert Archaic People** - A nomadic culture who left abstract geometric or hunting scenes.



### 450—1400 ACE

**Jornada Mogollon Culture**—Agriculturalists who settled at Hueco Tanks. This culture left the majority of pictographs which include animal, mask, or face designs.



### 1500s—1700s ACE

**Native Americans (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Mescalero Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa)**—

Various vibrant cultures that still find Hueco Tanks sacred left their stories on the rocks. You might see people, horses, hand prints and other images from this time period.



Download or take this sheet to the Hueco Tanks Interpretive Center and pick up a trail map. Visit two pictograph sites to complete the following activities then return it for a prize! On your map mark the two sites you visit.

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What **artifacts** or clues tell you people have lived here? Draw what you see.

*I think this artifact was used for*

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What kind of plants do you see?  
Observe a plant and draw it.



Look for **pictographs** check what you see:

- A shape
- 2 different colors of paint.
- An animal figure
- A human figure