

Rock art

(http://www.ccge.org/resources/learning_centre/classroom_activities/rock_art.asp)

Connections to the curriculum:

Science, social studies, language arts, art

Time:

45 to 60 minutes

Materials:

- Transparency or copy for each student of an example of Rock Art
- Clay or Plaster of Paris slabs (prepared ahead of time)
- Paper
- Paint or marker
- Paper clip

Overview

There are many fine examples of rock art on public lands in Canada. If students learn to create their own, they will gain a better understanding of the fact that material resources are not the only thing contained in public lands.

Objectives

In their study of rock art students will use art materials, coloured photographs, and rock art examples to:

- differentiate between symbol, petroglyph, pictograph, and rock art
- interpret rock art to illustrate its importance in the cultural heritage of a people and as a tool for learning about the past.
- Evaluate the importance of protecting rock art for study.

Geographic Skills

Knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation

Strategies

Brainstorming, discussion, visualization, drawing, writing, observation

Vocabulary

- Petroglyph: a design chiseled or chipped out of a rock surface.
- Pictograph: a design painted on a rock surface
- Rock Art: a general term for the pecking, incising, or painting of designs onto rock surfaces.
- Rock Art panel: a group of pictograph and/or petroglyph figures.
- Symbol: a thing which represents something else.

Background

First Nations people throughout North America created rock art in prehistoric times. Its meaning is mysterious and at times controversial. Some people think that rock art is a type of storytelling. Others believe it depicts religious or spiritual beliefs, while still others regard it as solely an artistic expression.

North American rock art is not a true writing system that can be 'read' like Egyptian hieroglyphics or a phonetic alphabet, although some rock art specialists attempt to decode

rock art symbols. Archaeologists analyze rock art figures and patterns, and frequently find that different cultural groups made different styles of rock art. Other rock art researchers analyze stories and information from First Nations people to draw conclusions about rock art.

Some First Nations groups have oral traditions about rock art and its meaning. Many First Nation people believe that the spirit of the maker resides in what they have created; therefore, rock art is living, and it has a spirit. Whatever our responses to, or interpretations of rock art may be, it stimulates our thoughts and imaginations and expands our awareness of cultural expressions. Rock Art can mean something different to each person who ponders it.

Setting the Stage

1. Brainstorm examples of symbols meaningful to us today.
2. Give each student a piece of paper, a marker or paint, clay or plaster of Paris slab and a paper clip. Ask them to flatten the clay into a slab and imagine that it or the plaster of Paris or paper are rock walls. Ask them to imagine they are living 1,000 years ago. Have them carve a symbol of their culture into the clay or plaster of Paris with the paper clip. Have them paint or draw this symbol on the paper.
3. Show the students the words "pictograph" and "petroglyph". Ask them to determine which word fits which method of rock design and give reasons for their answers. Verify the correct answer and explain that both design methods are classified as rock art. Or, give them the definitions of the root words prior to determining the correct definitions:
 - o Picto = to paint(Latin)
 - o Graph = to write(Greek)
 - o Petro = rock(Latin)
 - o Glyph = carved work (Greek)

Procedure

1. Project the Rock Art Panel transparency. Explain that the prehistoric people of Canada created this rock art panel.
2. Use the following questions to analyze the rock art panel:
 - o What words might you use to describe the symbols on this page?
 - o Why do you think people created these designs?
 - o If there is a message in these designs, what do you think it is?
3. In what ways might rock art be important to archaeologists' study of ancient people?
4. How might vandalism to rock art create problems for the archaeologist? For the descendents of the prehistoric rock artists? For all of us?

Closure

In summary, why is the preservation of rock art important?

Evaluation

Instead of answering the last question as a group, require students to answer it individually in a story, poem, essay, advertisement or song.

Rock Art Two: Creating Your Own

Connections to the curriculum:

Science, art

Time:

30 to 45 minutes

Materials:

- Brown construction paper
- roll of brown butcher paper
- box of cotton swabs
- one cup of chlorine bleach diluted with an equal amount of water
- small paper or plastic cups
- 'Rock Art Symbols' master displayed on the overhead projector or a copy for each student

Objectives

In their study of rock art, the students will use regional rock art symbols or their own symbols to:

- Create a petroglyph replica
- Cooperatively create a 'rock art panel'

Geographic Skills

Synthesis

Strategies

Visualization, Drawing

Background

Rock art "... occurs in caves, on cliff walls or on boulders. Rock art occurs all over the world, in virtually every culture, and surviving examples are known to be as old as 30,000 years, from the time of the last Ice Age. In modern North America, the most common kind of 'rock' art is that which is painted on the concrete and brick walls of the artificial canyons of our cities and on bridge abutments and rock faces along our highways. In modern North American culture, as in all cultures, it expresses the values, attitudes, beliefs, and desires of the society" (Hurst and Pachak, 1989, p.1).

Setting the Stage

Distribute a copy of the "Rock Art Symbols" master or display on the overhead projector. Give students time to observe and talk with each other about the symbols

Procedure

1. Explain to students that they will be using symbols to make an artwork that resembles petroglyphs. They will also contribute to a 'rock art panel'. They may use the symbols from the 'rock art' master for their artwork, or they may create their own.
2. Give each student a piece of brown construction paper and a cotton swab. The art is created by dipping the cotton swab in bleach mixed with an equal amount of water and rubbing the wet cotton swab on the paper to form the desired design. Demonstrate the process, emphasizing to students that they must be very careful not to touch anything but the paper with their cotton swab. Place a jar lid with a small amount of bleach in the center of the worktable or carry a cup of bleach to each student and have him or her dip his or her cotton swab. They should only need one or 2 dips for the activities.

3. Lay the roll of brown butcher on a table or floor. Divide the class into groups no larger than 10 students. An adult aide for each group would be helpful. Alternatively, have only one group at a time do the activity.
4. After students have completed their own petroglyph, they take turns making figures on a large piece of butcher paper. Space students a few feet apart, and have small groups work at a time. Exhibit the 'rock art' panel' in the classroom or hallway. The panel is used for an activity in Rock Art 3.

Closure

Have the students share the meanings of their rock art.

Rock Art Three: Protecting Our Past

Connections to the curriculum:

Socials, Language Arts

Time:

1 to 3 forty-five minute periods

Materials:

- Rock Art panel created in 'Rock Art 2'
- photograph of vandalized rock art
- copies of federal and provincial laws protecting archaeological and historic sites

Objectives

In their study of rock art, the students will use a replica of a vandalized rock art panel to:

- Examine their feelings about rock art vandalism.
- Discuss ways to protect rock art and other archaeological sites.
- Develop an educational campaign

Vocabulary

- Deface: spoiling or marring the surface or appearance of something
- Vandalism: willfully or maliciously defacing or destroying public or private property.

Geographic Skills

Synthesis, Analysis, Evaluation

Strategies

Observation, discussion, values clarification, problem solving

Background

Canada is fortunate to have many fine examples of rock art, and a rich archaeological heritage. Our past, however, is threatened by people who collect artifacts and dig sites as well as by those who vandalize rock art panels.

Collecting artifacts, digging sites, and defacing rock art and ruins has several harmful results. First of all, it destroys data, the evidence of people who lived here before us. Sites are very fragile, and one person with a shovel and ten minutes of time can destroy hundreds of years of prehistory. We, and the generations of tomorrow are being robbed of the chance to learn about America's past.

Secondly, disturbing and vandalizing sites attacks the cultural heritage of First Nations. These sites are the burial grounds, homes and sacred places of their ancestors. Archaeological sites can represent part of their spiritual and cultural legacy. To destroy or deface these places can be the equivalent to somebody vandalizing your home, church, or cemetery.

Finally, people who vandalize and destroy sites steal from all of us the opportunity to appreciate and understand other cultures. It is a personally enriching experience to gain a perspective on one's life and time by understanding how and where we fit in the human history of this land.

Setting the Stage

1. The purpose of the first part of the activity is to cause students to react to their rock art panel being defaced or threatened. You need to decide the best approach for your students. If the students are mature and will not think that school is an unsafe place, then anonymously deface the rock art panel by painting words over it. Say nothing to the students, but when they begin to talk about it, start the activity. Alternatively, bring the rock art panel into the classroom and, holding a can of spray paint or a marker, ask "How would you feel if I were to write my name over the rock art panel you created? Would that harm it?" Connect their feelings about their rock art being damaged to how First Nations, archaeologists, and public might feel when they see vandalized sites.
2. Show students a picture of defaced rock art, preferably one from your own province or territory. Ask how they feel about the vandalism of these ancient and unique panels and what they think should be done about it. It is important to move students beyond the "witch-hunt", that is, trying to discover and punish the person who did the damage. Ask students to think of solutions for repairing the damage and preventing vandalism from happening in the future.
3. Distribute "protecting the past". Have students read this page in preparation for creating an educational campaign.

Procedure

1. Inform the students about the problem of people vandalizing archaeological sites, including rock art panels, ruins, cave sites, and historic buildings. Explain that vandalism includes a range of behaviour, from picking up arrowheads to mining sites with a bulldozer.
2. Ask students to brainstorm: What are the harmful results of vandalism? They can brainstorm in the following categories: destruction of data, destruction of cultural heritage, destruction of historical appreciation; or they can be given the categories after brainstorming.
3. Review the provincial, territorial, and federal laws that deal with protecting archaeological and historic sites.
4. Assist students in creating a pamphlet, a radio announcement, poster, advertisement, etc. that will communicate to others the importance of protecting archaeological resources.

Closure

Students' projects could be shared at visitor centers, libraries, a PAC meeting, a teacher convention booth, or school archaeology fair.

Protecting the Past: Things Not To Do

1. Touching rock art with your hands can harm it.
2. Making paper rubbings or tracings may crumble the rock art.
3. Making latex molds of rock art should only be done by professionals if the rock art is going to be destroyed by construction or development.
4. Building fires nearby can cause serious damage from smoke and high temperature.
5. Taking it home. Some selfish people steal rock art by using rock saws and chisels.
6. Chalking is harmful to the rock art and makes it impossible to use new methods of dating the figures.
7. Re-pecking or re-painting a difficult to see image doesn't restore it, but rather destroys the original.
8. Defacement. Insensitive people often paint their names over rock art, or shoot bullets at it. Defacement is a sign of disrespect for other cultures.
9. Tunnel vision. People like rock art so much, they often forget to watch where they are walking and may trample or damage important artifacts.

10. Removal or rearrangement of artifacts destroys archaeological data. Artifacts should be left where they are found.
11. Disturbance of the ground. Any digging at an archaeological site is not allowed. Even too many visitors walking around may damage an archaeological site.

The lessons were modified from ones in *Intrigue of the Past*, by Shelley Smith, Jeanne Moe, Kelly Letts, and Danielle Paterson. The book was published in 1996 by the Bureau of Land Management.