

Charcoal Paint making

Amazing Stone Age paintings have been found in caves in Britain, France, and Spain. Some of them are thought to have been done as far back as an amazing 40,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. Studies done on the paintings found that the paints were made of mixtures of ground up rock, minerals or charcoal combined with animal fats. The animal fats soaked into the rock allowing archaeologists to date the paintings using radiocarbon dating. They give us a glimpse into life in a different era with pictures of human behaviour and animals which are now extinct.

Aims:

Use this activity as a great hook for a variety of ancient history topics, looking at ancient technology or to support expressive arts work outdoors

Equipment:

- Charcoal (the remnants of a burnt piece of wood from a fire)
- Vegetable oil
- A flat surface or a plastic plate
- Small handheld rock for grinding
- Old paintbrush – or even make your own out of a short stick and available loose natural materials such as grass, feathers or leaves
- Soap and water for washing up after

Activity

1. Grind up a small lump of charcoal into a fine powder using a rock
2. Add a splash of vegetable oil and combine with the powder to create an oil paint consistency.
3. Using an old paintbrush or your own DIY one attempt to mark make on a suitable surface (bearing in mind the designs might stick around a while!)
4. You could document some local history, give a tree a face, leave some clues for another class to find or it would even work as face paint!

