

TIME: 45 min.

Creating Your Own Rock Art

This lesson is divided into four sections: instructional goals, advanced preparation, activity, and glossary.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

Lesson Plan Overview: The student will learn about the different types of rock art and find out that the motivation behind rock art can rarely be understood but generally falls into one of six categories: record of a vision quest, a map, art associated with hunting magic, record of historical or mythical events, representation of clan or totem symbols, or idle doodling.

Standards this lesson correlates to

Eighth Grade

Science

Standard 1, Benchmark 1, Indicators 1 & 4
Standard 1, Benchmark 3, Indicator 1

United States History

Benchmark 3, Indicator 3

Kansas History

Benchmark 8, Indicators 1 & 3

Sixth Grade

Geography

Benchmark 2, Indicators 2 & 4

World History

Benchmark 5, Indicator 2

Objectives

- The students will define rock art.
- The students will learn about different motivations for rock art.

Skills Taught: Observation; comparison, contrast, and analysis; decision-making; drawing conclusions.

Student Prior Knowledge: The student should have an understanding that different cultures use and create art differently. For example, all cultures create art, but the form (rock art versus a painting that can be taken off the wall) and purpose (hunting magic versus artistic expression) may be different.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Prepare Yourself

- Read “Background Information for the Teacher.”
- Assemble materials you will need, referring to “Materials Needed.”
- Photocopy worksheets and answer sheets as indicated in “Materials Needed ” and familiarize yourself with the worksheets.

Materials Needed

Large sheets of paper (one per class or one per group)

Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

“Kansas Rock Art Information” (one copy per student and one for you)

Copies of “Rock Art Found in Kansas” (at least one per group, if working in small groups, and one for you. All students need to be able to refer to this sheet, which can also be turned into an overhead transparency and projected.)

Copies of “Activity Sheet for Creating Your Own Rock Art” (one per student and one for you)

Copy of “Answers for Activity Sheet for Creating Your Own Rock Art” (one for you)

Background Information for the Teacher

What is rock art? Rock art is divided into two categories: pictographs, which are drawings or paintings on a rock's surface, and petroglyphs, which are carved or pecked into rock.

What are the different motivations for rock art? Archaeologists rarely know why rock art was produced. Several theories exist to explain the creation of rock art in North America. In some cultures when a young man reaches adulthood, he goes on a vision quest to find his protective animal guardian spirit. Rock art could be the **product of dreams** he had during this search. Rock art may be a **map** of an area, giving directions to water or other features on the landscape. Rock art is thought sometimes to be associated with **hunting magic** to insure success in an upcoming hunt. For example, a scene depicting a bison with spears in it may have been drawn to give the hunters a better chance of finding and killing bison. Prehistoric people may have made a **record of historical or mythical events** in rock art form. A story of a great hunt may be told in rock art so it would not be forgotten. Rock art may represent **clan symbols**, drawn to mark the territory utilized by a certain group. Rock art may have been simply the product of **idle doodling**.

Did all cultures use the same symbols? No, not all cultures used the same symbols. Symbols, such as the "turkey track" (a geometric design that looks like a bird track) or "sun sign" (circle with lines emanating from it) may or may not have had the same meaning for different groups of people through time. Some symbols indicate a time frame for rock art. For example, depictions of horses are not found until those animals were reintroduced on the North American plains by Spanish explorers.

Would all cultures interpret the same panel in the same way? No, just as the symbols may not have universal meaning, people of different cultures would not interpret the panel in the same way. If a panel were done as the result of a vision quest, it would have little meaning except to the creator of the panel. Not all archaeologists agree on the meaning of panels either.

How can we protect rock art sites? Natural processes, like erosion and weathering may eventually erase all trace of a rock art site. However, this process is greatly accelerated when rock art is spray painted, chalked, or defaced. Additionally, modern graffiti can obscure ancient pictures. Rock art sites need to be recorded and periodically checked to keep track of their condition. This can be done by both archaeologists and the general public. Instead of carving initials at a site, people need to practice stewardship of rock art.

ACTIVITIES

Opening Activity

1. Activate **prior knowledge** of students by asking the students these questions and recording their answers on half the board.

What do you know about rock art?

What do you want to know about rock art?

2. Pass out “Kansas Rock Art Information” and have the students read this information.

3. Pass out “Rock Art Found in Kansas” or show it with an overhead projector.

4. Ask the students the following questions and record their answers on the board.

Why did prehistoric people use rock art?

Rock art was created for different purposes, including a product of a dream or vision quest, map, hunting magic, record of an event, clan symbol, or doodling.

What can rock art tell archaeologists about past cultures?

Rock art tells archaeologists that people were here. Without knowing who created the symbols or the motivation behind their creation, it is very difficult for archaeologists to interpret rock art. Depending on what is depicted, the images can suggest an approximate date that they were created.

5. Introduce the activity to the students. In groups or as a class, students will create their own rock art panel. They will have to decide on the motivation for the panel, whether it is a story, magic to insure that a future event turns out a certain way, etc.

Learning Activity

1. Decide whether to do this activity as a class or in smaller groups. If doing it in groups, divide the class. This activity also can be done on an individual basis.

2. Give the class or each group a large sheet of paper on which to create its rock art panel.

3. Tell the class or each group that they are a cultural group. Using what the students now know about rock art and how it was used, they will create a rock art panel that has meaning to their group. It can tell a story important to the group, portray an event for which a certain outcome is desired, etc.

4. Instruct the class or each group to create a panel using the symbols found in “Rock Art Found in Kansas” or symbols that they design. Allow about 25 minutes for this process.

5. Have each student complete the activity sheet as the panel is created.

Note: On the activity sheet a petroglyph is used even though it will not be carved into stone.

Closing Activity

1. Discuss what each panel says about the group who created it. (If the activity was done on an individual basis, choose several panels to discuss.) Did all the groups pick the same reason for creating their panels?
2. Discuss whether the class or group members think the panel would have the same meaning to an outside group as it does to the group who created it. **The panel should have special meaning to the group who created it, and that may not be obvious to an outside group.**
3. Considering the discussion of point 2, talk about what archaeologists can learn about rock art created by a cultural group. **Based on the images present, archaeologists may be able to say something about the group. For example, if there are representations of horses on a panel, then the group that created it must have existed after the reintroduction of the horse by Spanish explorers.**
4. Discuss what archaeologists might be able to learn about rock art if part of the panel is missing because of vandalism or natural erosion. Does it change the meaning? **Cover a portion of the panel and you'll notice that some, but not all, of the meaning may be lost. How does this make the students who spent time creating the panel and the outside groups feel?**
5. Ask the students what they have learned about rock art. Refer back to the discussion at the beginning of the lesson about what they knew about rock art and what they wanted to know about rock art.

GLOSSARY

Hunting Magic: Some prehistoric cultures performed ceremonies before going on a hunt to insure that the hunt was successful. One such ceremony involved the depicting of a successful hunt on a cave wall or other rock face.

Pictograph: Image painted or drawn on a rock's surface.

Petroglyph: Image carved or pecked into the rock.

Rock Art: Inclusive term for images on rock. Two types are found: petroglyphs and pictographs.

Rockshelter: A naturally formed hollow or shelter in a more or less vertical rock face. It may protect a large area but is not considered a cave.

Stewardship: Preserving our heritage. Being a caretaker of our resources.

Vision Quest: A ritual undergone by adolescent boys, usually alone, in order to be considered men by the group or other leaders. This rite of passage might help decide the future of the group, the crops, etc. A dream state is usually achieved by fasting and or sleep deprivation for several days.

Activity Sheet for Creating Your Own Rock Art

Name _____

1. Name two different ways rock art was used in prehistory.
2. Which motivation is your group using to create its panel?
3. Will a different group get the same meaning out of your panel? Why or why not?
4. Create a petroglyph that is special to you. Explain the symbolism of that glyph for you.
(This does not have to be something used in your panel.)
5. If erosion or vandalism obscured or destroyed this panel, what difference would this make in your interpretation?

Answers for Activity Sheet for Creating Your Own Rock Art

Name _____

1. Name two different ways rock art was used in prehistory.

The students should pick two the possible motivations and describe what they mean.

2. Which motivation is your group using in creating its panel?

This answer is based on what the group does. Make sure it agrees with the description in the next question.

3. Will a different group get the same meaning out of your panel? Why or why not?
Describe the meaning of your panel.

It is unlikely that a different group will get the same meaning out of a panel created by another group. This is because each rock art panel has a unique meaning to the group that created it, determined partly by the reason for creating it. Make sure the description given here corresponds to the motivation chosen to create the panel.

4. Create a petroglyph that is special to you. Explain the symbolism of that glyph for you.
(This does not have to be something used in your panel.)

This can be what ever the students want it to be. An explanation of the glyph and what it means to them must be included with the picture.

5. If erosion or vandalism obscured or destroyed this panel, what difference would this make in your interpretation?

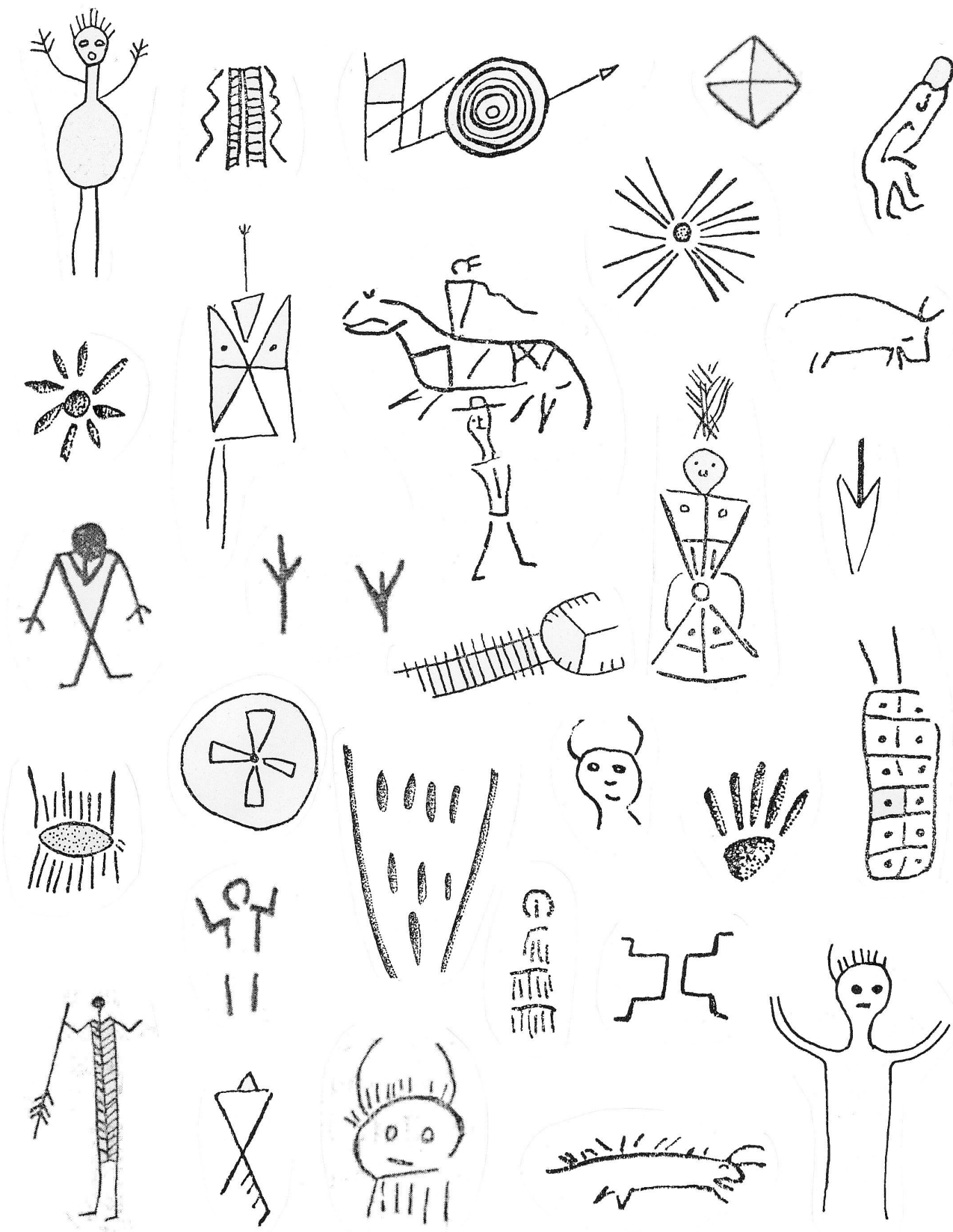
The students should recognize that rock art is an incomplete record, so it is important that what remains be preserved.

Kansas Rock Art Information

- ⇒ “Rock art is an inclusive term. It is used to describe an almost infinite variety of pictures and designs that have been carved into or drawn on exposed bedrock or the rock weathered from it.”
- ⇒ “Scratching, incising, pecking or abrading a rock face, or a combination of these techniques produced *petroglyphs* that were cut into the rock and became a part of it, while drawing or painting on the rock’s surface produced *pictographs*.”
- ⇒ Petroglyphs and pictographs are most commonly “grouped into representation of humans or human-like figures, animals and animal-like figures, and geometric designs.”
- ⇒ Rock art can be found in a number of locations including: the base of cliffs, on hilltops, at cave entrances, inside caves and rockshelters, and on isolated boulders, but only where rock of suitable size and consistency.
- ⇒ Rock art is often found near game trails, water, and villages. The exact relationship between rock art and these locations is not always known.
- ⇒ “The majority of Kansas petroglyphs were lightly scratched or deeply incised into the rock. Although the specific tools used to create these figures are not known, Kansas sandstone can be scored using a sharp hard rock, a sharpened piece of bone, or even a sharp stick.”
- ⇒ “Presently there are no proven methods that will yield absolute dates for petroglyph sites, although it is hoped that advances in lichen growth studies and rock chemistry analysis will provide the means.”
- ⇒ “If the makers of the petroglyphs and pictographs of Kansas were known one might better understand why they were produced.” Some possible motivations include:
 - may be a product of dreams, perhaps a record of a vision quest
 - may represent maps of an area, giving information such as the direction and distance to the nearest water source
 - when found along game trails, may have been associated with hunting magic
 - may record historical or mythical events or be elements of them
 - may represent clan or totem symbols
 - may have been the product of idle doodling.
- ⇒ Rock art sites can be destroyed by natural erosion or by human interference, such as when someone carves initials and dates into rock art or shoots a gun at the sites.

This information is summarized from *Kansas Rock Art* by Brian O’Neill, Kansas State Historical Society, 1981.

Rock Art Found in Kansas



Standards Used in Rock Art Lessons

The following are the Kansas Board of Education Standards that are applicable to the rock art lessons. At the beginning of each lesson, there is a section listing the standards apply to that lesson. The following are not the complete set of standards, nor do examples or further explanation accompany these. For a complete copy of the standards, visit <http://www.ksbe.state.ks.us/Welcome.html>

Science Standards - Eighth Grade

Standard 1: Science as Inquiry

Benchmark 1: The student will demonstrate abilities necessary to do the process of scientific inquiry.

Indicator 1: Identify questions that can be answered through scientific investigation.

Indicator 4: Think critically to identify the relationship between evidence and logical conclusions.

Benchmark 3: The students will analyze how science advances through new ideas, scientific investigations, skepticism, and examining evidence of varied explanations.

Indicator 1: After doing an investigation, generate alternative methods of investigation and/or further questions for inquiry.

United States History Standards - Eighth Grade

History Standard: The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of significant individuals, groups, ideas, events, eras, and developments in the history of Kansas, the United States, and the world, utilizing essential analytical and research skills.

Benchmark 3: The student engages in historical thinking skills.

Indicator 3: examines historical documents, artifacts, and other material, and analyzes them in terms of credibility, as well as the purpose, perspective, and point of view for which they were constructed.

Kansas History Standards - Eighth Grade

History Standard: The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of significant individuals, groups, ideas, events, eras, and developments in the history of Kansas, the United States, and the world, utilizing essential analytical and research skills.

Benchmark 8: The student engages in historical thinking skills.

Indicator 1: examines historical material relating to Kansas history, analyzes changes over time, and makes logical inferences concerning cause and effect.

Indicator 3: examines historical documents, artifacts, and other materials of Kansas history and analyzes them in terms of credibility, purpose, perspective, or point of view.

Geography Standards - Sixth Grade

Geography Standard: The students use a working knowledge and understanding of the spatial organization of Earth's surface and relationships among people, places, and physical and human environments in order to explain the interactions that occur in our interconnected world.

Benchmark 2: Regions: The student analyzes the spatial organization of people, places, and environments that form regions on Earth's surface.

Indicator 2: explains the diffusion of people and ideas from the early center of civilization to other regions of the world.

Indicator 4: describes how places and regions may be identified by cultural symbols.

World History Standards - Sixth Grade

History Standard: The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of significant individuals, groups, ideas, eras, developments, and turning points in the history of the world from prehistoric times through the pre-classical civilizations.

Benchmark 5: The student engages in historical thinking skills.

Indicator 2: identifies artifacts and documents from which historical accounts are constructed as either primary or secondary sources of historical data.

CREDITS:

Aimee J. Rosario produced "Creating Your Own Rock Art" for the PAK web site with contributions by Christine Garst and Virginia A. Wulfkuhle.