

OVERVIEW

GRADE 1

CENTRAL AMERICAN ARTS: Mexican Bark Painting

The students will study the jubilant folk art of the Mexican bark painting. After learning about pattern and repetition in bark painting, they will use brown paper and paint to create their own bark paintings.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the Mexican folk art form of bark painting.
- Students will learn about the concept of decorative art.
- Students will use line to create pattern, decoration, and shapes
- Students will use bright paint to create contrast, decoration, and pattern.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Mexican bark painting is a folk art of the Latin American Culture in which artists use bright colors to paint scenes of everyday village life, colorful birds, flowers and other animals on paper made from bark. The art form is also used to illustrate scenes from traditional fables and stories. Bark paper or *papel amate*, is produced by hand using bark from the mulberry or fig trees. The bark is washed, boiled and laid in lines on a wooden board. The fibers are then beaten with stone until they fuse together. When synthetic pigments/paints were introduced into rural areas in Mexico in the 1950's, artists fell in love with the bright colors, which produce amazing contrast against the bark paper.

MATERIALS

8.5 x 11" or scratch paper for practice drawings

9 x 12" brown construction paper (cut and flattened paper bags work as well)

Pencils

Black nontoxic waterproof markers (or Sharpies)

Various colors of fluorescent and white tempera paint

Paint brushes (small bristle brushes work best)

dishes/plates for paint

water containers or sink to clean brushes

table covering (newspaper or plastic)

RESOURCES

Bloom, Dwila. *Multicultural Art Activities Kit*. West Nyack, NY. The Center for Applied Research, 1994.

Gente del Sol. *Crizmac Audio Visual Program*, Tucson, AZ, 1991.

Daniel F. Rubin de la Borbolla. *Arte popular de Mexico, Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista*, 1963.

Toor, Francis. *Mexican Popular Arts*. Detroit: Blaine Ethridge, 1973.

Dorner, Gerd. *Folk Art of Mexico*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1962.

VOCABULARY

Pattern: in design: a repeated decorative design, for example, on fabric a zigzag pattern, a regular or repetitive form, order, or arrangement a predictable pattern of behavior

Decorate: to make something more attractive by adding nonfunctional elements to it.

Bark Paper: paper made from the bark of trees.

Folk Art: paintings and decorative objects made in a native style.

Stylized: created or performed according to distinctive established styles, usually in order to achieve a particular artistic effect, often at the expense of naturalness or spontaneity.

Contrast: a difference, or something that is different, compared with something else. An effect created by placing or arranging very different things, for example, colors, shades, or textures, next to each other. The difference or the use of differences between the lightest and the darkest parts of an image to create a special effect in a painting, photograph, or television image. To compare different things or arrange them in a way that highlights their differences.

Texture: the feel and appearance of a surface, especially how rough or smooth it is.

Line: a long narrow mark or stroke made on or in a surface.

Color: a pigment used in painting. A color such as red or green as opposed to black, white or gray which are called shades.

Shape: the outline of something.

Geometric shape: a form such as a square, triangle, cone or cube.

Space: a blank area.

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is really about lines. Show examples of Mexican bark paintings (see recourse list) and ask the children to describe the lines. When they look, they will see that the artists use a series of “C”s, and “S”s. Explain that the artists wanted something pretty and decorative to hang on the wall. The function of “decorative art” is to make something more attractive or pretty. Explain that the artists use natural tree bark to make their own paper and that they use bright paint colors to create contrast. The bright paint makes the painting stand out from the dark bark background. Bark paintings often depict things from the everyday life of the Mexican people such as village scenes, images of birds or animals, or scenes from stories that they frequently hear.

Ask the children if they can think of decorative art objects from their own lives. Do they have pictures hanging on their walls at home?

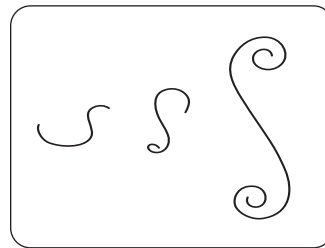
Ask the children what kind of scenes do they see everyday. Ask them to think of their daily routine. Where do they drive everyday? Where do they go at the end of the day? Where do they usually eat breakfast, lunch and dinner? Which friends or family members do they see almost everyday? Do they have a pet that they see everyday? Ask them if there is something or someone that they see everyday that they would like to try to paint.

Ask students what colors they will use to paint their image. Ask them if they think brown or dark blue will create contrast if painted on the bark paper. Why not? Why do fluorescent colors when painted on the brown “bark” paper work better? Why do fluorescent colors create a stronger contrast than blue or brown?

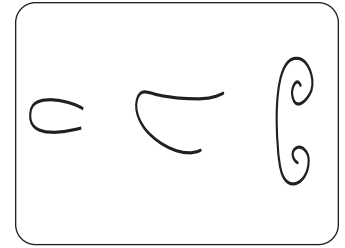
STEP BY STEP

Preparation

1. Prepare palettes with the fluorescent paint ahead of time. Set aside. Cover desks with newspaper or protective plastic.
2. Hand out scratch paper for practice drawings. Show and discuss the various “S” and “C” curves and have students practice drawing them in pencil on their paper.

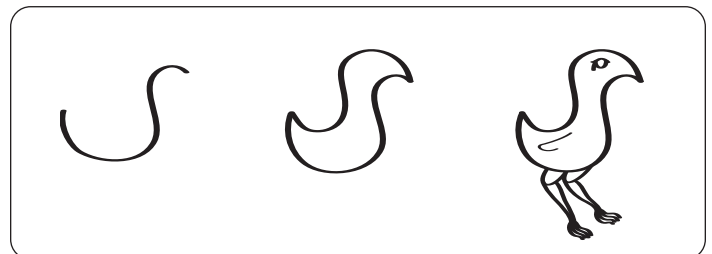
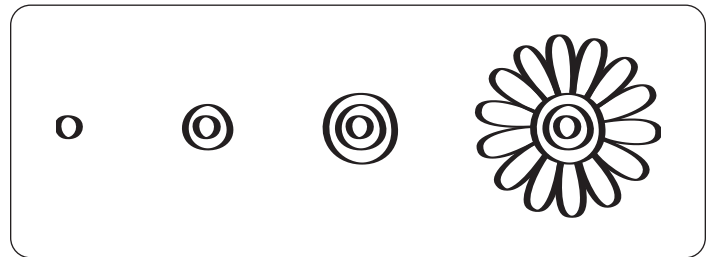


“S” curve examples

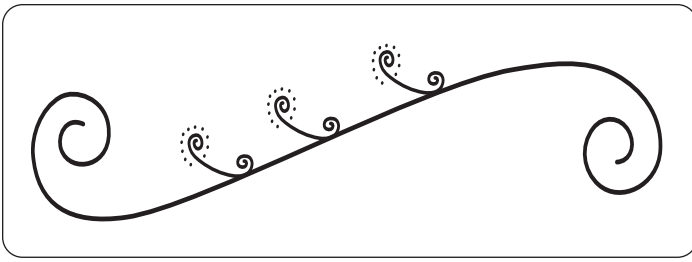


“C” curve examples

3. Show students how to use the “S” and “C” curves to make decorative forms, ie. flowers, birds, and designs. Allow time for students to practice these forms.



4. Discuss contrast, decorative art, design, pattern, shape, line, space and texture. Ask the children to consider a scene or picture that they’d like to draw.



5. After some time for practice, give each child a piece of brown construction paper or cut paper bag. Have students first draw the basic outline of their image in pencil on the paper (or bag). Allow about 10-15 minutes for these drawings.
6. Pass out black markers or Sharpies and have students trace over their line drawings. These line drawings are important for their final image. Allow another 10 minutes for students to finish their drawings.
7. Ask students to carefully crumple the paper as if they were going to throw it in the garbage bin. Tell them to be careful not to tear the paper; if bark paper is torn it cannot be easily repaired.
8. Bring out the painting supplies. Give each student a paint brush and demonstrate how to dab the paint onto the brown "bark" paper without covering the lines of the drawings. Students can use the wood end of their brush to make dots or they can paint carefully along the edges of their drawn lines. Remind them to not draw over the black lines. Allow 15-20 minutes to paint the images.
9. When the images are dry allow students to retrace over the black lines with their markers. (Optional)
10. After all students are finished, have a gallery-walk where students walk around the room and admire the work of others.
11. Allow at least 10 minutes for clean up.

During the Lesson

Be sure that students are aware of the amount of time they have for painting and drawing. Some students may try to make very complicated images that will be difficult to paint. Remind them to leave space and large areas that they'll be able to fill in with fluorescent paint. For students who finish their drawings early, ask them to count the spaces separated by lines to see how many different colors of paint they will be able to use. They will need lines between every area of paint. Suggest that they make more lines and remind them that S and C curve lines are typical of bark paintings. Suggest they add some of these to their images to make them more dynamic and complex.

For students who want to create even more contrast between the dark "bark" paper and the paint, suggest that they first use a coat of white on areas where they plan to paint the lighter fluorescent colors such as yellow. The white base coat will help the yellow to stand out in a greater contrast to the brown paper.

Concluding the Lesson

Cleaning up:

Allow 10 minutes for clean up. Set paintings on a drying rack or leave them on the tables. Wash brushes, recycle protective covering on desks and throw away or properly store paint palettes and extra paint.

Post-project discussion:

During the gallery walk ask the children to identify examples of interesting "S-curves", "C-curves", patterns and decorations. Ask them to identify examples of contrast, or paintings for which the image seems to pop out of the paper. Ask students to share what they have found and ask volunteers to discuss their piece and the scene or image they chose to depict. Another conversation can be to ask students to find two or more pieces that use similar design elements, similar colors, or similar styles.

Variations:

- Instead of bark paper, images can be drawn on wet clay to create a tile. Such a project would put even more emphasis on the importance of line.

- Lesson could be taught in conjunction with social studies, geography and history or family heritage lessons.

STANDARDS

- 1.1** Describe and replicate repeated patterns in nature, in the environment, and in works of art.
- 1.3** Identify the elements of art in objects in nature, in the environment, and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, and texture.
- 2.4** Plan and use variations in line, shape/form, color, and texture to communicate ideas or feelings in works of art.
- 3.2** Identify and describe various subject matter in art (e.g., landscapes, seascapes, portraits, still life).
- 4.1** Discuss works of art created in the classroom, focusing on selected elements of art (e.g., shape/form, texture, line, color).

NOTES