

# Prehistoric Art

## A Lesson in Recreating Cave Art



The most famous and outstanding examples of prehistoric art made nearly 20,000 years ago were discovered by accident. The caves at Lascaux in Southern France were found in 1941 by two young boys playing in a field. Their dog disappeared down a hole to chase a ball, and when the boys heard the dog barking below, they followed him down into the caves. The lighted matches they used to guide their way revealed extraordinary drawings of animals. These astonishingly sophisticated examples of man's earliest art have been studied by scientists and artists since their discovery. For a number of years the caves were open to visitors and tourists, but have been closed since 1963 to protect the art from disintegration and destruction. In this lesson, elementary students learn the rich history of prehistoric art and create their own "cave paintings."

### Lesson goals and objectives:

1. Students create cave paintings like those found in the caves in Lascaux, France on clay slabs.
2. The lesson incorporates art history, aesthetics, and criticism with hands on activity.
3. The lesson focuses on ceramic techniques, important composition and design elements, an understanding of the importance of these earliest works of art, as well as self-expression.

### Glossary:

**Anthropology** — the study of the history of human beings including their cultural history

**Ceramics** — the art of making objects of clay which are hardened by firing at a high temperature in a kiln

**Composition** — the organization of a work of art

**Fire** — a term used in ceramics; to heat the clay in a kiln at a very high temperature until it is dry and hard and becomes pottery.

**Kiln** — an oven or furnace that reaches very high temperatures (2000°F to 2300°F) and is used for drying, firing, and glazing ceramic ware.

**Prehistoric** — relating to the time before written history

**Slab** — a rolled out piece of clay of a certain thickness

**Template** — a positive pattern

**Trace** — to copy a drawing onto another surface by following the lines of the original drawing

**Leather hard** — term used to describe a hard state of clay-cool to the touch - too dry to shape- can be carved

### Instructions:

1. Create a clay slab- 5-6 inches wide and ¼ inch thick- irregular shape...carve your name on the back of allow to dry to leather hard.(3 days)
2. Choose an animal from prehistoric times and create a series of drawings using blind contour and contour drawing ( 6 drawings)
3. Choose your favourite drawing and complete it in colour using paint.
4. Once your slab is leather hard, carve your contour drawing onto the slab using a bamboo stick. You may also cut out a draft drawing and use the template to trace the contours.
5. Allow clay slab to dry completely.
6. Once fired in the kiln and cooled, paint your animal –keeping in mind with prehistoric colour palette.