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# Cave Art Explorers: Painting Our Stories

## Materials Needed:

- One large brown paper bag (from the grocery store) or a large piece of brown kraft paper
- Scissors
- Chalk pastels or crayons in "earth tones" (black, brown, red, orange, yellow)
- A pencil (for optional light sketching)
- A small spray bottle with water OR a small cup of water and a paper towel/sponge
- Pictures of real cave paintings (from Lascaux or Chauvet caves - a quick search online will provide great examples to show on a screen or print out)

## Learning Objectives:

By the end of this 30-60 minute lesson, the student will be able to:

- Explain at least one reason why early humans might have created art on cave walls (e.g., to tell stories about a hunt, for good luck, or to show animals in their world).
- Create a unique piece of art using techniques that mimic the style and texture of ancient cave paintings.
- Tell a short story based on the artwork they created.

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## Part 1: The Time Travel Introduction (5-10 minutes)

**1. Spark Curiosity:** Start with a question to get them thinking. Say, *"Imagine we are living thousands of years ago. We don't have paper, phones, or even books. How would you show your family the amazing bison you saw on your walk today? How would you tell the story of a great hunt?"*

**2. Explore Real Cave Art:** Show the pictures of real cave paintings. As you look at them together, ask guiding questions:

- *"What do you see in these paintings?"* (Animals, handprints, stick-figure people).
- *"What colors did they use?"* (Browns, reds, blacks, yellows).
- *"Why do you think they painted these on the walls of a deep, dark cave?"*

**3. Set the Scene:** Explain that these paintings are like a window into the past, telling us stories about the lives of early humans. Today, we are going to become cave artists and tell our own stories!

## Part 2: Creating Your Cave Wall (15-25 minutes)

### Step 1: Make the "Rock" Canvas

- Cut the paper bag so it can lie flat, creating one large rectangular piece of paper. Trim off any handles.
- Say, *"Cave walls aren't smooth like paper. They're bumpy and rough! Let's make our paper feel like a real cave wall."*

- Have the student tightly crumple the paper into a ball. Then, carefully open it and smooth it out. The paper will now be full of interesting wrinkles and textures.

### Step 2: Plan Your Ancient Story

- Ask the student: "*What story will your cave painting tell? Will it be about your favorite animal? A fun day with family? A dream you had?*"
- Encourage them to think in simple shapes, just like the early humans did. They can lightly sketch their ideas with a pencil if they wish, but it's also fun to draw directly with the colors.

### Step 3: Draw Like an Early Human

- Using only the earth-toned chalk or crayons, have the student draw their story on the crumpled paper.
- **Tip for authenticity:** Encourage them to press hard so the color gets into the wrinkles. They can use their fingers to smudge the chalk to blend colors and create a softer, more ancient look.
- **A Classic Handprint:** A very common feature in cave art is the handprint. Show your student how they can place their hand on the paper and carefully trace or smudge color around it to leave a hand-shaped outline.

### Step 4: Age Your Artwork

- Say, "*These paintings have been in the cave for thousands of years. Let's make ours look old.*"
- Lightly mist the artwork with the spray bottle of water (best for chalk) OR gently dab it with a damp paper towel/sponge (works for chalk and crayon).
- This will cause the colors to bleed and soften slightly, giving the art a beautiful, weathered effect. Let it sit and dry.

## Part 3: The Cave Art Gallery (5-10 minutes)

**1. Share the Story:** Once the artwork is dry, it's time for the gallery opening! Ask your student to be the "cave tour guide" and present their art.

- Ask: "*Tell me the story of your painting. What is happening here?*"

**2. Reflect on the Process:** Discuss the experience.

- Ask: "*What was it like drawing on the bumpy paper? Now, imagine doing this on a real rock wall, in a dark cave, with just a flickering fire for light! Do you think it would be easy or hard?*"

**3. Display the Masterpiece:** Find a special place to display the cave art. You could even create a "cave" by draping a blanket over a couple of chairs and hanging the art inside for an immersive experience.

## Differentiation and Extension Ideas

- **For Extra Support:** Provide simple animal stencils or lightly draw the outlines of shapes for the student to color in.
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Encourage the student to try drawing with a piece of charcoal from a fireplace (with supervision) for a truly authentic feel. They could also write a short story from the perspective of the person who created their cave painting.

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