

## Get Smart with Art Lesson

### Petroglyphs and Pictographs: Symbols in Rock

Lesson Created by the Virgin Valley Artists Association of Mesquite, NV

For Parents: In this lesson, students will learn about and develop an appreciation of pictographs and petroglyphs. Students will create their own symbols on rocks or on a flat surface.

Supplies Needed: For rock painting: smooth rocks, acrylic paint, and markers (if desired). If your child resides in Mesquite, NV or the Virgin Valley area and needs supplies for this lesson, send email to [lindaharrisvvaa@gmail.com](mailto:lindaharrisvvaa@gmail.com).

For Students:



People communicate with each other through words, pictures and sign language. We read about different cultures, historical events, and scientific discoveries. We look at pictures of people who lived long ago, what they wore and the types of homes they lived in. Our families share stories about the kind of lives their parents and grandparents lived, how they earned a living, and what they liked to do for fun.

Long before writing was developed, people around the world recorded events, ideas, maps and feelings by drawing or carving pictures and symbols on rocks or other surfaces. Native Americans recorded their history by painting on rocks (pictographs) or carving into them (petroglyphs). The paints were made from colorful minerals and clays. The petroglyphs were formed by using a hard surface to scratch symbols into the rock. Many of the pictographs and petroglyphs are found in Nevada and other southwestern states. The ancient art tells stories about the people who lived in this region. The carvings and paintings often show pictures of animals that were hunted, crops which were grown, native plants and animals, and water

sources. Many of the symbols were carved for religious ceremonies and are still sacred areas for Native Americans living today.

The picture above shows petroglyphs found in Gold Butte National Monument near Mesquite, Nevada. What kinds of figures do you see? These and other petroglyphs and pictographs are protected by state and national laws. Why do you think it's important to preserve these carvings and paintings for future generations?

Your turn: For rock art: Find a smooth rock. Then rinse it and dry it thoroughly. Paint the rock



with one color of acrylic paint. This is your background color. It's a good idea to use white or another light color for your background. You may have to paint two coats of the background color to fully cover your rock. After the background color dries, you can use markers or paint to create your own designs on the rock. Here

are some of the pieces of rock art made in the GSWA classroom. If you would rather paint your designs on a flat sheet of paper, you can do that too. Have fun!

This lesson was designed and written by Norma Sachar and Linda Harris, VVAA members.