



# Stories in stone

People have always been storytellers, from the Stone Age until today. In ancient times, humans painted or carved their stories on cave walls or rocks using pictures. They drew things that were important to them like celebrations, hunting, and animals. Prehistoric cave paintings more than 40,000 years old have been discovered in France (Lascaux) and Spain (Altamira). Rock carvings (petroglyphs) can be found throughout the world; here in the U.S., you can explore the Native American petroglyphs of the Southwest – some thousands of years old.



What would your child paint on a rock or cave wall? The night sky? Animals? Family? Celebrations? What story would he tell? For each of the following activities, talk with your child about what he chose to draw and what it means to him.

### Sandpaper petroglyphs

Use rough sandpaper as your “rock” surface and watch your child’s imagination fly. Drawing with crayons on the rough surface creates an interesting texture!

What you’ll need:

- Squares of rough grit sandpaper
- Crayons

### Sidewalk petroglyphs

What you’ll need:

- Spray bottle with misting nozzle
  - Cornstarch
  - Food coloring
1. Gather up items that have interesting shapes: leaves, small kitchen utensils, plastic animals – and your hands! You could also cut shapes out of heavy construction paper. These objects will be used as your sidewalk stencils.
  2. Mix 6 tablespoons of cornstarch with 1 cup of water until dissolved. Stir in a few drops of food coloring.

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## Sidewalk petroglyphs *(continued from previous page)*

3. Pour the mixture into your spray bottle and shake (you'll need to re-shake often to keep everything well mixed).
4. Set your found objects on the sidewalk and spray around each. Lift up the objects to reveal the "petroglyph" underneath.

## More learning online

- 5 Great Places to See Native American Rock Art  
<http://www.gadling.com/2010/12/24/five-great-places-to-see-native-american-rock-art/>
- Petroglyph National Park Virtual Visit  
<http://www.nps.gov/petr/photosmultimedia/virtual-visit.htm>
- Petroglyph Photo Gallery  
<http://geology.com/articles/petroglyphs/more-petroglyphs.shtml>

## More to think about

How do we use pictures or symbols in our world today? Can you think of examples of "modern petroglyphs"? What about the symbols that you see in our parks? What stories do they tell?

