

“Mexican Bark Painting...Tree of Life” (Papel Amate/Bark Paper)

Developed with Cheryl Scott
and Tricia Couch
Grades 3-5

Time Required

Approximately 4-5 class periods (50 minutes each)

Objectives

Students will...

- Produce a visual representation of ideas derived through the study of everyday life in Latin American cultures.
- Identify specific styles and periods of art as they relate to various cultures.
- Produce a visual representation of an Amate Bark Painting using similar colours, symbols, and subject matter.
- Learn how Amate Bark Paintings were created in the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican period and how they relate to Latin American culture.





Vocabulary

Amate or Papel Amate (Bark Paper)

Balance

Folk Art

Detail

Organic

Embellish

Introduction

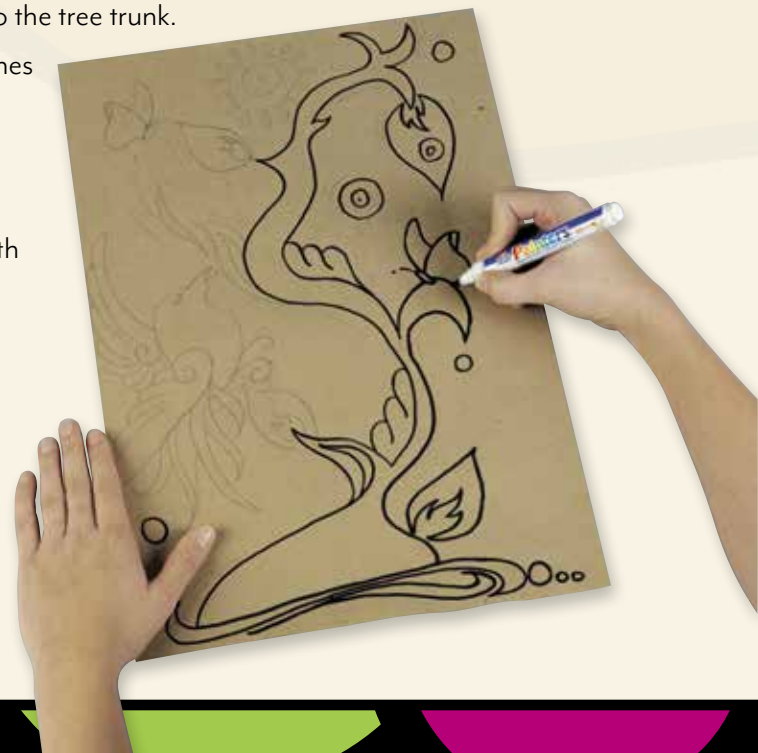
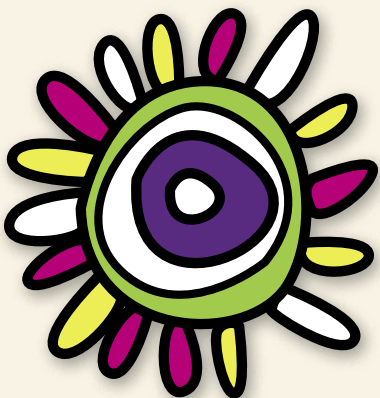
Show students original Amate Bark Paintings created in Mexico, show examples from the Internet or other sources. Explain how Amate is paper made from the inner barks of several species of fig trees pounded together. Have visuals of birds, butterflies, and flowers available for students to use as reference. Explain that a “tree of life” is used in many cultures to represent religious and cultural beliefs such as infinity, astrology, immortality, and fertility. In Central America, the tree of life is known as the “World Tree.” World trees are frequently depicted with birds in their branches and their roots extending into earth or water.

Directions

1. Sketch with pencil:

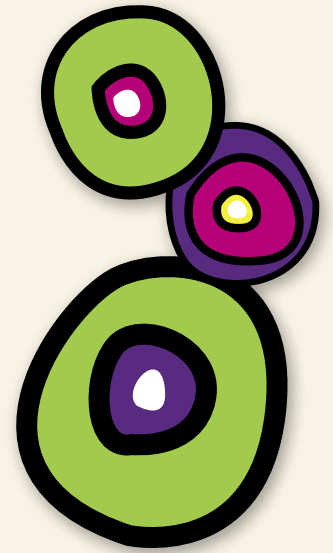
- Lines and patterns for earth or water at the bottom of the page.
- Centre trunk of tree making it curvy, narrowing as it reaches the top. It is a *Living* tree.
- Many curvy branches and leaves of fanciful shapes onto the tree trunk.
- Birds, flowers, butterflies, and animals resting on branches or hovering between them.

2. Trace over all pencil lines with black paint pen and let dry. Erase all pencil marks.





3. Use paint pens or tempera paint to fill in solid areas of colour. The brighter the colours, the more authentic the Amate painting will appear. Encourage students to use scratch paper to test the paint pens.



4. Add the detail markings (small black lines and white dots) to accentuate lively movements of the tree and animal life. Touch up areas of the black outline.



Tips

- Fluorescent tempera paint, plus white, can be used to complement paint pens.
- Outlining can be done with permanent black markers.
- Create Amate bark with brown kraft paper or grocery bags crumpled and stained with watery brown tempera, liquid brown watercolour, or watery India ink.
- Any heavyweight paper can be substituted.



Materials List

- S.A.V.E.® Natural Kraft Paper, pkg. of 50 sheets, 12" x 18" — [9725473](#)
- Nasco Budget White Sulphite Drawing Paper, pkg. of 500 sheets, 12" x 18" — [9700929](#)
- Zig® Posterman™ Chisel-Tip Paint Markers, Set of 8 — [9724982](#)
- Nasco Country School™ Fluorescent Tempera Paint: set of 8 pints — pink, blue, green, orange, yellow, red, magenta, and violet ([9705914](#)); and white, pint ([9703627H](#))
- Nasco/General's® Drafting Pencil Sketch Pack, pkg. of 48 pencils — 12 each of HB, 2B, 4B, and 6B — [9704208](#)
- Nasco Gum Erasers — [9728740](#)
- Big Kid's Choice™ Deluxe Beginner 6-Brush Set — [9717868](#)
- Variety of resource illustrations of birds, butterflies, and flowers
- Scratch paper for testing paint pens