

Amate Painting

Objective: Students will learn about cultural arts for Hispanic Heritage Month and create a vibrant art work in the style of the indigenous people of Mexico.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion:

Amate: The Amate paper paintings combine the paper crafting from San Pablito Pahuatlan in Puebla and the Nahuatl folk paintings from La Mezcala region on the Balsas River basin in Guerrero. ... Amate comes from the Nahuatl word amatl (paper).

Materials: kraft paper (cut into letter sized sheets), or paper bags, pencils, chalk or oil pastels, or crayons, black markers. You can also choose to use paint instead of pastels/crayons.

Opening Activity: Teach students about the origin of AMATE painting. The Mexican tradition of making and painting tree bark paper is known as amate bark painting. It's an intriguing folk art is also a living link to the ancient civilizations of Mexico's past.

The tradition of turning bark into paper dates back to the ancient Maya and Nahua peoples. The Maya lived in the jungles of what is now the Yucatán Peninsula. They were the only civilization in the Western Hemisphere to develop a true written language. The Nahua lived throughout central Mexico. You may also know them by the name of the largest Nahuatl-speaking empire: the Aztecs. The concept of painting and writing were interchangeable in the both Maya culture and the Aztec Empire. Artists, as the primary people responsible for recording all the information needed to keep such a large empire functioning, were highly educated and very respected. In the Nahuatl language, the word for the bark-paper used to create pictorial histories was amatl. That's where the word amate comes from. Learn more about Amate Painting HERE: <https://youtu.be/BAV8oLU-FmI>

Core Activity: Distribute the paper and pencils and have students draw a simple image of a palm tree, flower, bird or a flowering tree branch. Then crumple it up. A lot! Crumple and re-crumple; you're going to want a bunch of creases in there. Once the paper is thoroughly crumpled, flatten it out (A LOT!) and retrace the image with white crayon or pastel. Then, fill in your drawing with vibrant colors and retrace the outside edges with black marker.

Reflection: As students help clean up the space, invite them to consider how their lives might change if they needed to make each piece of paper they wanted to use. Would they be more careful when drawing or writing if each piece of paper they used took a full hour or so to make? Why or why not?







