

# Cave Paintings & Petroglyphs Museum

## Make Your Own Rock Art Artifacts



Plaster artifacts for student use

Thank you for taking the time to check out the rock art artifacts you, or a classroom volunteer, can make for your students to "play" with. This item is INCLUDED in the "Cave Paintings & Petroglyphs Museum Bundle". I hope you'll find the items exciting, educational, and easy to use!

*Sandie*

# Mortar for student use. You supply the stone pestle.



## Mortar & Pestle



Natural items needed to make food and paint pigments were ground up in a stone bowl called a mortar. The pestle, a hand-sized rock, was used to crush rocks and plants in the mortar.

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## Stone Mortar

Ancient people created pigments for painting by crushing plants and minerals in a mortar, a bowl carved out of a stone or carved into bedrock. Sometimes the mortars were decorated with beautiful carvings or paintings. You are going to make a replica of a mortar that will be strong enough to use in our classroom-museum.

### Materials:

- plaster of Paris
- spatula or wooden spoon
- water
- plastic bucket
- 2 plastic, bowl-shaped containers such as a medium sized mixing bowl and a whipped cream tub: One must fit inside the other with at least 1 inch of space between them
- 1 plastic lid as from a whipped cream tub
- tweezers/pin-needle, brown
- sand, in a sand box, large plastic box, or dish pan



### Directions:

1. Cover your work area with newspapers, or work outside. Plaster is very messy!
2. Dampen the sand just enough so that it holds a shape.
3. Dig a bowl shaped hole in the sand, 6-10 inches deep. Place a plastic lid in the bottom of the hole and press it down. This will give the mortar a flat bottom.



Mortar (bottom view)



4. Push the larger plastic bowl into the hole and press the sand tightly around it to form the mold. Then pull it back out of the hole.



5. Spread some sand on the top of the plastic lid. This will give it a rocky look on the bottom.



6. Pour 4-5 cups of plaster into a plastic bucket. Add a little water at a time and mix until it reaches the consistency of a creamy milk shake. If you think you'll need more plaster to fill your hole about 3/4 full, keep adding plaster and water until it looks about right. You need to work quickly, though, because plaster starts to set quickly.



7. Add paint to the plaster mixture and stir, to create a more "rock like" color. There is no correct amount of color to add.

Mortar (bottom view)



8. Pour the plaster into the hole, pushing it into the plastic lid and up the sides. Keep pouring until the plaster fills about 3/4 of the hole.



9. Press the smaller plastic bowl into the center of the plaster. Gently push it down, forcing the plaster to come up the sides of the hole and surround the inside container.



10. Gently turn the center container a little to the right and left so that the plaster will fill in. You can sprinkle some sand around the top edge if you want. Then let it sit until it has hardened. You may have to weigh the inside tub to keep it down while the plaster hardens.

11. Immediately hose off the spatula and the plastic bucket and they will be as good as new. Don't throw the wash water down the drain! Dump it into your flower beds or onto the dirt. (It won't hurt anything. Plaster is crushed up limestone.)

Plaster heats up as it hardens. If it feels warm, you know it's setting. It usually sets up fairly quickly, but can take hours if the weather is damp. If you are working inside, you can leave it in the mold overnight. If it is outside, remove it after a few hours. Gently twist and pull out the inside bowl. Rinse off the excess sand and let it dry thoroughly. (This may take a week or more.) When it is completely dry, it will be very hard, strong enough for the children to use as a mortar.

Step-by-step, illustrated directions to make plaster artifacts for student use. Each item takes about 10-30 minutes to make.

Petroglyph Replicas  
You can also make stones  
for student carving.

## Petroglyph



A petroglyph is a carving made on stone. They are often found on cave walls, in canyons, and on boulders. The surface layer is chipped away to show the lighter layer below.



## Cupules Blank



Cupules Replica

## Cupules



Cupules, holes carved into rock, were probably the first petroglyphs ever made. No one knows why they were made—they were not used for anything!

## Blombos Stone



Blombos Cave in South Africa may have the oldest "abstract art" on earth. Two ochre stones were found there, with crosshatch markings carved into them. They may be as much as 70,000 years old!

Stone for students to carve



Replica of original

Stone "rock" for students to carve into a bowl using "found" carving tools



## Stone Bowl



Ancient people made many of their tools and weapons out of stone, and so this period of time is called the "Stone Age". This bowl was carved from a rock.



## Bone Tube



Ancient artists put paint into hollow bones, and blew it onto the rock. This was how a negative hand print was made.

## Paint Brushes



Ancient artists made paint brushes from natural items like animal fur, hair, moss, and plant fibers.



# Native Tools

