

BBC

HANDS ON HISTORY

THE ANCIENTS

Use these simple ideas to get into the minds of our ancient ancestors and create your own ancient art!

Key to icons



Estimated time



Indoors



Outdoors



Completion





CREATE SOME ANCIENT ART

1. Tell a story without words

You will need:

- A large piece of paper on the wall OR a black/whiteboard
- Pens

If you are doing this as a group or family, play this quick and simple game to help get into the mind of your ancient ancestors and think about what life must have been like before written language developed.

Imagine you are now entering the ancient world. It is 12000BC and Britain is beginning to warm after the Ice Age. You live a hunter-gatherer life, hunting mammals such as reindeer and Arctic hare.

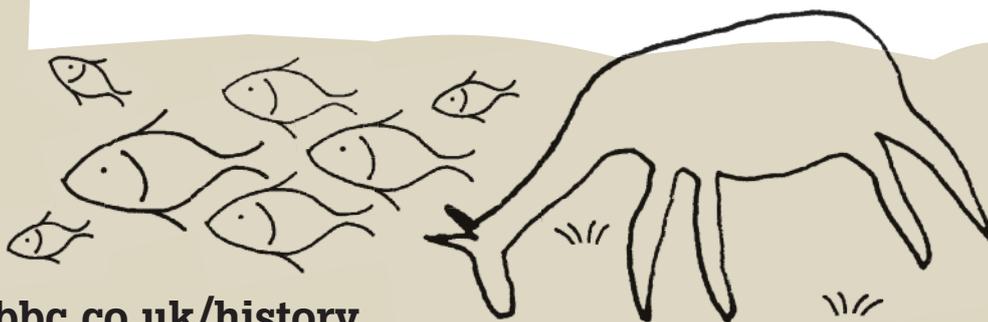
Choose one member of the group to be the 'messenger' – they will have to share a message with the rest of the group by drawing a picture. The messenger can make up their own ancient message or use one of ours.

It could be:

- I have had a successful hunt today and killed a deer.
- There are many fish in the river over the big hill.
- I have found a new cave that we could shelter in to keep dry.
- Has anyone seen my cutting stone?

The group has three minutes to work out what the message is by calling out suggestions based on the drawings.

Don't worry if you haven't worked out the message completely once the time is up. The aim of this game is to show just how tricky it must have been to communicate and share stories without written language. This may be why some ancient people began to use art to describe the world around them.



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2. Craft a cave carving

You will need:

- Modelling clay (a piece the size of a fist for each carver)
- 'Tools' for carving
- Rolling pin



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Ancient people carved the world that they saw around them into the walls of caves. They started with a natural feature in the rock face and carved around it, using the shapes they saw to inspire them.

Find inspiration for your cave art by looking at the carvings found at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire – the oldest art in Britain!
www.creswell-crags.org.uk

Get carving

Roll out a piece of clay to create a smooth, flat surface around 1cm thick.

Close your eyes and, using modelling tools or your hands, create a rough surface, just like a cave wall.

Imagine you are a Stone Age person looking at your cave wall for inspiration. This is a bit like seeing shapes in the clouds!

What shapes do you see? It might just be a line or a couple of bumps on the clay that inspire you. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- A bird by a lake or river
- A group of Stone Age people on a deer hunt
- The night sky with the moon and stars shining brightly

When you are ready, begin to shape the clay. You can use modelling tools, your hands or go outside to find twigs to use as ancient tools.





3. Paint your own cave painting

You will need:

- Coloured paint (red, black, white, yellow and brown)
- An old tile/slab OR card to paint on, sand and glue



Although no ancient cave paintings have been found in Britain (yet!), they are found throughout Europe.

First find your 'cave wall'. You can paint anything that has a rough surface, for example sections of old roof tiles or paving slabs.

You can also create your own rough surface by taking a thick piece of paper or card and covering it in PVA glue. Now shake sand over the paper and leave to dry. Shake off the excess sand to leave a rough surface to paint on.

Now you need to find your painting tools. The ancients didn't use paintbrushes, so you'll need to paint using your fingers and natural objects around you. You can go into your garden or communal space to find sticks, leaves or feathers to use. You could also make up your picture using overlapping handprints (or individual fingers) – paint the colour onto your hand and press it onto the paper.

Remember to use only colours that were common in cave paintings and would have been made from rocks and other natural objects around them: red, black, white, yellow and brown.

What shall I paint?

Most cave paintings were of animals, including deer, cattle or horses. Apart from handprints, humans were rarely represented and then mostly as very simple stick figures. Cave paintings are sometimes simple patterns too – using lines, dots and zigzags.

You may want to paint the nature you see around you today – either by looking out of your window or using your imagination.



You are an ancient artist

