

## Sand painting - Navajo

### Materials:

Sturdy board, tan or white  
Paint brushes  
Rulers  
Sand in squeeze bottles  
Sheets of paper  
Paper cups

White glue  
Pencils  
Template  
Shallow cardboard boxes  
carbon paper

### Vocabulary:

Symbols  
Symmetry  
Diagonal

Ephemeral - something short lived  
Balance  
Pattern

### Lesson 1

#### Discussion

- the cultural and religious significance of Navajo sand paintings.
- The **ephemeral** nature of the artwork - must be destroyed within 24 hours
- The application of the sand and other materials
- some of the possible materials used: grains, pollen, gypsum, sand, crushed stone and crushed flowers. (<http://www.americana.net/sandptest.html>)
- typical design or layout of paintings - **balance, symmetry, diagonal** lines, repeating **patterns**
- possible **symbols** used - cornstalks, tobacco, snakes, sky, gods
- symbols important to ourselves

Have the students sketch a design to be created later in sand on a template the same size as the boards. They should concentrate on the imagery and balance discussed earlier. Adding color to the image will help with painting the design later on. They should avoid too much detail as it will be extremely difficult to achieve with the sand.

## Lesson 2

Review the discussion of the previous lesson.

Transfer the images onto the boards using the carbon paper. Make sure the final lines on the board are light but clear.

While the students are transferring their images, set up the sand area. Line the bottom of each shallow box with a sheet of paper. Place a squeeze bottle filled with colored sand in each box. Make sure the bottles are boldly labeled. Make a small cup of watered white glue for each student.

Demonstrate to the students how to apply the glue and the sand:

- The colors need to be applied one color at a time, starting with the darkest colors.
- Choose a color and paint a small amount of glue in a small area that will be that color
- Go immediately to the box with the colored sand and place the board in the box. Pour the sand over the glued area. Pick up board and gently shake excess sand off.
- Continue painting and sanding until all colors are applied.

**Tip:** Avoid getting different color sand on already sanded areas. If the glue has not dried completely the new color will stick as well.

**Tip:** Do not hold the board upright or your glue may run.

**Tip:** If you dawdle, your glue will dry before you get to the box.

As the sand gets low in the squeeze bottle and high in the box, use the paper in the box to funnel the sand back into the bottle. Have the students help clean up.

When the work is completed, set the images up in a gallery setting and discuss the results - expectations, surprises, conclusions

### **Reference:**

Legends in the Sand - Evolutions in Modern Navajo Sand Painting -  
<http://www.americana.net/sandptest.html>

The Hosteen Etsitty Collection -  
<http://lpsl1.coe.uga.edu/oreyPage/navajo/collection.html>

Navajo Ceremonies and Sand Painting - <http://www.cia-g.com/~rockets/nmnavajo.ceremonies.htm>

Navajo Sand Painting -  
<http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/kmartin/School/navajomed.htm>

### **Illinois State Standards**

LS 25.A.2d - Identify and describe the elements of 2- and 3-dimensional space, figure ground, value and form; the principles of rhythm, size, proportion and composition; and the expressive qualities of symbol and story

LS 26.B.2d - Demonstrate knowledge and skills to create works of visual art using problem solving, observing, designing, sketching and constructing.

LS 27.A.2a - Identify and describe the relationship between the arts and the various environments (e.g. home, school, workplace, theater gallery).

LS 27.B.2 - Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.