

Making an X-Ray Bark Drawing

Aboriginal rock paintings picture tall, skinny humanlike figures, animals with their internal organs showing, footprints, handprints, sailing ships and many other subjects. The earliest rock paintings were made with human blood as long as 20,000 years ago, and the most recent ones were made with mineral paints in the 1920's.

Aborigines do not paint on rock shelter walls anymore, but some elders of the northern and central regions of Australia still remember the meaning of the

rock paintings. They say that paintings of animals and plants on the walls of rock shelters were a way for the Aborigines to keep a record of the animals and plants they found and ate.

Animal paintings were always done in the "X-ray" style, showing their internal organs. The heart, lungs, esophagus, stomach, intestines, eye nerve, backbone, ribs, and leg bones were drawn in a very simplified way. Bark paintings done today by Aborigines look a lot like these X-ray paintings.

- ◆ **Objective:** To create an "X-ray" bark drawing
- ◆ **Time to Complete Activity:** 2–3 hours
- ◆ **Materials Needed:** Brown construction paper or brown wrapping paper (cut in rectangular shape) that will imitate bark, dark-red chalk or crayon to simulate the red-ocher mineral paint used in Aboriginal drawings, white chalk or white crayon, 2 thin branches of same length as shorter sides of paper, with leaves and small twigs removed, large needle, heavy-duty brown thread or embroidery floss, scissors, white practice paper, masking tape, pencil

Directions:

___ Decide on the animal you want to draw and practice making X-ray drawings. As Aboriginal artists do, mark off sections of the body at major joints, like hips, ankles, and shoulders, and draw the internal organs in a simplified manner (see example below).

___ Don't hesitate to add more lines and shapes if you think it would improve your artwork. Think about where you will use the red and where you will use the white colors in your final drawing.

___ When you are finished practicing, re-create your design on the sheet of brown construction paper, using the red and white chalk (or crayons).

___ Sew the thin branches onto the top and bottom edges of your drawing by simply pushing the thread through the edge of the paper and looping it around the branch. Tie off the ends of the thread and secure them on the back of the paper with small strips of masking tape.



X-ray style animal painting shows simplified internal organs and bones.

