

# Mexican Bark Art

Part 1— 1 hour 15 minutes

Part 2 — 45 minutes

## Purpose

- To learn the technique of using geometric shapes, color, and texture to create exotic birds in the tradition of an ancient Mexican craft.

## Docent Provides

- Map of Mexico and vocabulary chart
- Samples of authentic bark paintings and student project samples
- Tempera paints (green, red, yellow, blue, turquoise, magenta, orange, and white)
- Water containers to share
- Old towel and iron to flatten crumpled brown paper
- Large paper plates (for paint palette)
- Paper towels
- 1 half-circle templates for each student
- 1 piece newsprint for sketching four layouts for each students
- 1 paintbrush for each student (extra smaller brushes are also in bin to be available if students want to use them for details)
- 1 brown grocery bags cut into thirds (not construction paper, it tears too easily)
- 1 permanent fine tip black markers for each student (**part 2 only**)
- Small paper plates for white paint (**part 2 only**)

## **Part One (1 hour 45 minutes)**

### Set Up (Two *assistant* docents needed for part 1)

- Give each child a piece of newsprint and a brown paper bag
- Aid in crumpling and tearing off edges of brown paper
- Set up paint palettes with 3-4 colors per plate. **DO NOT USE WHITE.** If paints are too thick, add a little water to the bottle, shake, and then put on plates. It should not be globby as that makes it hard to paint with and will take too long to dry. (**White paint given out only during Part 2**).
- Fold towel in half and spread out on a counter or desk (to serve as your ironing board) and plug in iron

## Lesson

### **Introduce Amate Bark Painting**

- ❑ The Otomi Indians of Guerrero, Mexico (“Ge-re-ro” — show on map) create vibrant paintings by setting bright colors against the textured brown background of Amate paper. They make their own paper from the bark of the mulberry tree (dark) or fig tree (light). We are going to make our own paper that will look something like theirs.
- ❑ Show samples of the authentic paper, and our paper bag version.
- ❑ Show the authentic paintings. Discuss the designs used in the paintings — bold colors, farming, animals, flowers — things representative of the historic lifestyle of the Otomi Indians.

### **Crumple Brown Paper**

- ❑ Have students print their names in pencil in middle of the back side of the paper (the edges will be torn off, so it needs to be centered).
- ❑ Lead docent demonstrates how to crumple paper and smooth out. Repeat crumpling and smoothing a couple of times carefully so it doesn't tear.
- ❑ Assistants then collect a couple at a time (table by table) and iron out flat for students then return to them. Go slowly and press iron down firmly.

### **Review Spanish Language Vocabulary**

- ❑ There is a language connection with this lesson. If possible, familiarize yourself with the vocabulary and try to use these words during the lesson. You can invite kids who speak Spanish to help you with the vocabulary and pronunciation — give them the chance to be experts.

Red = ROJO (ro-ho)	Black = NEGRO (nay-gro)
Blue = AZUL (ah-sool)	White = BLANCO (blan-ko)
Yellow = AMARILLO (ahm-a-ree-o)	Bark = CORTEZA (core-tay-sah)
Green = VERDE (vair-day)	Paintbrush = PINCEL (peen-sell)
Pink = ROSA (ro-sah)	To Paint = PINTAR (peen-tar)
Brown = MORENO (more-eh-no )	

### **Demo, then Have Students Draw Birds**

- ❑ Talk to kids about geometric shapes — have them name some.
- ❑ Draw a small circle (head), a large half-circle (body), and a triangle (beak) on the chalkboard. Demonstrate to students how to combine these geometric shapes to make a bird. Show different examples of position that a bird might be in.

- ❑ Have students take their newsprint and fold in half and open out on to their desks. Let them know that these are just idea sketches and one of these will be used as a guide for their painting.
- ❑ Let students experiment with four arrangements on the newsprint, two per side, trying out both horizontal and vertical layouts.

### **Tear Edge of Brown Paper**

- ❑ Demonstrate how to neatly tear the edges of the brown paper. Help children where needed. Pressing a book or ruler along the edge you wish to tear helps it to tear in a more straight line, however, a rough edge is more natural looking.

### **Copy Sketch onto Brown “Bark” Paper**

- ❑ Have students select their favorite sketch and fold the newsprint so only this one is visible. Tell students to leave room around the edge of paper so their bird can sit on a branch or vine. Show examples in the sample artwork.
- ❑ Have them sketch the border in first reminding them that it is NOT the focus of the art. Have assistants check on their progress to make sure to keep it simple.
- ❑ Have students use pencil and template to copy sketch onto center of “bark” paper.

### **Paint Artwork**

- ❑ Have assistants pass out larger paint brushes, water cups, and paint palettes.
- ❑ Review cleaning brush by “hugging off” paint in a paper towel before dipping in water, and “licking” paint onto brush instead of jamming bristles into paint. If students request, they may use smaller brushes for details (wing, tail, plume).
- ❑ The paint fades when it dries, so tell the students to paint layers and not to water down the tempura paints. Given the rough paper, it will *not* stay within the lines, but during part 2 they will go over lines with black sharpie, so they should not stress about imperfections. It all comes together in part 2.

## **Part Two (45 minutes)**

### **Set up**

- ❑ One black marker and small paint brush per student.
- ❑ Small paper plates with a teaspoon of white paint for pairs of students to share.

### **Add Black Lines and White Accent Dots**

- ❑ Show examples of ways to add marker and white dots and review vocabulary.
- ❑ With the black markers students can outline the main shapes of their bird, flowers, branch, vine and leaves. **No need to outline everything.**
- ❑ Demonstrate dotting by using the back of the small paintbrush dipped into paint, then have students add dots. No dragging, no lines, no brush bristles, just dots.