

# **Brief History of Cave Paintings**

## **Altamira, Spain**

The first cave paintings were found in 1870 in Altamira, Spain by Don Marcelino and his daughter. They were painted by the Magdalenian people between 16,000-9,000 BC. This would have been 11,000-19,000 years ago. These paintings at Altamira are mainly of the bison. Many of the bison are drawn and then painted using the boulders for the animal's shoulders. This made them look three-dimensional. These paintings are sometimes called "The Sistine Chapel of Paleolithic Art".

Additional information from the Internet:

<http://www.bubis.com/showcaves/english/es/showcaves/Altamira.html>

## **Lascaux, France**

Four boys searching for a lost dog also discovered paintings at Lascaux, France in 1940. These paintings were created around 15,000 BC, which would make them about 17,000 years old. There are seven chambers in the Lascaux cave; the Great Hall of the Bulls, the Painted Gallery, the Lateral Passage, the Chamber of Engravings, the Main Gallery, the Chamber of Felines, and the Shaft of the Dead Man.

The Hall of the Bulls is the most impressive. It is composed of horses, bulls, and stags. Some of the animals have been painted over, suggesting that different groups of people might have lived in this same cave. The painting in the Shaft of the Dead Man is unusual because the human figure is not normally drawn. This scene shows the image of a man that appears to have been killed by the bison.

Additional information from the Internet: <http://www.culture.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/>

## **Cave Paintings Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc**

Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc cave in the South of France is the newest cave painting to be discovered. Jean-Marie Chauvet, Christian Hillaire and Heliette Brunel-Deschamps discovered the cave on December 18, 1994. There is a menagerie of animals on the walls of these caves. Many of the animals like the ones in Lascaux were painted over each other. The oldest were probably painted around 30,000 BC, making them about 32,000 years old. The cave was probably occupied for nearly 10,000 years. It is thought that a violent collapse blocked the natural entrance.

Additional information from the Internet: <http://www.culture.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/en/gvpda-d.htm>

## **Theories About the Cave Paintings**

Humans had not learned to write during the prehistoric time period. They communicated through cave paintings. Why did man find a need to paint on the walls of the caves? We know that most of the paintings were of animals. However, there are a few paintings that have human figures either in etchings or in a painting, like the scene in Lascaux of the Dead Man. The face of the dead man is represented by a bird's face, but it is the body of a human. Perhaps they did not want to portray a human face, thinking that it might take the soul. There are three theories that the prehistoric man might have painted animals on the walls of the caves. Perhaps the cave man wanted to decorate the cave and chose animals because they were important to their existence. The second theory could have been that they considered this magic to help the hunters. Perhaps if the artist could capture the image of the animal, they could capture the animal in a hunt. Prehistoric man could have used the painting of animals on the walls of caves to document their hunting expeditions.

## **Methods of Painting**

Prehistoric people would have used natural objects to paint the walls of the caves. To etch into the rock, they could have used sharp tools or a spear. The paint or color that they probably used was from berries, clay, soot, or charcoal. The tools used to apply the paint could have been made by attaching straw, leaves, moss, or hair to sticks. They might have used hollow bones or reeds to spray the color on, similar to an airbrush technique.

## Rubrics for Assessment

### Assessment for the Cave Painting

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Working Constructively</b>	<b>Working Cooperatively</b>	<b>Significant for a Prehistoric Time Period</b>	<b>Explaining Importance in their Society</b>
<b>A</b>	The students work the whole time by planning what they need to put in their painting.	All of the members of the group work together without arguing. Everyone participates.	The cave painting shows what they consider important for survival. (Ex. Hunting, gathering, dwelling, water)	The students explain to the rest of the class what their clan painted and how it was significant to their society
<b>B</b>	The students work most of the time by planning what they need to put in their painting.	Most of the members of the group work together without arguing. Most of the students participate.	Even though they have not worked very constructively or cooperatively, they still have a cave painting that shows what they consider important for survival. (Ex. Hunting, gathering, dwelling, water)	The students explain to the rest of the class what their clan painted and how it was significant to their society.
<b>C</b>	The students work some of the time by planning what they need to put in their painting.	Some of the members of the group work together without arguing. Some of the students participate.	The cave painting shows to some degree what they consider important for survival. (Ex. Hunting, gathering, dwelling, water) However, they use something from the modern day time period.(Ex. Something in technology or writing).	The students explain to the rest of the class what their clan painted and how it was significant to their society.
<b>D</b>	The students only work some of the allotted time on their planning and cave painting. They talk about other things or disrupt the rest of the class.	Most of the members of the group work together without arguing. Most of the students participate.	The cave painting shows what they consider important for survival. (Ex. Hunting, gathering, dwelling, water)	The students goof around when they are suppose to explain what their clan painted and how it was significant to their society.
<b>F</b>	The students do not attempt to plan for their cave painting. They do not produce a cave painting or they produce one that does not have anything to do with the assignment.	The students do not work together at all. They argue or do not communicate.	The cave painting, if they have one, does not have anything to do with what they consider important for survival.	The students will not explain their cave painting or they make a big joke out of it.