



Maci, grade five.



Amate painting from Guerrero, Mexico. Education Collection, Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, NM DCA. Photos by Blair Clark.



Austin, grade five.

Amate Painting Lesson

Patricia Sigala and Aurelia Gomez

Objectives

1. Students will learn about the process of making amate and its use over time to convey important events and transmit cultural values (historical and cultural understanding).
2. Students will explore the imagery used in amate painting (perceiving, analyzing, and responding).
3. Students will use their own imagery to create amate paintings (creating and performing).

Materials

- Amate paper, or bark paper (available from several art supply companies) cut into 6 x 8" (15 x 20 cm) or 4 x 6" (10 x 15 cm) pieces (construction paper or brown paper bags can substitute)
- pencils and erasers
- tempera paint or gouache
- paintbrushes, markers, or colored pencils
- containers of water
- newspapers to cover tables

Motivation

Show students images of amate paintings. Ask questions to stimulate conversation about the imagery: What is going on in the painting? Are the paintings decorative? Do they show historical events, celebrations, everyday life or are they decorative patterns and designs? What motifs and patterns are used? Do you see animals, floral imagery, people? What are the people doing? Are the forms and shapes outlined? What kinds of lines do you see?

Have students decide what type of painting they would like to make: a decorative painting, a painting that represents flowers or animals, an everyday scene, or a historic event?

Procedures

1. Have students use pencil to draw their ideas on the amate paper. Encourage them to leave open space for the amate paper to show through.
2. Outline the forms with markers.

3. Apply paint to the drawings and set aside to dry (colored pencils can be substituted for paint).

Evaluation

Display the amate paintings with labels describing each painting. Have students talk about their work and how it felt to work with amate paper. Create groups of paintings that have a similar theme or subject matter. Have students respond to the groups by creating a story or poem about the arrangements.

Extensions and Connections

- Students can use amate paper to create a codex which describes a historic or current event related to Mexico (social studies).
- Introduce students to the way amate is used to make Otomí spirit figures. Have students make figures of their own (visual arts).
- Show students the relationship between cut amate and contemporary *papel picado*. Have students create their own *papel*

picado and use it to decorate the school or classroom for a Day of the Dead celebration (social studies and visual arts).

- Students can study the ways that comic strips, comic books, and codices use symbols and forms with outlines. They can create comics or codices that convey elements shared by each form (visual arts).
- Have students research different ways that people have recorded history using scrolls, carved tablets, book forms, and oral traditions. Students can report their findings back to the group orally, create a time line showing the development of recorded history, or make examples of their findings (social studies).

Resources

Children's Books

- Berdan, Frances F. *The Aztecs*. New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989.
- Castillo, Ana. *My Daughter, My Son, the Eagle, the Dove: An Aztec Chant*. New York, NY: Dutton Books, 2000.

DeFrates, Joanna. *What Do We Know About The Aztecs?* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Young Books, 1992.

Hadley, Eric and Tessa. *Legends of the Sun and Moon*. Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Harper, Jo. *The Legend of Mexicatli*. New York, NY: Turtle Books, 1998.

Lattimore, Deborah. *The Flame of Peace, A Tale of the Aztecs*. New York, NY: Harper Trophy, 1987.

Mathews, Sally Schoffer. *The Sad Night: The Story of an Aztec Victory and a Spanish Loss*. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 1994.

McKissack, Patricia. *Aztec Indians*. Chicago, IL: Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc., 1985.

Adult Bibliography

Caso, Alfonso. *Aztecs: People of the Sun*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1958.

Miller, Mary and Karl Taube. *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1993.

Nuttall, Zelia and Arthur G. Miller. *The Codex Nuttall: A Picture Manuscript From Ancient Mexico*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975.

Portilla, Miguel Leon. *Aztec Thought and Culture*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.

Salonas-Norman, Bobbi. *Folk Art Traditions II*. Oakland, CA: Piñata Publications, 1988.

Sayer, Chloë. *Arts and Crafts of Mexico*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1990.

Trenchard, Kathleen. *Mexican Paper-cutting, Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects*. Asheville, NC: Lark Books, 1998.

Patricia Sigala is outreach educator at the Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico. patricia.sigala@state.nm.us

Aurelia Gomez is director of education at MOIFA and an advisory board member of SchoolArts. aurelia.gomez@state.nm.us