

## **BACKGROUND READING FOR PRESENTERS**

### **Lascaux Cave Painting, c. 30,000 - 15,000 B.C., France (Red Cow and Horse) Grade Three**

**Source: Martha Hamilton**

**This cave was discovered in 1940 in southwestern France, quite by accident. "A group of boys, trying to enlarge a hole to find their lost dog, fell into what has proved to be the most exciting site in the prehistoric field." Among these paintings are found powerful, charging bulls, stocky little horses, shaggy ponies, stags' heads, charging bison, and "stick" human figures shooting bows and arrows.**

**There are several theories about the cave art of this Old Stone Age. Early man was in the nomadic hunting stage--agriculture came later. Did he paint these animals as practical magic so that he could more easily hunt them? Or: was this a religious rite? Remember that superstition was closely bound up in the religion of that age, just as it is today in primitive society in many parts of the world: Africa, Pacific areas, even our American Indians.**

**We can call the people who created these cave paintings artists because they created very unique pieces of art.**

**Several distinct techniques were used in these cave paintings: 1) heavy black outlinings of form of animal, then with fingerpainting the brushing on of color 2) engraved (scratched with stone) outline of body form 3) use of surface-wall and ceiling bulges and ceiling bulges, rock fissures to emphasize animal form.**

**Color was added in broad surfaces or in dots. There was some shading. Earth tones were used. Red clay, other clays and substances with animal fat, charcoal were common media.**

**In this painting "Red Cow and Horse", red clay and charcoal seem to have been used for outlining. Then the color was filled in, with attempts at shading. There is a strong sense of movement. The form of the horse is superimposed over the cow. In the top of the composition, just left of middle, there appear some red lines which may be a trap--a device in several forms, which was believed to help capture the animal.**

**The cave was closed for a time in 1963 because of problems caused by carbon dioxide, heat, humidity and too many visitors. Again in 1998 it had to be closed because the air conditioning system and bright lights created a fungus. By 2008 black mold had grown on the cave walls. Only a few scientists and workers are allowed in for only a few days a month.**

**ART PRESENTER PROGRAM**  
**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR:**

**Lascaux (laes' kou) Cave Painting--"Red Cow and Horse"**  
**Grade Three**

- 1. What is a cave?**
- 2. Raise your hand if you have ever been in one.**
- 3. Describe the cave that you were in. What did you see there?**
- 4. This painting is a reproduction of something found in a cave in France. The cave is Lascaux**
- 5. What do you see in the painting?**
- 6. It has been said that the paintings may have been created to help make hunting easier or for part of a religious ceremony.**
- 7. Do the animals seem real to you?**
- 8. What do they seem to be doing? How can you tell?**
- 9. Is there anything in the background? Does that matter?**
- 10. How would you feel if you went into a cave and saw these paintings for the first time?**
- 11. Why do you think that they picked caves to paint in?**
- 12. Describe the colors. What do you think are the main colors used? Why were these colors chosen?**
- 13. Notice the texture. What makes the paintings so rough?**
- 14. Have you ever drawn on cement or rock? How did you do it? What did you do?  
What kind of art materials did you use?**
- 15. If you were able to paint in a cave or on a large wall of a building, what would you draw or paint?**
- 16. Do you think the artists drew these animals from real life or imagination?**

## **EXTENDED ACTIVITIES TO ACCOMPANY:**

### **Lascaux Cave Painting "Red Cow and Horse"**

#### **1. Petroglyphs**

**Materials:** small rocks, chalk pastels (Buchanan Center for the Arts)  
paper clips (unbend to use as a carving tool)

Have students make sketches on scratch paper of an animal that might have been found in prehistoric times. Then using one chalk pastel in a neutral color, color the rock. Carving with the opened paper clip, create their animal.

Website with examples--

<http://artlessonsforkids.me/2009/03/15/cave-art-comes-alive/>

#### **2. Tools and Weapons**

**Materials:** pieces of cardboard, string

**Challenge:** make a tool they think would have been useful for hunting or painting. ONLY use string to put it together. This is not an easy challenge. Students will want to use glue or tape, but only the string may be used.

Website that shows examples--

<http://artlessonsforkids.me/2009/03/15/cave-art-comes-alive/>

#### **3. Cave wall animals**

**Materials:** brown butcher paper, earth tone chalks (Buchanan Center for the Arts cabinet)

Students are given a piece of brown butcher paper (piece of a brown grocery sack would work) and an earth-tone chalk. Have them draw an animal that they would have found in prehistoric times (like they have seen in the cave drawing examples). They can color in their animal by turning their chalk sideways.