



## SOIL PAINTING



### Teaching Objective

"To gain a deeper appreciation of soils -- one of our most important natural resources."

## Introduction

Soils are one of our most important natural resources. They also are important for the beauty their many colors add to our landscapes. Most of us overlook this natural beauty because we see it every day. Often these colors blend with vegetation, sky, water, etc. Soil colors serve as pigments in bricks and pottery.

If you look at the works of many of the great artists, you will notice that "earth colors" are dominant. The color and texture of soil painting is fascinating and a creative opportunity for all ages of students.

## Materials

- \* soil (dried in air) (from different location for different colors) hammer or mallet or tool to break soil up. Coffee Grinder works well to make the soil finer.  
mortar and pestle (rubber-tipped) or tulle or nylons and cup to shake soil before mixing
- \* paper cups (4 oz.) Or reuse meat trays, frozen dinner trays other reusable containers
- \* pencils, color pencils, markers
- \* ink pens (black, different tip sizes)
- \* paint brushes (different kinds and sizes)
- \* artist acrylic (clear gloss medium) (White glue watered down or liquid starch also works)
- \* sponges and rags
- \* 4 x 6 cards or white paper or water color paper or plain paper
- \* masking tape
- \* clothes line and clothes pins to use to hang to dry (if needed)

## Procedure

### Soils



1. Gather soils of various colors.
2. Place each dried soil sample on a piece of paper or cloth and crush into pieces with hammer or mallet.-
3. Place some of the crushed soil into a mortar. Use a rubber-tipped pestle to crush the soil into a fine powder. Repeat to crush all of the different colored soils.  
Or use tulleing or nylons (pantyhose) to sift the soil into cups. This will be dusty.
4. Coffee Grinder works well to make the soil finer.
5. Place the different soils in paper cups -- notice the colors and textures.



Soils from Oklahoma

You can get different colors from various depths

### Artwork

1. Lightly sketch art work on water color paper with a pencil. When satisfied with composition, use ink for permanent lines.
2. With masking tape, carefully tape paper edges to table or board. This is done so that the art work will dry flat.  
Pour small amounts of artist acrylic in small paper cups or reuse containers and add a variety of colors (Ex: meat trays, frozen dinner trays). Add small amounts of soil. Experiment with depth of color and mixing the different soils.
3. Use different sizes and kinds of paint brushes, sponges, and rags. Experiment and have fun.
4. Layering colors. When your art work is dry, you may apply another layer of soil paint.
5. You may want to use a black ink pen to make finishing touches on your artwork.
6. You can also make soil creatures with younger students. Have them use their thumb to dip into paint and place thumb print on paper. Use markers, pens or pencils to make creatures.

### Activity Time

The estimated time is about 1 hour.

Adapted from USDA

[http://soils.usda.gov/education/resources/k\\_12/lessons/painting/](http://soils.usda.gov/education/resources/k_12/lessons/painting/)

**EXAMPLE from USDA Calendar 2004**



The "Painting with Soil" art technique evolved from the works of artist Janis Lang, Lincoln, Neb., an employee with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/lewisandclark/paintingwithsoil.html>