



Hunting & Making Pigments

Art activity for grades 2-4

Timeframe: 30 - 60 minutes

This activity suggests going outside, if kids are not comfortable going outside, it is possible to make pigments out of dried food or house plants.

This activity is the first in a series in which the students will be making their own pigments so they can have natural colors to add to homemade paint, clay or pastel.

Big Questions:

What is a pigment?

What can I find that is a natural object, indoors or outside, that will make a pigment?

Objectives:

- Learn about natural pigments
- Explore their backyard or neighborhood to collect natural materials
- Observe the world around them through drawing
- Reflect on what natural materials might create interesting pigments and why

STEAM Habits of Mind:

Envision, Reflect, Observe, Engage & Persist, Understand Art World

What is a Pigment?

Feel free to do a Google image search to help get a better idea of what a pigment might look like.

What are pigments?



Have you ever wondered what make leaves green or flower petals so bright and colorful? **Pigments** are what gives everything color! In nature, pigments are what makes flower petals bright and colorful, leaves green, and lizards green. Skin, eyes, feathers, fur, and hair all have pigments, like melanin, that determine their color.



What about your favorite blue shirt? When coloring materials like paint, ink, plastic, and fabric, designers add pigments that are powders or liquids.



Imagine you collect a purple flower, some dirt and grass. What color do you think each one might be if made into a pigment? What texture do you think it will be? What might you want to collect that could make a pigment?

Other Questions to discuss:

What are the benefits of sourcing/creating materials for ourselves and others?
Who could benefit from making our own art materials?

Activity: Collection Walk

1. Before going outside, remind students to be mindful of what they collect, use observation skills to look closely, and try to predict what a pigment from selected materials might be. Try to collect things that are already laying on the ground, try not to kill any plants etc.
2. Kids will need four ziploc bags to collect at least 4 objects and keep them in separate bags.
3. If other natural materials/objects are interesting to them, they can collect those to study or sketch later!
4. Is there anything that students can find inside (dried food or house plants) that can be used to create a pigment?

Reflection:

1. Ask students to look at what they've collected - can they identify the natural materials? Have colored pencils and regular pencils available for them.
 - Imagine what each material you collected will look like as a pigment? Describe in writing or drawing what you predict. (label 1, 2, 3?)

Activity: Making Pigments

The goal here is to make pigments (or colors) from your natural materials. If you have a mortar and pestle, transfer your natural materials into the mortar and crush it with the pestle. If not, keep the material in the ziploc bag and crush it with a spoon or a wooden kitchen mallet. Be careful not to make a hole in the bag! Once you've crushed it to as fine of a grain as you can, you have your pigments!

What worked well? What didn't?

Are there any different techniques that you can try to extract color?

Next activity will be to use the pigments to make your own art materials!

Other Resources:

The Pigment Hunter - <https://www.pigmenthunter.com/index.html>

Ancient Art: Making Earth Pigments - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6k8JEEP0QNg>

Making Natural Earth Paints -

<https://www.thehippyhomemaker.com/diy-natural-herbal-earth-paints/>

Some Artists Make their own Paints -

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/some-artists-make-their-o_1_b_876225