

HISTORY learning springboards



Make paints from plants: history links – KS2

Enhance a history project with a creative project to make bunting or flags

Aim: Pupils create their own mark making colours and work creatively outside at a large scale

This is a fun, sensory and active way to make bunting for a celebration, or flags to link with a history project. This could link to an historical theme such as Vikings, Anglo Saxons, Romans and Tudors.

Activity:

Start with some open-ended questions such as, Which plants do you think will make yellow/red/blue colours? Which will make the brightest colours? Which colours will last longest outdoors? Which parts of plants are likely to produce the most 'dye' – and why do you think that? Remember that colour-blind pupils may find it easier to talk about depth of tone rather than colour.

Record the predictions to compare with the results later and remember to take photographs of the process below.

- Pupils gather plants from the grounds or gardens - experiment with any plants that pupils can find.
- Add to these some items brought in if they don't grow at the school, such as: beetroot, raspberry, blackberry, coriander leaf, nettle leaf, lichen.
- Cut up the plant part and crush it in pestle and mortar or in a jar, using a fat stick to crush and draw out the pigment.
- Use the result to 'paint' on scrap fabrics. Use a theme such as leaf shapes perhaps, or any theme to link with a current book or topic.
- Peg up these samples outdoors and monitor them over a few weeks as the weather washes and bleaches them.
- The pupils should check the longevity of the plant paints against their predictions.
- Write an explanation text and use the photographs to create an instructional text that describes the dying process and a recommendation for the best natural dyes for different colours.

More springboards:

- Why was blue considered to be a treasured and rare colour?
- What colours did the Romans wear and how did they make the colours? Purple was an expensive colour!
- Investigate the Bayeux Tapestry and the different colours used to make it. Dye white thread using plant dye and make a cross stitch picture using the dyed thread.
- Investigate the use of lichens to create the colours of Harris tweed (a famous fabric from Scotland).
- Use the Lindisfarne Gospels as inspiration to create an illustrated letter using plant dyes.

Resources:

- From the school community, source old cotton or linen fabrics such as plain pale sheets.
- Cut or tear them into large triangles (bunting) or rectangles (flags)
- You also need a range of colourful plants to make the dyes from
- Sharp kitchen knives and cutting mats
- Mortar and pestle (or jar and stick)
- Pegs
- Camera / tablet

More Springboards:

- Creative Arts Learning Springboard: Textiles and dye plants

Key vocabulary:

Extract, pestle, mortar, pigment

Success criteria:

- ✓ I can name plants that make a natural dye
- ✓ I can describe the process to extract dye from a plant
- ✓ I understand and can explain how people in the past used plants to dye their fabric, yarn and wool

