

Textures and Rubbings



Ideal for Grades: 1-2

Appropriate for grades: K-4

Materials Needed: writing materials, nature journals, pencils, crayons, charcoal, textured items, foil

Activity Categories: pre-visit, post-visit, adaptations, art, recording

This activity is designed to get students excited about textures they can find outside.

Before the activity: discuss texture with students. Do all rough things feel the same? How can you describe texture? How can you draw it?

Discuss proper rubbing techniques by using non-breakable, textured, classroom items. Think of things like metal grates, tiles, a package of crayons, and plastic rubbing plates. Have students journal about their favourite technique so they can refer back to it. A small piece of crayon with the paper removed is a really good tool. Rub the edge of the crayon or a tilted non-mechanical pencil on the paper, overtop of the texture. Have students press softly (so nearly no colour rubs onto the paper) and very hard (so they rip through a piece of scrap paper). Try to have them press somewhere between those two extremes. You should be able to see the texture clearly. Search the classroom for textures!

Another texture technique is to use aluminum foil. Press the foil against the textured surface, getting in all of the nooks and crannies. Carefully pull the foil off, retaining the shape. Tape this shape into a shadowbox or journal.

Head outside: once students are confident with transferring texture from objects to paper or foil, bring them outside. Start with non-living objects: empty shells, concrete, pinecones, and rocks. Get them to make rubbings of each item. Is it harder or easier than it was in the classroom? Be cautious if items are wet; bring out towels to blot items dry if needed.

Discuss how to handle living and rare objects safely. Being careful not to damage anything, move to items like tree trunks, plants, and leaves. Fossils (or fossil casts) can work really well for this.

Add in information to each rubbing about where you found it, what it is, the date, and any other notes. Place the pages into a nature journal or display them in a poster format.

After the activity: debrief on the favourite rubbing places of the day. Are there types of texture that don't translate well to paper (soft and fuzzy)? Tape up a variety of rubbings to a board and have students brainstorm textural adjectives.

Optional extension: have students draw or sculpt creatures, using their rubbing as a part of the drawing or inspiration for their sculpture. It could lead into realistic or abstract art.