

# Native American Sand Painting

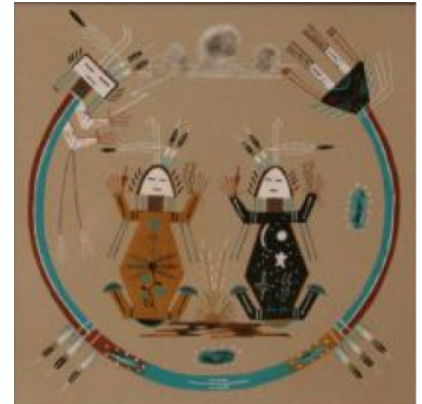
## Overview

Students will use characters in a story as inspiration in creating sand paintings. Creative projects help students connect with characters in literature. Sand paintings allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a multisensory format.

## Standards

This craft project aligns with the following national standards, as outlined by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning). [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)

- Visual Content Standard 1
- Visual Arts Standard 1, 3 and 4
- Language Arts Standard 6



## Cultural Influence

The Navajo Nation traditionally utilizes sand paintings as part of healing rituals. These creations have been used for generations, and historically the materials are returned back to the earth after the healing ritual. They are not kept. Sand paintings are created patiently by hand, without using any other tools. This is believed to be part of the healing process.

More recently, sand paintings have also been used as an art form. They utilize traditional symbols to communicate a story and represent key figures in Navajo culture. Traditional Navajo sand paintings are made with tans, browns, deep reds, yellows and turquoise: colors found naturally in Navajo lands.

## Time

One to two class periods

## Materials

- Cardboard or poster board for each student
- Pencils
- Glue – mixed 50/50 with water
- Paint brushes

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- Colored sand in three to four colors
- 20 to 30 paper plates or cups
- Newspaper to cover work surface
- Hairspray

*Note:* While colored sand can be purchased, it is also possible to make it. Cornmeal can be used on its own as a “sand” material; and sand can be colored by mixing it with fine-ground spices, or with a few drops of watercolor or food dye (then left out to dry overnight before being used).

### Project Directions

- Cover work surface with newspaper.
- Pencil in an outline of your design on cardboard or poster board.
- Carefully apply glue to one area of the design.
- Carefully pour a small handful of one color of sand over the wet glue, lightly brushing off extra sand.
- Repeat the process for all remaining areas of the picture, completing one color of sand at a time.
- Once the sand painting is complete and the glue is dry, spray the picture with hairspray to keep the sand in place.

### Teacher Preparation

- Select a book from **We Give Books** ([www.wegivebooks.org](http://www.wegivebooks.org)).
- Collect all required materials.

### Classroom Instructions

- Direct your web browser to the **We Give Books** website at [www.wegivebooks.org](http://www.wegivebooks.org).
- Log in to your account and select a campaign to support.
- Choose a book to read and click the orange “Read Online” button to open it.
- Read your selected book to the students.
- After reading the story, direct students to close their eyes and picture one character that they enjoyed. Encourage students to analyze their decision: Did they like something the character did? Did they like how the artist created the character? Do students have anything in common with the character they chose?

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- Read the Cultural Influence section above to students.
- Let students know that they are going to translate this character into their sand painting.
- Demonstrate the project by outlining your image onto the cardboard or poster board.
- Encourage students to work with one color of sand at a time, using small amounts.
- Lightly brush off extra sand and repeat the process for each color.
- Once a student has finished his or her sand painting, the painting can be sprayed with a thin coat of hairspray to help the sand stay in place.

*Note:* If appropriate, the story can first be read without showing the illustrations to students, encouraging them to develop their own interpretations of the characters' appearance.

### Ideas for Display

- Students can create a short write-up explaining why they chose the character they created.
- If your class makes their own sand from spices, describe how each color was created to include as part of the sand paintings display.