Paint like the Ancients

Humans are a lot like other animals, but something that makes us unique is the way we express ourselves. Color helps us represent ideas and emotions in the things we create. But where does it come from? Learn about the origins of paint technology and how to create paint from objects found around the home!

Ancient humans used what they found around them in the natural world to create paint colors.

The Mayans used small bugs found on cacti to create a red paint.

Prehistoric humans used ground rocks and minerals, like ochre, to paint on cave walls.

The Egyptians created the first synthetic paint, called Egyptian blue, using natural materials and chemistry!

What is paint made of? Most ancient paints were made from mixing these basic ingredients.

**PIGMENTS** are the base of all paint colors. They can be made from organic materials (plant/animal) or minerals (rocks) and are typically ground into a fine powder.

**A BINDER** is a neutral or colorless material that adheres paint to a surface.

**ADDITIVES and LIQUIDS** are also added depending on the type of paint and its texture. More liquid can create a more diluted paint like watercolor.
Paint like the Ancients
Practice being resourceful like our ancient ancestors and create paint with household items! Remember to ask for an adult for help

DIRECTIONS:
Experiment with different combinations of pigment, binder, and additives. Start with small amounts and gradually add more ingredients when needed. Keep track of how much you add using measuring spoons and a piece of paper. Once you get a paint you like, record your final recipe on the recipe card below.

WHAT YOU NEED:

**Pigment:** Look for interesting colors in your spice cabinet. Ground mustard, turmeric, and cinnamon work great! Make sure the spice is ground into a fine powder.

**BINDER:** Substance to help paint stick to and spread onto a surface. Egg whites, glycerin, or corn starch are options you may have at home.

**Liquids/Additives:** You could try adding flour to make a thicker paint or water if it needs to be thinned out.

**Measuring units:** Measuring spoons work great but you can also use small cups or spoons to keep track of how much ingredients you add.

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**Recipe Card:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pigment</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Binder</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid/Additives</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid/Additives</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

**Name of Color:**

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**Penn Museum**
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EXAMPLE:

Turmeric
Pigment
1 tblsp
Amount

Corn Starch
Binder
4 tsp
Amount

Flour
Liquid/ Additives
1/4 cup
Amount

Water
Liquid/ Additives
1 cup
Amount

NOTES:
Whisk for 1 minute

NAME OF COLOR: TUMERIC
YELLOW