Dear artists,

Although we might be out of school right now, it’s important to remember that you can still make art! You might be saying to yourself “Mrs. Roe, I don’t have art supplies!” That’s OK; you don’t need art supplies; you just need to get creative (which is the best part of art!) Here’s a list of ideas for you to try at home. Remember, native people have been creating art from nature…. FOREVER. You’re just carrying on the tradition!

**Paints & dyes:**

Paint is made up of something called PIGMENT. You can find PIGMENT everywhere; different colored dirt, berries, leaves, twigs, flowers, herbs, vegetables, etc. Paints and dyes can be made from almost any organic material. You’ve studied the dye chart, and we’ve read The Goat in the Rug a LOT; you know what I’m talking about:

To make dyes, you’ll have to boil your plants with water. Once most of your water has boiled off (evaporated), and the color is condensed/concentrated, you can use the dye. More water= light colors, a little water= dark colors. **Remember:** always use the stove with an adult!

To make paints, you can find different colors of dirt, and mix them with water, egg yolk, etc. This how Da Vinci made his tempera paint: pigment + egg yolk. You can also mix herbs (like dried parsley, dried rosemary, curry, etc) with
water or oil to make paints. You can mash up berries or grind up leaves as well. When leaves are ground up, you’re releasing the green chlorophyll inside the cells, which will give you green ‘paint’.

***Safety tip! Some plants may be poisonous, or bad for you to touch/eat. Ask your parents or grandparents about plants before foraging for plants/berries.

Coffee and tea work great for paint!
Clay

Clay, as you know, is nothing more than good ‘ol dirt. Now I can’t guarantee that you’ll have clay near your home, but you’ll at least have fun looking around for it. Clay is typically found in washes/arroyos/riverbanks. Clay is different than sand or topsoil; it has a different color and texture. It’s typically blueish or greyish in color.

If you find clay you’ll need to 1) collect it and dry it out 2) grind it up between two big rocks 3) rehydrate it with water. Keep kneading the clay until it’s no longer sticky. Once it’s a good texture, you can sculpt.
Clay can be fired (cooked in a fire) if you want to keep what you’ve made, although without volcanic ash or other stabilizers (temper) it probably won’t be very strong. I’d suggest using the clay for fun.

*Safety tip: **Always** listen for water before entering a dry wash/arroyo. If it’s raining upstream, you may have unexpected flooding. Also, check for hazards like snakes, glass, etc. before entering an arroyo. **Always** explore nature with a partner, and **always** let an adult know where you are going.

The Anasazi made all kinds of clay pottery! They used natural paints to add decorations! Pueblo tribes **still** use the Rocky Mountain Bee Plant to make their paints. They boil and reduce the plant until it is a hard lump. Then the lump is ground up and rehydrated to make a deep black paint. Yucca leaves are cut into tiny brushes. Everything here came from nature!
Another great art form is EARTH ART! You might look out at your landscape and think there isn’t anything to make art with except some pebbles and dirt. Well, you’re in luck, because that’s all you need! Artists have been using natural materials to create designs and pictures for thousands of years. Try sorting rocks and leaves into different shapes, colors, or sizes.

This picture is one example of earth art. These are the NAZCA LINES, created by the Nazca tribe of Peru. These HUGE drawings were made over 2,000 years ago! Some of these drawing are 30 miles wide!

This is an example of Aboriginal paintings from Australia. By dabbing different colors of mud, the artist was able to make a landscape.
Make some designs with rocks! Notice they go from big to small, close together to wide apart, etc.

Sort leaves based on size, shape, and color.
Get some sticks and weave them together!

Make a robot out of rocks!

Many cultures have different styles of SAND PAINTINGS. Some are used for ceremonial use (like with Navajo sand paintings), while others (like these Tibetan mandalas) are used for meditation and relaxation. Try drawing with sand!
Or, just draw directly in the sand!
Whittling & Carving

This activity requires some materials, such as a pocketknife and wood. This activity should ONLY be done with adults around. Remember, never carve towards yourself or anyone else. Always carve away from your body. Make sure you get green (alive) wood to carve; old dried wood can be harder to work with. Also, remove bark first to expose inner layers of wood; use small movements like peeling a carrot.
Charcoal & Mineral Drawings

The first material that can be used for drawing are rocks covered in mineral deposits (like calcium). If you go outside, you may notice a white chalky material covering your rocks, which means you’re in business! Try dragging the chalky rock over a dark colored rock. You should notice that the chalky rock leaves behind white marks. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a great way to write, draw, etc if you don’t have paper and pencils. You have a natural chalk board!

Also, if you’re interested in a bit of science, take on one of those chalky white rocks, and drop it in vinegar. The minerals are alkaline (basic) and the vinegar is acidic. You’ll notice a chemical reaction taking place when the two mix.

As for charcoal, you’ll need an adult for this because it requires a fire. Sticks/wood pieces that are partially burnt in a fire will turn into charcoal. Charcoal is typically black and powdery. You can use pieces of charcoal to draw with like a pencil, or you can grind it up to make inks/paints. To make ink, you can grind up charcoal and mix it with water and honey, vinegar, egg yolk, etc. These binders allow the charcoal to move like ink/paint. Find a pointy stick, dip it in the ink, and draw on a rock.

*Safety tip: When using a fire, **always** have an adult with you. If it’s very dry in your area, avoid making a fire; this could lead to a wildfire. Also, if you are handling raw eggs, **wash** your hands to avoid salmonella poisoning.

Ancient cave art was created with charcoal and other pigments!
Soda Can Tin Work

OK, this one isn’t really nature related, but if you have some cans lying around it’s free, and fun!

Wash the soda can first. Then get some steel wool and remove the paint on the outside of the can.

You’ll then cut the top and bottom of the can off. Then cut up the center of the can to make one big sheet of aluminum. The metal will be SHARP. Be careful!
Next, work on top of something soft(ish) like cardboard, magazines, fabric, whatever. This will allow the tin to flex when you draw on it.

You can use a pen, a pencil, a stick, a toothpick, a pin, a hammer and nails, a pointy rock, whatever you can think of to make designs in the tin! Press gently to avoid tearing the aluminum.

The Spanish are known for using old tin cans, left by the US military, to make tinwork. They used the tinwork to decorate their large adobe churches.

*** I hope this helps get your creativity flowing! Stay safe, wash your hands, and keep making art! ~Love Mrs. Roe