

Cave painting



Comprehension

Cave painting

The flickering fires cast shadows that moved over the walls of the cave. A group of men had come to this special place to paint. It was a way of trying to explore and understand the world around them.

Towards the middle of the cave, a man crouched down on the floor near a fire. He ground up little coloured stones in a bowl-shaped rock. They made powders in brown, red and dark yellow colours. He added some tree sap to make the powders into paint. Then he made a brush by splitting the end of a stick.

He handed the paint and the brush to the men working at one side of the cave. One of them held paint in a shell, and lifted up a burning torch to shine light on the wall. Another man brushed paint onto the wall.

He painted an animal scene, as he had done so often before. He drew the outline of a great bison in black, and filled it in with a reddish-brown colour. Then he added a dark eye. The eye reminded him of what he had seen in the wilderness. Perhaps by painting a bison here, he could tame it in a way he could not in the wild. In the light of the fires, it looked like it was alive.

Then he painted a mammoth, which had a long trunk and frightening tusks. As he painted, he remembered all the mammoth hunts he had been on. He finished the whole wall scene with other animals, such as rhinoceroses and deer. They all roamed the world outside the cave, the world that he and the other men lived and hunted in. Just then, he heard a distant animal cry...

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'flickering'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'flickering' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'flickering'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'flickering'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'flickering' means.

Try this for other words, too. 2

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: outline	shape

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

In the light of the fires, the bison on the wall looked alive.

He added tree sap to the powder to make paint.

In the middle of the cave, a man crushed up coloured stones to make a powder.

He painted a mammoth and other animals to complete the scene.

Another man used the paint, and a stick for a brush, to paint on the cave wall.

He painted a bison, which reminded him of the bison he had seen in the wilderness outside.

Get to the facts

1 What cast shadows on the walls of the cave?

2 What was the man in the middle of the cave grinding up?

3 What colour powders did he make?

4 What did the painter draw the outline of on the wall?

5 Which animal had a trunk and tusks?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Seeing a cave painting

Imagine you are a modern visitor to a cave that was painted in Stone Age times. Write a letter to a friend, in which you describe the painting that you saw on the cave walls... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

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For example:

Key word – outline Synonym – shape

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