

# Native American Pictographs

A pictograph is a picture that represents a word phrase, and are our earliest forms of writing. Native Americans wrote pictographs on rocks, cave walls, and buffalo hides to tell stories of battles and communicate important warnings and messages. For example, some Native American tribes believed that animals had spirits controlling them. Prior to a hunt, the Native Americans hosted a ceremony asking the animal spirits to allow them to be taken for food. Game animal pictographs found on some rock art sites may have been left behind from these special ceremonies.

This activity will help your child read and write Native American pictographs, and better understand what life was like back then.

## What You Need:

- List of common Native American pictographs (search online)
- Paper
- Pencil
- Colored pencils

## What You Do:

1. Explain to your child that a “pictograph” is a picture that represents a word or an idea. Some languages use a pictograph writing system, such as Chinese. Native Americans living in early America used pictographs as their writing system. Some Native Americans still use pictographs today!
2. Show your child some common Native American pictographs that you found online.
3. Notice that there are symbols for various kinds of weather, people, places, and feelings. Have your child try to write a “sentence” by drawing some pictographs together. For example, he could draw the pictographs for “Summer”, “Man”, “Happy” to express his love for summertime.
4. If more than one child is doing this activity, they could each write some “sentences” and then try to decipher each other’s sentences.
5. When he’s finished writing, your child may want to add color to his pictograph sentences using colored pencils over the penciled drawings.
6. Have your child think of a person, place, kind of weather, or emotion that is important in his own life. He could make up some new pictographs for one or several of these words, and sketch them on his paper. If he likes his new pictographs, he can color those also with colored pencils.

