

Rock Art in the Petrified Forest National Park Background

Petroglyphs (carved into the rock) and pictographs (painted on the rock), like the ones found in the Petrified Forest National Park, are found in a few other locations in the Southwest, particularly in the Four Corners region. They have been identified as the work of the Mogollon, Mimbres, Hohokam, and the Puebloans (Hopi and Zuni) Indians. Researchers have said the petroglyphs are probably from approximately 750 A.D. to the 1400's. No one knows exactly what the symbols mean, who drew them, or why they drew them. Needless to say, there are many different interpretations from various Native American tribes into answering those unanswerable questions. Scientists have determined how the petroglyphs were drawn. They say they could have been drawn with an acidic liquid, such as could be found in cactus. They could have been chiseled or hammered into the rock, using a sharp object like another rock or an antler. However, they got there, the who, when, and why remain a mystery, because the people who left them are no longer with us and did not leave a record telling us who they were, when they made them, and why they drew them. Oral records are used today to determine probable meaning.

The rock art we see today in the Petrified Forest National Park occur as individual figures, in groups with other figures, as full-sized humans, as animal figures, and as many glyphs together (like at Newspaper Rock). Some researchers have categorized the petroglyphs into symbols for migration, maps, calendars, the heavenly skies, people, animals, groups or clans of Native American tribes, spirits, and maybe even battle shields. Again, because the people who made the rock art are no longer around to tell us, we have to theorize about what they mean and why they were drawn.

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Name _____ Period _____

What are 2 new things you learned today in our lesson?

A.

B.

How can this lesson be of value to you personally? How could you apply what you learned to your life?

How can this lesson help you learn about other ancient civilizations or societies that do not exist today?

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