

An Introduction to Marbling

MULTI LEVEL VISUAL ARTS EXPERIENCES

STRANDS & ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Developing Practical Knowledge in the Visual Arts

- *developing visual art skills and techniques in the context of marbling*
- *investigating and using the properties of marbling inks, marbling solutions and tools*

Developing Ideas in the Visual Arts

- *developing visual ideas using imagination and invention in a variety of contexts and media*
- *creating designs that have decorative and expressive qualities on practical works of art*

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- *trying out innovative and original ideas*
- *designing and making*
- *thinking creatively and imaginatively*
- *working cooperatively and individually*

Teacher Notes

Have you ever tried Marbling? We outline a step by step process that shows how you and your class can get into one of the most creative and exciting art and craft activities your children can experience. Try it. You'll be hooked.

Background Information

The basic idea of marbling is simply creating designs and patterns on the surface of a liquid with inks then printing the pattern by laying paper or fabric on the surface. There is just a little more to this fascinating process. We will guide you through it, providing the recipe and how to do it. Marbling is great for children of all ages, but especially those who say "I can't draw".

Some Topics for Marbling

Coverings for pads, notebooks, books, telephone books, boxes, shelves, rubbish bin.

Place mats • lamp shade covers • attractive wrapping paper background for a display or bulletin board

backdrop for a play to create a mood decorative panels and screens

a mouse mat undercover

tray tops • dog bowl feeding mat • pencil case cover toilet top cover

stained glass windows • dresses • head scarves,

handkerchiefs • cushion covers • shirts and skirts • T shirts

What you Need

- Marbling Inks of various colours
- Carragheen Powder (Irish Seaweed Powder)
- Alum to treat the paper and fabric before marbling
- A blender or hand beater to mix the carragheen
- Plastic or other suitable trays
- Patterning tools; marbling combs are needed if you are going to make traditional patterns but sticks, kitchen forks can be used to make 'freehand' patterns that are initially very exciting for children.
- Paper and fabric to print the marbled pattern on to. Cotton, silk, rayon, and calico all give excellent results. We suggest you start with paper.

ACTIVITY ONE

Mixing Carragheen Solution

- Make up enough carragheen solution to fill each marbling bath.
- 2 level tablespoons of carragheen powder for every 5 litres of water.
- Fill half a blender with hot water.
- Run the blender while sprinkling the carragheen powder onto the water.
- Add water to nearly top up the blender and blend for a minute.
- Pour into the tray and add any water needed to make up the 5 litre amount.
- Cover the tray and leave to stand undisturbed over night before using.

Mixing the Alum Solution

- Add 2 tablespoons of alum to 600ml of water in a pot.
- Bring to the boil to dissolve the alum and leave to cool.



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ACTIVITY TWO

Preparing the Paper for Marbling

- Paper of almost any type can be used, but those with some absorbent qualities are the best e.g. white drawing paper; smooth printing papers, brown papers and some wrapping papers.
- Best results are gained by preparing the paper with alum.
- Have the pupils put the alum solution in a spray bottle (clean it out thoroughly first)
- Children spray the paper lightly with alum solution.
- Wipe across the paper with a sponge and then down the paper. The aim is to coat the whole surface evenly with alum.
- Lay the paper between sheets of newspaper and leave to dry.

ACTIVITY THREE

Paper Marbling

- Before starting to marble and after each print, lay a piece of newspaper over the whole surface of the carragheen solution (size). Remove and discard it. This is to remove any dust or ink residue. Skim across the surface with a strip of newspaper to “smooth” the surface film.
- Have pupils carefully apply drops of different coloured inks to the surface of the size.
- Patterns can be made by slowly drawing a knitting needle or pointed stick through the surface. Some slow swirling also makes exciting patterns. Special marbling tools can also be used and are described later.
- Hold the paper by the diagonal corners and carefully lower it on to the surface of the size, starting at the centre and working outwards. The print takes immediately the paper touches the surface and so you will have to be careful not to trap any air bubbles.
- Carefully lift the paper off the size transfer to a flat tray or board and rinse off any carragheen and excess ink by gently pouring cold water over the paper.
- Drain the paper well and place it on newspaper to dry.
- When the paper is completely dry, place the paper under a weight to smooth it out.

Evaluate and Suggest

- Let the children enjoy and comment on all the different designs. Have them make suggestions for improvements in design use and colour.

ACTIVITY FOUR

Fabric Marbling

- Prepare fabric for marbling by first washing it and then fully immersing it in the alum solution.
- Hand wring it lightly and allow to dry completely before you marble.
- Marble the treated fabric following the steps describe for paper marbling.
- When the fabric has dried, heat set the ink with a hot iron or in a clothes drier on the hottest setting for 30 minutes. When washing marbled fabric, hand wash in cold water.

ACTIVITY FIVE

Comb Marbling

- Traditional combed patterns can be achieved by using various specialised (and very cheap) combs which can be purchased to allow students to add another dimension to their patterns.
- One method is to put lots of small drops of ink close together all over the surface of the size.
- Now use a comb (put only the tips of the teeth into the size) to make a pattern. Pleasing patterns can be produced by moving the comb along the length of the bath, across the bath or in some combination of these movements.
- Let the students experiment to find which order gives them a pleasing design.

Concluding Activities

- Arrange a hall, corridor or classroom wall display of your marbling. Invite parents and other classes to view the works of art.
- Have children demonstrate their craft and instruct other people in marbling with paper.
- Have pupils marble T shirts and shorts.
- Make place mats, book covers etc.

ASSESSMENT

- are the students able to comment on their designs and others in a constructive and positive manner
- are students showing developing competence and showing imagination in the process of marbling?
- is there evidence of creative and imaginative thinking, both in creating designs and in decoration of objects?
- are students developing a marbling vocabulary?
- are students able to instruct others in marbling processes?