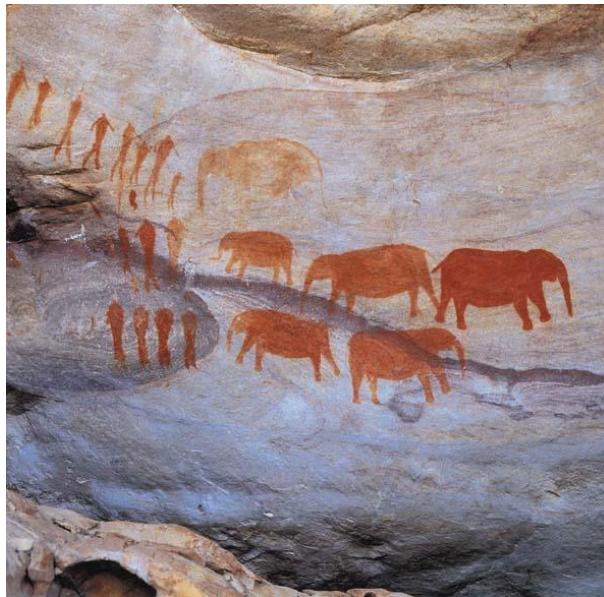


Grade 7 Social Sciences Worksheet

Assessment Task: Rock Art



Study the pictures of rock art above. These are both Southern African examples, done by Bushmen, also known as Khoi San. The one on the left is from the Drakensberg, while the one on the right is from Xhorixas in Northern Namibia. There are engravings and paintings all over South Africa, almost wherever there is a sheltered rock wall.

The elephants are painted in red ochre, a colour (pigment) made from iron. The other one is an example of rock engravings, known as petroglyphs (Greek for rock pictures), which were chiselled out of the rock. The paintings are probably not more than a few hundred years old, but parts of the engraving may be as much as 20 000 years old.

Rock art was a necessary step in the development of writing. Each painting tells its own story. There are four major purposes to rock art:

- **Storytelling**, the most important way that these ancient people educated their children.
- **Religion**. Rock art often contains religious symbols. Perhaps the long tails had religious significance.
- **Recording** important events (history).
- **Decoration**. Some rock art appears to have been done 'just for fun'.

These four purposes are often mixed up on one rock wall.

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Activity

1. Write a paragraph, explaining why we know that the painting is much younger than the engraving. [5]
2. Why do you think that paintings of different uses are often mixed up on one wall [5]
3. You will notice that several of the animals in the engraving have very long tails. Use your imagination to try to explain why the artists gave them such long tails. [2]
4. The picture of the elephants and people appears to record one 'event'. Describe in words what you think the event was. [10]
5. The Bushmen were forced out of their traditional lands as black settlers from central Africa and white settlers from the Cape occupied their lands. The most recent rock paintings in the Drakensberg area show men with guns riding horses. Explain why it is very useful to historians and archaeologists to have such pictures. [5]



6. This picture is of ancient petroglyphs near Kimberley, probably about 2 000 years old. These do not show many animals, but do show a number of unusual shapes and decorations.

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- 6.1 How do we know that the pictures on this rock are of different ages? [4]
- 6.2 There are a number of circular patterns. What do YOU think these patterns represent? [10]
7. In this exercise, you are often asked to express an opinion. Are there any reasons why your opinion might not be as good as a trained archaeologist's opinion? [5]

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Suggested Solutions

1. Write a paragraph, explaining why we know that the painting is much younger than the engraving. [5]
Painting does not last as long as rock engravings. While there are some very faint paintings in the background, most of these paintings look very fresh.
2. Why do you think that paintings of different uses are often mixed up on one wall? [5]
People may have lived in one place for a long time. Several different artists worked on them. The places where they could paint in one shelter were limited, so they all used the same space.
3. You will notice that several of the animals in the engraving have very long tails. Use your imagination to try to explain why the artists gave them such long tails. [2]
Any answer. The important thing here is that they learn to think and try to imagine what the ancient people were thinking.
4. The picture of the elephants and people appears to record one 'event'. Describe in words what you think the event was. [10]
Again, any answer that fits the evidence. Did a group of people meet a herd of elephants? Some elephants are walking away. Did the elephants turn around and go away? The people are walking in lines; perhaps they are dancing. Perhaps it is about an elephant dance (elephants also often walk in lines).
5. The Bushmen were forced out of their traditional lands as black settlers from central Africa and white settlers from the Cape occupied their lands. The most recent rock paintings in the Drakensberg area show men with guns riding horses. Explain why it is very useful to historians and archaeologists to have such pictures. [5]
We know that the settlers carrying guns and riding horses probably only reached the Drakensberg around 1800. Large numbers of settlers only went inland from 1830 onwards. This allows us to date the paintings accurately and will help us to date other paintings as well.
6. This picture is of ancient petroglyphs near Kimberley, probably about 2 000 years old. These do not show many animals, but do show a number of unusual shapes and decorations.
- 6.1 How do we know that the pictures on this rock are of different ages? [4]
The younger (orange-coloured) pictures are on top of the older, faint weathered pictures. The fainter the picture the older it is.

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6.2 There are a number of circular patterns. What do YOU think these patterns represent? [10]
Some archaeologists think they are religious symbols for the sun and the moon. They could be lots of different things. A good answer shows imagination and variety of ideas.

7. In this exercise, you are often asked to express an opinion. Are there any reasons why your opinion might not be as good as a trained archaeologist's opinion? [5]
Trained archaeologists will know how to date the pictures. They will also know about other similar pictures and examples from many different places. All of this builds up a bigger picture of what it means, but in the end they have to use their imagination, just like the learners.