

# Trying Out Navajo Traditional Ceremonial Sandpainting

Heritage Middle School, Westerville, OH -- 8th grade Multicultural Literature Class Integrated Art Activity Hyla Skudder, Guest Artist

After learning about the purpose and techniques of Navajo ceremonial sandpainting, and viewing photographs of sandpaintings, students tried their hand at it. Playground sand was poured and spread onto a sheet, and students used small containers of colored sands to create the design. I provided a black and white sketch on posterboard of a traditional design for them to work from. Students made their own decisions about color, and invented some creative new techniques to achieve some intricate effects. Everyone agreed this was much harder than they thought!



Starting out: Tracing the design in the sand & then sprinkling in pinches of colored sand.



Referring to the design while working.



Taking turns working on different parts.



The finishing touches: This was an exercise in group problem solving, cooperation and taking creative risks.



The finished sandpainting!



Erasing the sandpainting, as the Navajos always do. The students found this very meaningful. They came away with a great respect for the consummate skill of the Navajo sandpainters, and gained a new appreciation for a new cultural concept of art that is intricate and beautiful, but is not meant to be permanently kept.