First Americans Museum
OKLAHOMA

Sonic Scribbles

Activity Length: 10–30 minutes
Recommended Ages: 8 and up
Key Content Areas: Music, Native Native American Studies, Visual Arts

Activity Description:
Reveal the diversity and creativity of present-day Native creatives through a listening-and-drawing activity.

Supplies Needed:

- Ability to play music (speakers and streaming service, etc.)
- Printed Sonic Scribbles handout
- Drawing utensils (Markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)



A child layers paint over his completed Sonic Scribble drawing made in response to a song. Image courtesy of FAM.

Instructions:

1. Share with your group that they will be listening to clips of songs by First American artists. Their job is to listen closely and quietly create one drawing per song.
2. Drawings are an intuitive response to the beats, rhythms, and lyrics of the songs. There is no right or wrong way to use colors, shapes, and patterns.
3. However, all drawings should be abstract, meaning they are not realistic and don't depict actual people or objects.
4. The group leader will then begin the first song and play a section of the song for as long as they want.
5. Once the song is stopped, instruct group members to put their drawing utensils down and turn to the next page.
6. Once you have listened to two or more of the songs, invite group members to discuss their drawing experiences with a partner or the table. The handout includes questions to guide conversation.

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Sonic Scribbles, cont.

Key Concepts:

- First American musicians, artists, writers and other creatives fuse traditional modes of expression with new ideas, genres, and concepts.
- Native cultures are not static—they are always innovating and changing.

Adaptation/Extension Ideas:

- If your students need examples of abstract art before beginning the activity, consider showing examples of nonfigurative work by Dick West (Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes) or Benjamin Harjo, Jr. (Absentee Shawnee Tribe/Seminole).

Special Notes:

- This concept can be used with any musical selection. Take care to screen media to ensure it is age and audience appropriate.
- Sonic Scribbles can serve as the foundation for multi-media art, such as layering crayon or pencil with paint, cutting into strips to weave, etc.

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