

# Painting on the Walls

Image: Painting of a bison in the cave of Altamira. Image released into public domain by photographer, Ramesses in en:Wikipedia.



Bulls dash across a field. Saber-tooth tigers run from hunters. A person watches the sun rise. People have painted their hopes and dreams on the walls of caves

for thousands of years. Scientists called archaeologists study pictures like these and other objects to learn how people lived in the past.

The oldest paintings found in Europe are in the Altamira caves in Spain and in the Lascaux caves in France. These paintings were made by Stone Age people in prehistoric times, about 27,000 years ago! They show deer, mammoths, horses, and people. Some show hunting scenes. Some just show human hands.

Native Americans also painted on cave walls. In fact, the oldest cave paintings found in North America were painted about 6,000 years ago. These paintings, which are in Tennessee, also show animals that the Native Americans might have hunted, such as wolves and foxes. Other paintings might represent the people's spiritual

beliefs. They show people dancing, celebrating, and changing into animals.

The ancient people of the Kimberley area, in Australia, also painted on the walls of caves. Their work is still being studied, but scientists think it may be the oldest cave art ever painted. In fact, it may have been painted as long as 65,000 years ago! One painting shows four men in a boat. Others show fish, possums, and human hands and feet.

Archaeologists don't know why early people painted on cave walls. Perhaps the painters were going out to hunt, and they showed what they hoped would happen. Perhaps they were celebrating a successful hunt. They may have been decorating their living spaces, creating art, or just telling stories. Because they left no written records, archaeologists can't be sure. But it is exciting to look at cave paintings and guess what our distant relatives saw, thought, and dreamed.



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