

SAND PAINTING

CULTURE CLUES

The Navajo have many rituals and ceremonies. Most of them are related to the Navajo concept of *hozho*. This single word has a very complex meaning. It conveys ideas about beauty, goodness, happiness, and harmony. It is a summary of the highest value and final goal of the Navajo people.

The world is full of good things, but there are also many bad things. A person might be contaminated by one of these evil elements. The purpose of the Navajo rituals is to help the individual overcome bad influences and restore *hozho*. These ceremonies are called Chantways. If the Chantway ritual, which could last up to nine days, was correctly performed. The Navajo believed that the Holy People would notice and take action to cure the patient.

The rituals called Blessingway were not to restore *hozho* but to promote it. Different occasions, like protecting the herds of sheep or a new marriage, had Blessingway ceremonies. The ritual began at sundown and continued uninterrupted for two nights and one day.

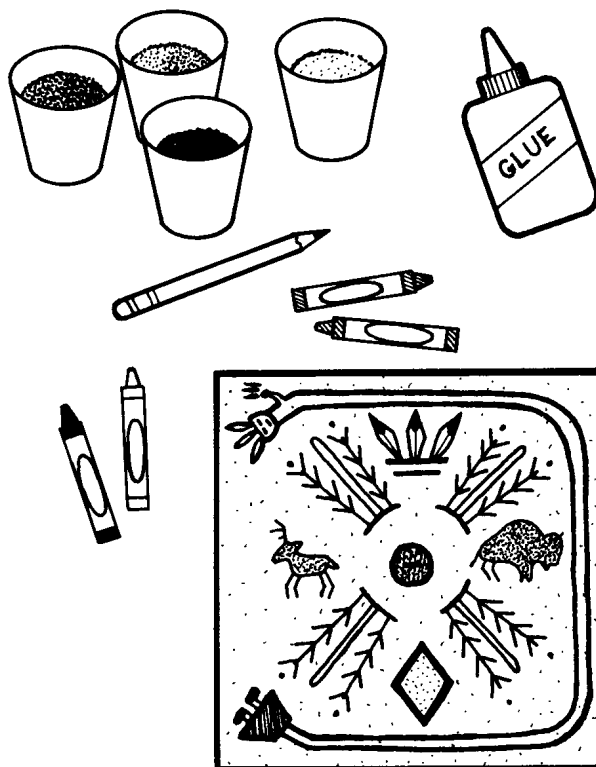
In some rituals a dry painting or sand painting was made from dried pigments. The materials were shaped into patterns on the floor of the patient's hogan. The size ranged from less than 1 foot (31 cm) to 20 feet (6 m) in diameter. It took many hours to create each sand painting. At the end of the ritual, what remained of the painting was destroyed. The Navajo believed that the reason for the painting's existence had ended.

MATERIALS

- colored sand
- 8" x 8" (20 cm x 20 cm) square of poster board
- white glue
- pencil
- crayons

DIRECTION

1. Draw an original design on the poster board. Look at pictures of Navajo designs for ideas about how the picture should look. Sample designs are provided on page 65.
2. Use crayons to lightly color the design. The Navajo traditionally used black, red, white, and yellow for their sand paintings.
3. Apply white glue to all areas that will be a particular color. Sprinkle that color of sand generously over the glue.
4. When the glue is dry, shake off the excess sand.
5. Continue until you have used all the colors.



ACTIVITY

On a piece of paper, write about your design. What is the purpose of your painting? How does it reflect the Navajo ideal of *hozho*?

SAND PAINTING DESIGNS

SAMPLE DESIGNS

