

TRUST FOR AFRICAN ROCK ART

# I LOVE ROCK ART



ÉCOLE  
DU PATRIMOINE  
AFRICAIN



TARA

## ABOUT TARA

TARA is the Trust for African Rock Art. It is a group of people who want to find rock art, teach others about it, and help to protect it. TARA wants everyone in Africa, and around the world, to know what rock art is, why it is important, and why we should not damage it. TARA wants to take as many pictures of rock art as possible so that if the real rock art is damaged, people can still see the pictures.

TARA was founded in 1996 by David Coulson, who is a photographer, with the help of Mary Leakey, one of the first women archaeologists in the world. TARA has recently been working with a group known as EPA (École du Patrimoine Africain... this is French for "School for African Heritage") to educate children on rock art.



Engraving of an elephant, Morocco.

## TARA AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA



The Education Section of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) develops educational programmes based on exhibitions in the Nairobi National Museum and other museums across the country. It also makes sure that information on Kenyan cultural and natural heritage is shared with the general public, especially schools and colleges. Art has recently been added to school syllabuses, thanks to teachers' workshop that developed study guides/worksheets. The Rock Art Educational Programme was an eye-opener for the students, as well as for teachers who were eager to learn about Rock Art in a new and interactive way.

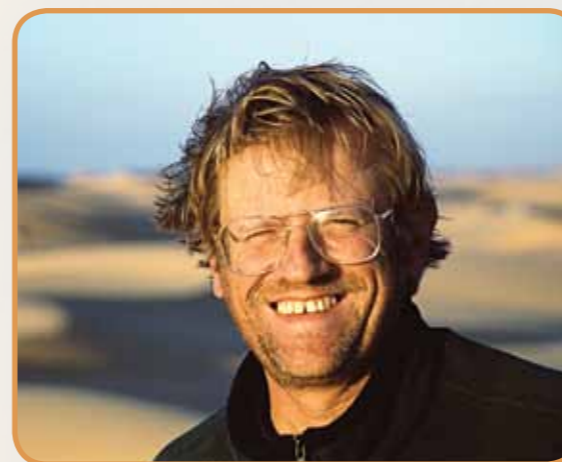
At the end of each session, the students were able to relate rock art with history according to the rock art timelines. They were able to learn about different cultures and traditions, and

appreciate rock art as a cultural gift from our ancestors. Rock art also ties to religious studies, and the children learnt about spiritualism and supreme powers in ancient times. The students were introduced to the topics of conservation and climate change in different parts of Africa, which complements the science syllabus. Making the connection between rock art and various national landmarks addressed bearings and directions, a topic covered in geography. While the NMK Education Section achieved its primary objectives (education and awareness) through this programme, it was also important because it opened young minds to the little known world of rock art, and contributed towards improving students' art skills. This was particularly evident in the creative artworks produced at the end of each session. The TARA-NMK collaboration was timely, and significantly contributed to the objectives of both TARA and the NMK's Education Section. - **by Esther Omosa, National Museums of Kenya.**

## CONTENTS

TARA and the NMK.....	1
Introduction to African Rock Art .....	2
Rock Art Sites.....	5
African Countries With Rock Art.....	6
Rock Art Conservation.....	8
Crosswords .....	10
Rock Art Studios.....	13
Artworks .....	16
Working with Rock Art .....	18
Fun pages .....	19

## INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN ROCK ART



A long time ago, all over the world, people used to paint and carve pictures into the natural rock in the areas they lived. In Africa, the pictures mainly represented animals and people, and also designs. Very rarely the artists painted plants; they never drew hills and rivers. The perspective, the way the images are placed in what may be scenes, is different from what we would draw today.

The earliest pictures that we can still see today may be as much as 10,000 years old. When you look at pictures in this booklet, remember that those ancient artists could not read or write as we do today. It makes us wonder how they could draw so accurately and engrave with such care. We must also remember that rock art painting and engravings were an early form of communication, because the artists were telling their communities about how they saw their world. This art is our heritage, a part of

our roots in this land. We must care for it so that our children and our children's children can also see, study and enjoy it.

- **by David Coulson, TARA Executive Chairman.**

**Do you know who Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela are?  
Read what they said about children and rock art.**

## AFRICAN LEADERS AND ROCK ART



**Kofi Annan (right) and Nelson Mandela (left)** are some of the most important African leaders in the world. Here is what they had to say about rock art:

**Kofi Annan:** "To Africa's children, I would like to say, you are the future of Africa. Study your proud history and protect Africa's rock art."

**Nelson Mandela:** "Africa's rock art is the common heritage of all Africans, but it is more than that. It is the common heritage of humanity."

## ROCK ART



Painting of concentric circles on Mfangano Island, Lake Victoria.

### What is rock art?

Rock art is the **prehistoric** artistic works made on rock hundreds or thousands of years ago. This means that a long time ago, when people wanted to draw or paint, they did it on rocks – because they did not have any paper, pencils or pens.

Rock art can be made by painting on rocks and these are called **Rock Paintings**.

People made their own paint by using different materials like charcoal, soft rocks, ochre (clay that is red, yellow or brown) and other dry things, and grinding them with stones to make **pigments**. A pigment is a dry powder, and when mixed with liquids like blood, milk, fat and plant juices, turns into paint. The liquids are known as **binders** because they help pigments to stick to the rock. After mixing their homemade paint, early humans would use their fingers, sticks, animal hairs or feathers to apply the paint on the rock.

Other images can be made by carving on the rocks and these are called **engravings**.

In ancient times, people used hard and sharp objects to make the engravings by picking the rock. Sometimes they used other rocks or stone knives. Sometimes the artist would first make an outline of the picture, and then scrape inside the line.



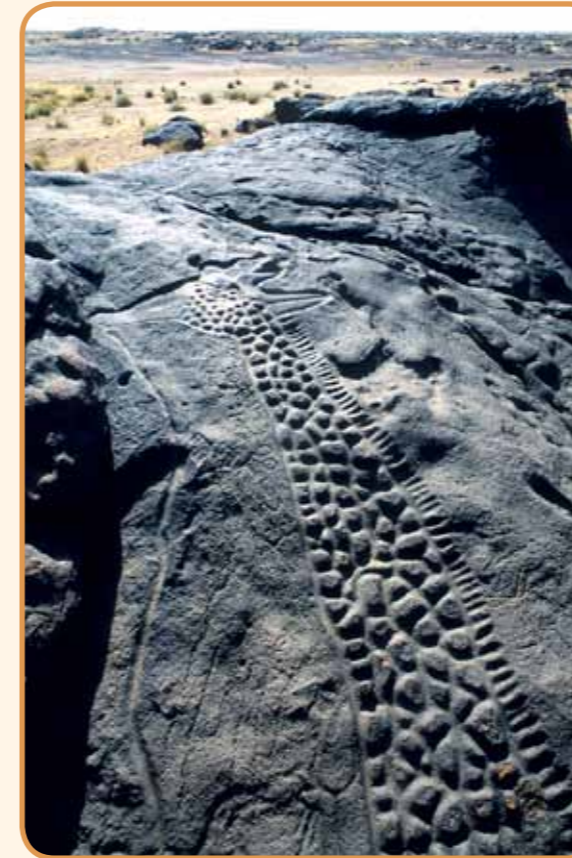
Engraving of a crocodile, Libya.

**Conservation tip: When you visit a rock art site, do not touch the art because your fingers leave sweat and oil on the art, which cannot be removed later.**

### What does rock art tell us?

Rock art is important because it gives us a clue into what happened a long time ago. For example, the image below shows a rock engraving found in Niger. When you look at rock paintings and engravings, you see animals, people and designs. We ask ourselves several questions:

what does the image mean, why did the artists make them and did the people use the images now for some long forgotten purposes? These are questions that are hard to answer. In fact, we can only guess the answers and we may never be certain if our guesses are correct.



### Which animal is this?

It is a giraffe, the tallest animal in the world. Niger is a country in Western Africa, and 80% of the country is covered by the largest desert in Africa, the Sahara Desert.

Why are giraffes so common? We don't know the answer, but we suspect that giraffe pictures may have been a symbolic representation of not just the animal, but of what giraffe meant to them. In southern Africa, Bushmen (also known as San) believe that giraffe are associated with rain and abundance.

### Look at this other image. What do you see?



This painting, which was found in Tanzania, shows a man with bow and arrow and a **kudu**.

A kudu is a large African antelope. This painting shows us that the man may have wanted to shoot the kudu, and it tells us that people hunted kudu a long time ago.

**Conservation tip: When you visit a rock art site, never pour liquids on the engravings and paintings! This spoils them and the damage cannot be undone.**

## ROCK ART SITES

A place where the rock art paintings and engravings are found is known as a **rock art site**. Rock art sites are found all over the world. Scientists (**archaeologists** and **anthropologists**) and photographers are still searching and learning new things about them. Photographers take pictures of the rock art so that people who live far away from rock art sites can see and learn about them.

The year in which a painting or engraving was made is known as its **date**. Finding the date for the rock art involves a lot of experiments, where scientists make tests. They can test the rocks or the pigment used to make the rock art. Scientists can also estimate the dates for the rock art by looking at similar rock art images that have already been dated.

For example, if the scientist sees that one image looks like another, he may believe that they were made by similar people at a similar time. This kind of dating works better when the rock art sites are near each other.

Finding the exact date that the art was made is really hard and therefore archaeologists and anthropologists usually give approximate dates. An approximate date is like saying 1,000 to 2,000 years ago. Finding the dates of the art is important because it can help us tell who made it.



**An archaeologist** (say “ar key olo gist”) is a person who looks at old things and sites to find out how people lived in the past.

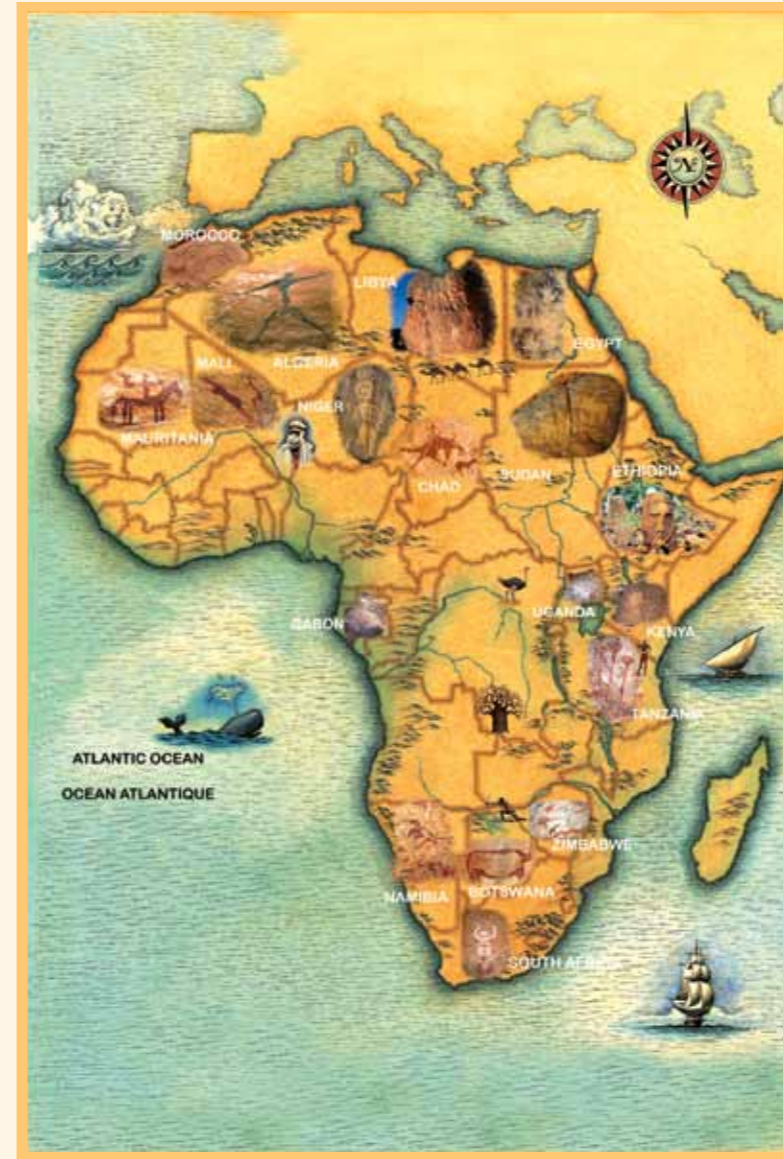
**An anthropologist** (say “an thro po lo gist”) is a person who studies the origins and changes of people and their cultures.

**A photographer** is a person who takes pictures with a camera.

**Note:** **Archaeologists** and **Anthropologists** also try to find out when the rock art was made and who made the rock art (a person who makes art is called an **artist**).

**Conservation tip:** Do not outline or fill in rock art engravings because it spoils the varnish and makes dating the art difficult. Varnish is the outer layer of an engraving or painting. Dating rock art helps us to learn who made the art.

## AFRICAN COUNTRIES WITH ROCK ART SITES



Rock art is found in many countries of Africa. Look at the map of Africa: do you know some of these countries?

Here are some examples of paintings and engravings found in Africa.



*Painting of a predator, Apollo 11 cave, Namibia.*



*Painting of a camel rider and a cow, Chad.*



*Painting of a man working on the hair of another person, Libya.*



*Painting of a man running with a bow, Algeria.*



Engraving of a rhinoceros with a small elephant inside, Morocco.



Painting of two therianthropes, South Africa.



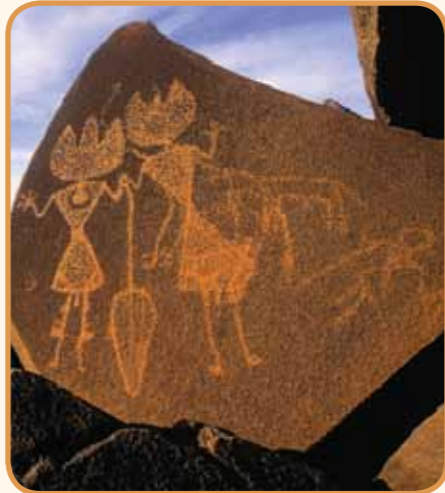
Painting of a hunter with a bow and arrow, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria.



Engraving of a man holding a giraffe by the tongue, Algeria.



Engraving of a camel at Kapesse, near Lake Turkana, in Northern Kenya.



Engraving of two warriors, Niger.

While reading this section you might find a few words that you do not know. Here is something that will explain some of those words to you:

**Domestic:** In this case, it means an animal that becomes used to being cared for by humans, for example cows, chickens and dogs.

**Eland:** One of the largest antelopes, it has a reddish-brown coat, with several well-defined vertical white stripes on the body.

**Kudu:** A large antelope that also has vertical white stripes on its body, and the males have long, twisted horns.

**Predator:** An animal that hunts and eats other animals, for example a lion or a leopard.

**Therianthropes:** These are mythical (imaginary) creatures that are part human and part animal.

## ROCK ART CONSERVATION

Sometimes a rock art site is damaged and this makes it hard to learn from it. Rock art can be spoiled by people, water and the sun. People damage rock art by writing on top of the image or on the rock. This prevents other people from learning from the rock art. Such writings are known as **graffiti**.

Sometime rock art gets damaged on its own because it is very old or when there is too much sun and rain.



For example, this painting of two men and a hippopotamus has become worn out naturally. It is found in Eland Cave in South Africa.

An interesting fact about rock art: Rock art has been recorded all over Africa



Engraving of mythical animals, now called Fighting Cats, Libya.

This is rock art engraving is found in **Libya** and it has been damaged by natural processes like the sun and rain because it is very old. In the place where this engraving is found, people **mine** (dig or drill below the ground) to find oil and the movement of the machines they use is also thought to damage the engraving.

When rock art is damaged, people cannot study it and learn about what happened a long time ago. We all need to **protect rock art** from any damage so that people in the future maybe able to see it. Protecting of rock art from damage is known as **conservation**.



Graffiti on rock painting, Nyero, Uganda.

This rock art was broken by people who were trying to steal it so they can sell it. Such people are known as **vandals**.



4,000 year old engraving in Southern Morocco broken by vandals.



Graffiti on rock painting, Kakapel in Western Kenya.

## MUSEUMS AND ROCK ART



The Abasuba Community Peace Museum is one of the first community museums in Kenya, thanks to its Founding Curator, Jack Obonyo. His desire to protect and promote the culture of his people, the Abasuba, led him to build a small community museum on his land. He began to

collect cultural objects (**artefacts**) and carry out research. With TARA's help, Jack worked with elders and the youth to encourage the protection of the nearby rock art sites, another important part of Suba culture. Jack transferred ownership of his plot to the Suba County Council in 2007.

Established in the 2000, the museum promotes and protects the cultural and natural heritage of the small and endangered Abasuba community. The museum works very closely with TARA and the National Museums of Kenya to manage the rock art sites. The museum is also a centre to promote traditional methods of peace and conflict resolution.

The construction of the Abasuba Museum and Community Centre was made possible by a project to promote rock art tourism in Suba District. TARA received funding for this project in 2007 from the European Union/Tourism Trust Fund. The project also helped to develop tourism facilities, train staff, set up signs at the rock art sites, and build piers that help the villagers and also make boat travel easier for tourists.

## JUNIOR CROSSWORD

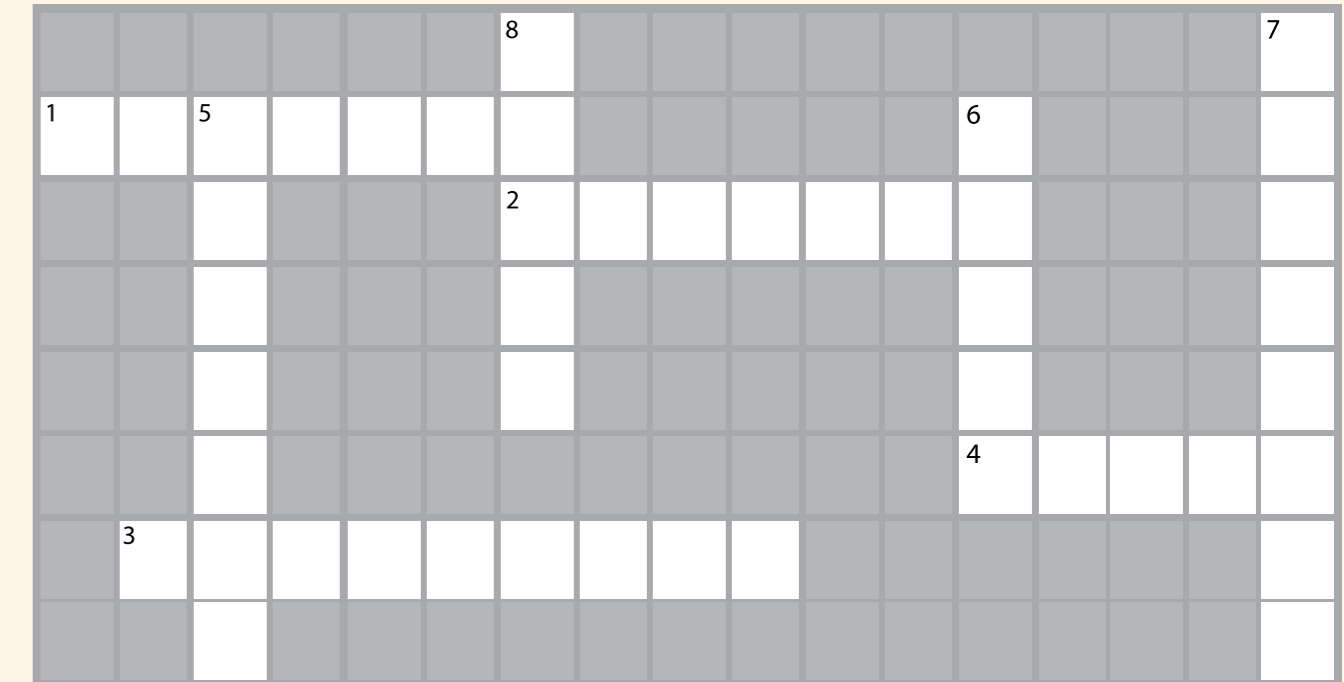
Try out these crossword puzzles to see how much you can remember!

### ACROSS

1. Which is the tallest animal in the world?
2. In which country is the painting of three people and a giraffe found?
3. Which animal lives in water and has a long, big mouth with many sharp teeth?
4. In which country is the engraving of the Fighting Cats found?

### DOWN

5. What do you call the art of people made a long time ago? (*two words*)
6. Which animal lives in the desert and has a hump?
7. Which animal has a long trunk and two tusks?
8. In which country is the engraving of the camel found?



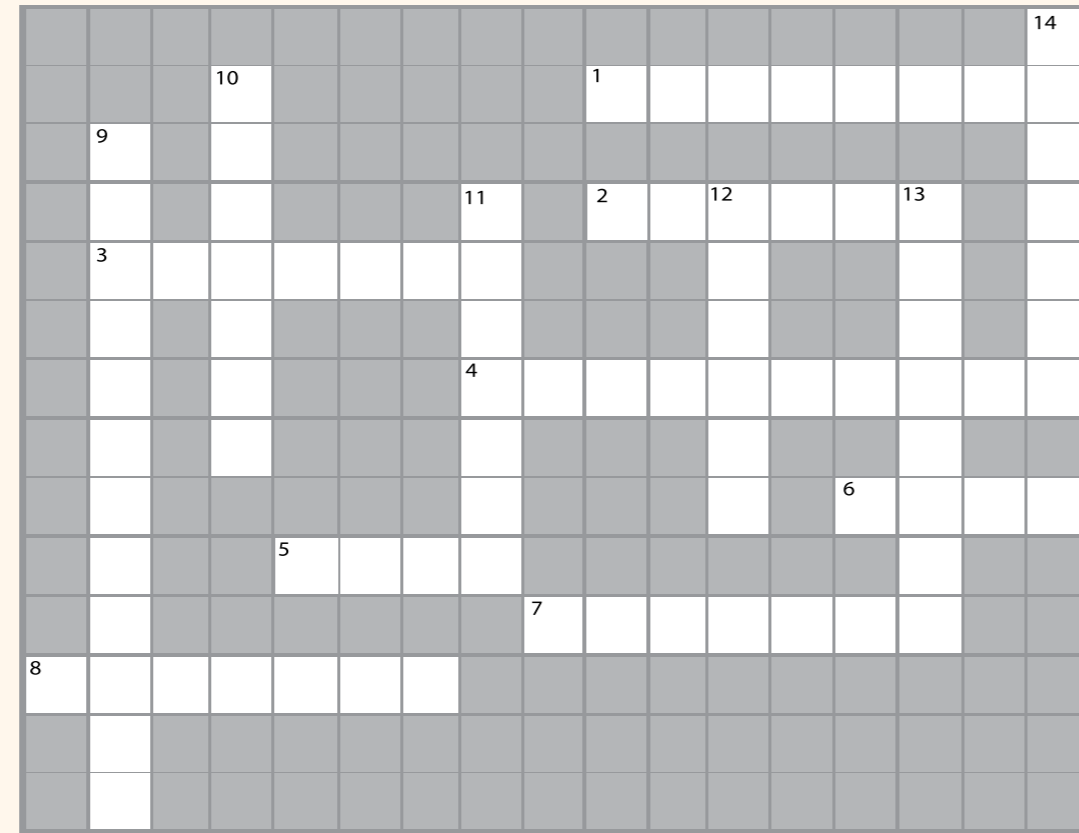
## SENIOR CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

1. In which country is the image of the kudu and a man with bow and arrow found?
2. In which place can people see displays of rock art and other historical and cultural features?
3. In which country in Africa is the predator image found?
4. What are the carvings on stone called?
5. What do you call a place where rock art is found?
6. What are the animals found in the engraving under threat in Libya?
7. The elephant inside a cow engraving is found in which country?
8. What do you call the liquids that help the paint stick to the rocks?

### DOWN

9. What do you call the protection of rock art and other environmental features?
10. What do you call the dry powdery substance used to make rock paintings?
11. In which region in Kenya is the image of the camel found?
12. Which is the biggest desert in Africa?
13. In which island is the image of concentric circles found?
14. What do you call people who destroy rock art by writing on it or breaking it?



## ROCK ART STUDIOS

A TARA rock art studio is a programme where school children learn about rock art. They are taught by assistants, called Attendants, and they watch videos, draw pictures, do puzzles and other fun activities, at the Nairobi Museum.



*Pupils from Arya Vedic participating in the thrilling puzzle game.*



*The winners of the puzzle game from Arya Vedic show off their prizes.*



*Pupils from Arya Vedic fill in their work sheets.*



*Pupils from Little Scholar Academy try their hand at the Wheel of Knowledge game.*



*Time to eat... after an exciting studio session.*



*Pupils from Memusi Academy learning how to play the Wheel of Knowledge game.*

## ROCK ART STUDIOS



*Pupils from Parklands Primary relaxing during their lunch break.*



*Pupils from Parklands Primary learn how rock art was used to communicate with the divine.*



*Lower primary pupils from Riara Primary fill in their worksheets.*



*Lower primary pupils from Little Scholars being taken through the rock art shelter.*



*Upper primary pupils from Riara Primary fill in their worksheets.*



*Pupils from Our Lady of Visitation learn about rock art conservation.*

## ROCK ART STUDIOS

**Some Students participated in our essay writing competition. Here are the best essays:**

### PARKLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL.

*Charity Wanjiku, age 13*

I went to the Nairobi Museum with my school and got a chance to see the TARA rock art exhibition. It highlighted the historical and cultural importance of rock art in Kenya, East Africa and the whole African continent. Rock art was drawn by our forefathers. In Eastern Africa, there are some tall rocks with faded paintings standing on a giraffe outcrop in western Uganda. In Tanzania there is a late white painting of a giraffe while in northern Sudan, we found a scene with the people and long horned cattle.

I learnt that these arts are very important because when tourists are attracted they bring money that earns our country foreign exchange. It is good to preserve this African heritage and safeguard it.

*Grace Wanjiru, age 15*

Rock art offers tantalizing glimpses into early cultural beliefs. During our school's visit to the Dawn of Imagination Exhibition at the Nairobi Museum, I learnt that Morocco has some of the most extraordinary rock art in Africa with hundreds of sites. The art represents different styles from different periods. TARA is hoping to raise money for a joint community conservation project in the Draa Valley. I also learnt that rock art is in constant danger due to domestic and political tension and therefore TARA has spent so much time trying to record it.

**Conservation tip: if you find a rock art site, please tell an adult or tell your teacher so that they can inform the National Museum or TARA about it.**

### MEMUSI ACADEMY

*Leon Lusigi, age 13*

What I liked about the rock art exhibition was the collection of various paintings and engravings. I was fascinated on seeing how our ancestors could carve pictures on rocks. They could also paint and decorate rocks with concentric circles. I also like the collection of different engravings of crocodiles from Libya and the elephant in the rhinoceros engraving. There was also another interesting engraving of a kudu antelope and a man with a bow and arrow. Lastly, I would like to thank TARA for accommodating us, feeding us and above all I thank all of you for letting us see all these natural prehistoric sites free of charge; we could not have discovered those great sites on our own.

*Roy Njoroge, age 14*

When I went into the rock art gallery, I was most excited by the two horse chariot. The horses appeared to be running really fast and the man riding them was very tall and thin. He did not have a head and when I saw him first, I thought he was a woman! The reason why I thought that was because of the clothes he wore. The two horse chariot also had a very nice colour and shape that is similar to real horses. At the end of the exhibition I came to learn that rock art started thousands of years ago. I would like to thank TARA for discovering those paintings and engravings; it was a great honour to see them.



## ROCK ART STUDIOS

### LITTLE PRINCE PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Faustine Ochieng, age 9*

At the museum we went into a place that looked like a big cave with drawings on it. We met an attendant, Wycliffe, who told us that this was a rock art cave. He said that the drawings were made a long time ago. We also saw a picture of some people standing in a line and we were told that they were looking for wives. We then went to the spinning wheel and we played that game and won. The boys only had 5 points and that was what I enjoyed the most.

*Janepius Akumu, age 9*

My classmates and I went for an amazing trip at the National Museum, and we were taken to the rock art cave. The attendant there taught us more about rock art and the story was very nice and we were happy as a king.

The attendant also taught us more about where the rock art is found. He later asked us questions about the rock art. He then showed us rock art done by a lady from Tanzania. Her painting was very nice and it looked like the sun.

The most interesting part was when we spun the wheel of knowledge game in which we girls won. It was an amazing trip to the Nairobi National Museum.

*Nancy Awino, age 9*

When I went to visit the National Museum saw so many interesting things. We saw ancestral people. Our attendant taught us interesting stories about them and their paintings. The paintings had human bodies and like animals. He later took us for a competition against the boys, which we girls won. It was a good day and I liked it.

### A TEACHER'S VIEW

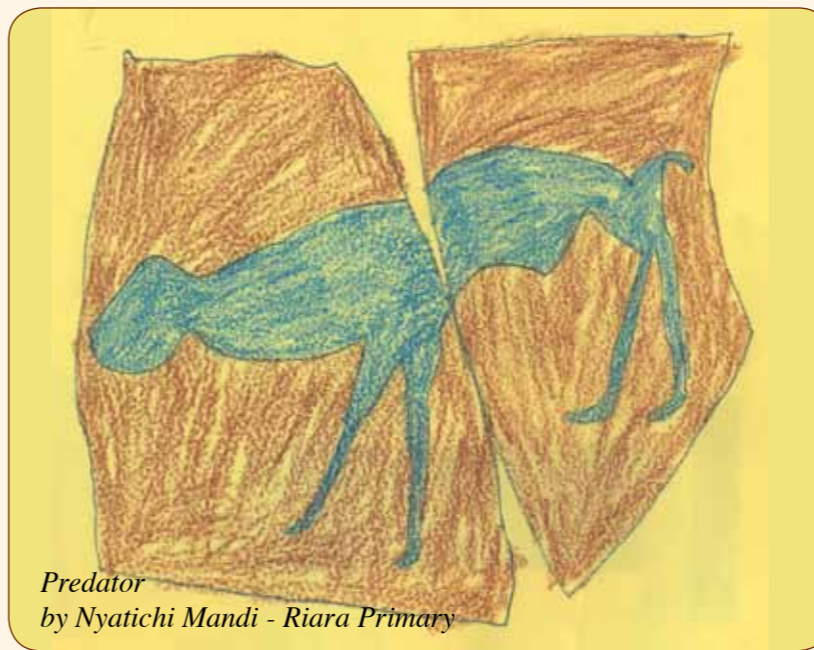
*Florence Munene, Parklands Primary School*

On several occasions during my social studies lessons, I have mentioned that rock art was done by the San in their caves. The paintings and engravings were mainly of animals, which spoke a lot about their economic and social systems.

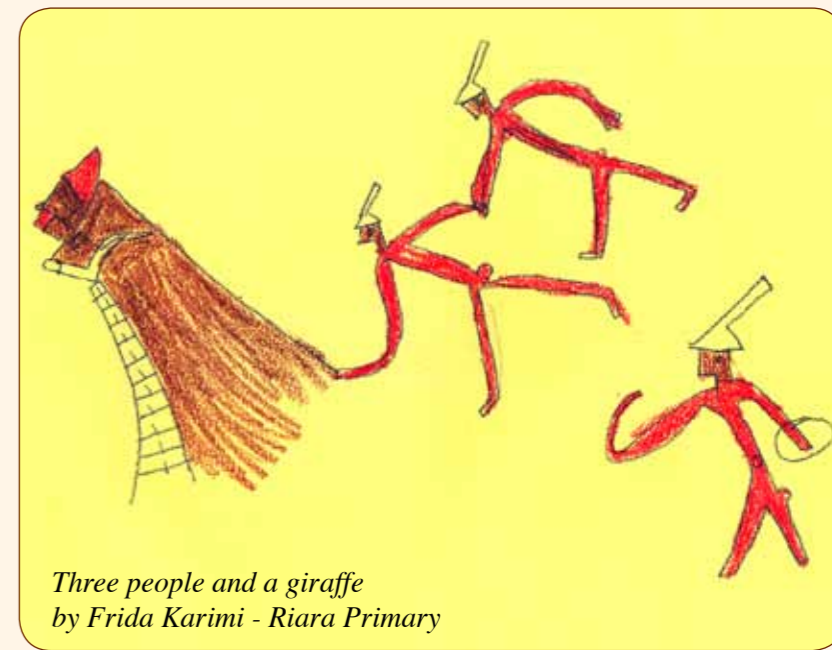
The TARA exhibition is well organised, systematically set and full of rich information. The cave displays some of the rock art in real form thanks to the 3-D laser scanning technology. One feels like he/she is at the actual site. Thanks to the organisers of the exhibition, my pupils had a chance to visit the gallery and learnt a lot about rock art. Personally, this exhibition came at the right time since I am currently undertaking my under-graduate degree course. I was well equipped to write a paper in history on the domestication of animals and another one in human geography and technology. Educating people on this great African heritage and taking greater initiatives on conservation is vital.

Conservation tip: do not try to make your own engravings or write your name on the rocks. Doing this destroys the value of the painting and it is not fair for the other visitors.

## ARTWORKS



*Predator*  
by Nyatichi Mandi - Riara Primary



*Three people and a giraffe*  
by Frida Karimi - Riara Primary



*Concentric circles*  
by Monali Pate - Arya Videc



*Painting of a person riding on a chariot*  
by Drupad D. Revankar - Arya Verdic

## ARTWORKS



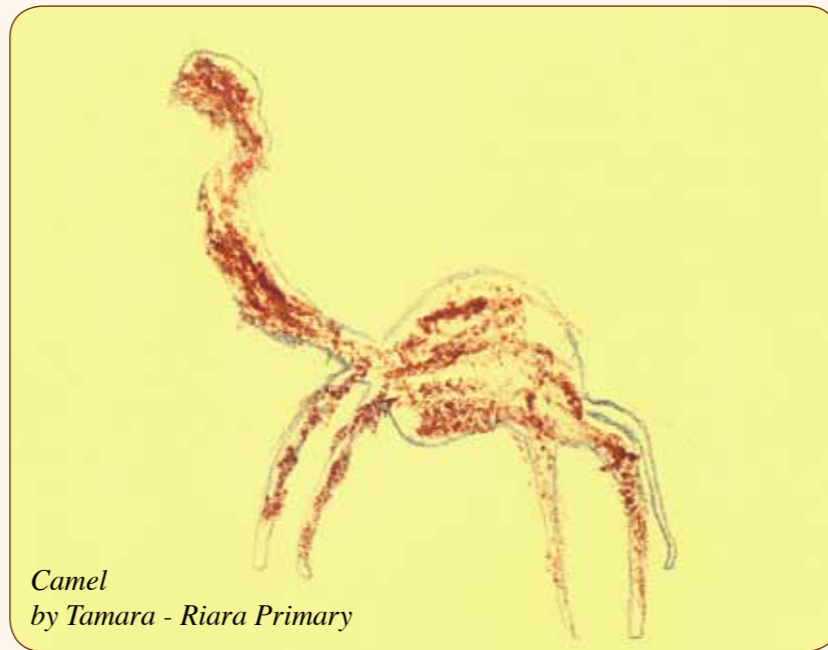
*Giraffe*  
by Stephanie - Riara Primary



*Fighting cats*  
by Sheila Bulimu - Parklands Primary



*Concentric circles*  
by Ray - Little Scholars Academy



*Camel*  
by Tamara - Riara Primary

## WORKING WITH ROCK ART

### ROCK ART STUDIO ATTENDANTS

A studio attendant is someone who teaches children about rock art in a museum. For example, at the Nairobi National Museum, some young men and women talked to you about what rock art is, when it was made, where it is found, why it is important and why it is in danger. Here are some of the things they had to say about working with you.



#### Martin Sande - Studio attendant

I meet people from all over the world at the rock art gallery in the museum. I especially enjoy working with young visitors. I always try as much as possible to ensure young visitors, regardless of their ages, understand what rock art is. After guiding a group of children within the gallery, I ask them questions on what they have learnt and it always feels good when I receive answers from the children. It's been inspiring and motivating to see school children leaving the rock art gallery having gained knowledge about old paintings and engravings on rocks.



#### Wycliffe Msita - Studio attendant

I am sure most of you have seen me in the TARA rock art gallery. My job is really interesting since I meet a lot of different people, they come from different countries from all over the world. I get to teach people of all races and ages about Africa's rock art heritage but I really love talking to children because they make me smile. Sometimes my job is very tough when people don't pay attention, or when they touch the rock art or sit on the rock shelter, which damages it. Rock art has now become a part of my life and I know a lot about it, unlike when I first began. When teaching children about rock art, I make them attentive by telling them jokes, short stories and making funny faces. It is really fun to work in the rock art gallery.

### CURATORS

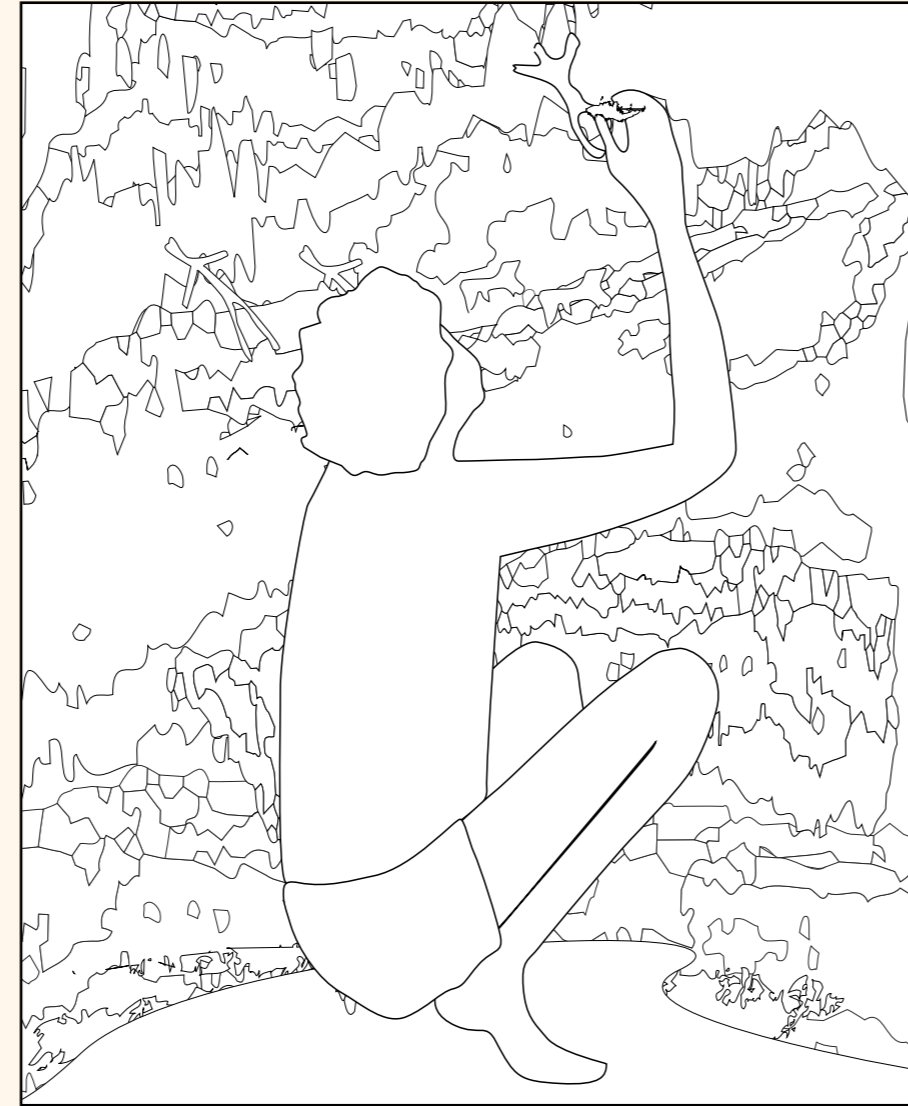


#### Jack Obonyo - Curator

A curator is a person who is in charge of a museum, or of its collections. I am the founder and curator of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum (page 9). When I got married, my father gave me some land to build a new home for my family. Instead, I wanted to help my community on Mfangano Island of Lake Victoria, and I decided to build a museum on my land that would promote and protect the heritage of the Abasuba people, and also the rock art found on the island. An example of the rock art found in the area is the Kwitone concentric circles on page 3. With the help of TARA, we were able to build a bigger and better museum to teach everybody about the Abasuba culture and the wonderful rock art found in the area. As the curator, I take care of the collections in the museum and give information to the visitors who want to see the rock art sites.

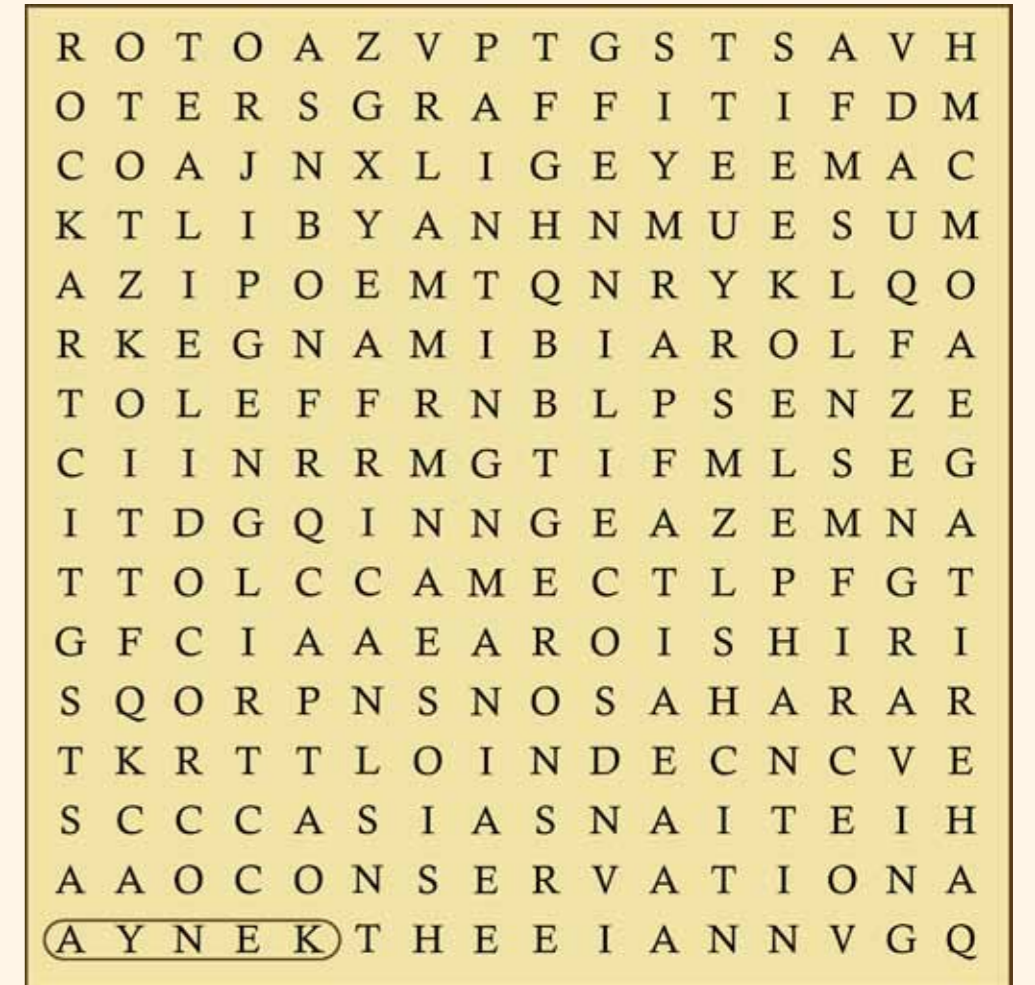
COLOUR ME

Please help Tommy find the rock art site!



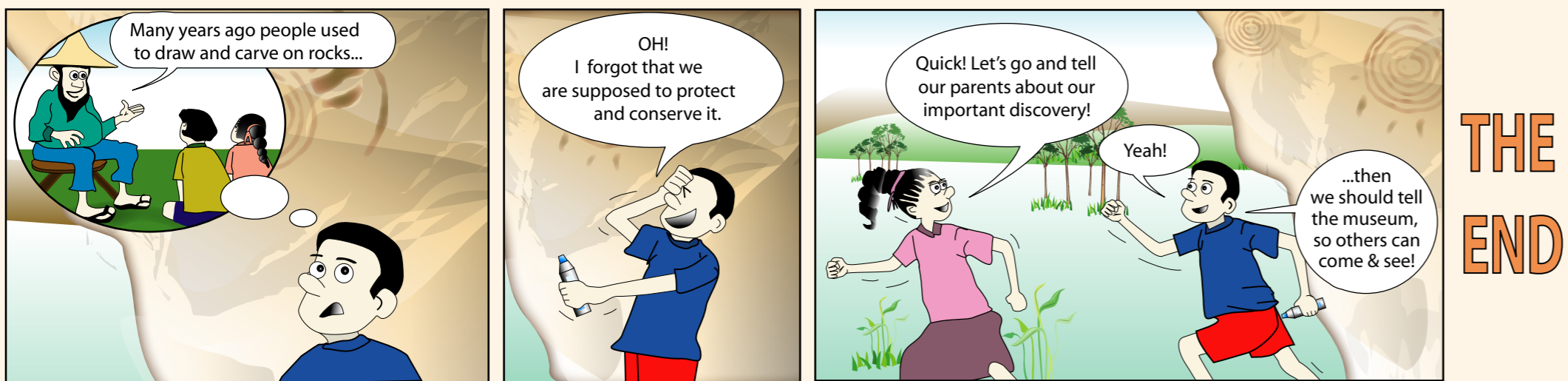
Find the following words in the word puzzle. The first one has been done for you. The words run in all directions.

- 1. Kenya
- 2. Africa
- 3. Rock art
- 4. Engraving
- 5. Namibia
- 6. Elephant
- 7. Crocodile
- 8. Sahara
- 9. Camel
- 10. Pigment
- 11. Museum
- 12. Conservation
- 13. Graffiti
- 14. Libya
- 15. Painting
- 16. TARA
- 17. San
- 18. Mask
- 19. Heritage
- 20. Cave



# Rockart Adventure

by Joseph Weche



## THE END

## SOLUTIONS

### JUNIOR CROSSWORD

#### ACROSS

1. Giraffe, 2. Namibia, 3. Crocodile, 4. Libya

#### DOWN

5. Rockart, 6. Camel, 7. Elephant, 8. Kenya

### SENIOR CROSSWORD

#### ACROSS

1. Tanzania, 2. Museum, 3. Namibia 4. Engravings, 5. Site, 6. Cats, 7. Morocco, 8. Binders

#### DOWN

9. Conservation, 10. Pigment, 11. Kapesse, 12. Sahara, 13. Mfangano, 14. Vandals

