

Maya Blue and You

Humans have been using color for centuries.
How do you use blue compared to the Maya?

Summary:

The color blue had special meaning to the Maya culture. How do you connect with blue? Where can you find it in your life?

Guiding Questions:

Where is blue in your home?

Why is that object blue?

Does it have special meaning to you?

Experience Goals:

- Think about how blue is special to you and your family.
- Explore your home for blue items and think about why they are that color.

Supplies:

- History of Maya Blue (page 4)
- Collection of Blue form (page 5)
- Optional: camera

Steps:

1. Learn about Maya Blue

- a. Explore how the Maya culture used the color blue. Read through the Info Sheet. Why was it important to them?
- b. Think about how blue is important to you? Do you have things that are blue?

2. Go on a Scavenger Hunt!

- a. Look for blue items around your home.
- b. Collect them on the Collection of Blue Form.
Bonus: take a picture!
- c. Why are these items blue? How are they important to you?

3. Make a Blue Collection

- a. Organize your blue objects however you would like! By size? Shade of blue? Importance to you?
- b. Share your collection with family or friends!

Extensions:

Explore other cultures to see what colors were special to them. *What do the colors on flags represent? Are there different meanings in different countries?*

Go outside! Can you find blue in nature? Why is that plant or animal blue? How does it help them survive?

Find inspiration in organizing a collection with a video from the **Brain Scoop**:

<https://www.fieldmuseum.org/blog/taxonomy-candy>

Write a story about the blue items you discovered. Here are a couple ways you might start your story:

- “I went on an adventure to find blue, and I discovered...”
- “Looking around my house, I was surprised to find a blue...”

History of Maya Blue

What is Maya Blue? Maya Blue is a pigment of blue that the Maya culture used in art and rituals. The pigment is stable, so its vibrant color can still be seen in areas today (other pigments fade over time). Field Museum researchers recently discovered it was created by heating dye from the indigo plant and palygorskite (white clay mineral from the area).



Where did the Maya live? When were they making Maya Blue? The Maya culture was spread across the Yucatan Peninsula in modern day Mexico. Maya Blue is thought to be used as early as 300 BC.

How did the Maya use blue? Blue was an important color to the Maya culture. It represented both water and rebirth, and was a part of religion and rituals. Water was an important resource for the Maya as they depended on seasonal rain. Maya Blue was used to celebrate rains and appeal to the rain god.

How do we know about this? Around the turn of the 20th century, an incense bowl was pulled out of a cenote (sinkhole) along with many other artifacts. These were acquired by the Field Museum where they were safely kept for decades. While researching Maya Blue, researchers rediscovered this incense bowl and found that it contained the ingredients of Maya Blue. This also showed that Maya Blue was created through the burning of incense, helping to resolve the mystery of how the pigment was created.



Example of a cenote where the incense bowl was found.



Incense bowl currently in the Field Museum collection

Collection of Blue Form

Blue Item	Description
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