Anticipated Learning Outcomes

- Students will begin to observe natural objects carefully and note intricate design and structure beyond surface form.
- In discussion, students will learn how patterns result from natural growth processes (e.g., shell growth) and land-shaping processes (e.g., erosion).

Background

Art is a fun way to encourage children to see the world around them and increase their visual awareness. Natural objects like shells, rocks, minerals, and plants have subtle and striking detail, regularity of pattern, texture, and shape. By exploring natural design, students will be encouraged to observe the natural world more closely.

Materials

- Paper, pencils, colored pencils or crayons, drawing surface
- Magnifying glass
- Natural objects (e.g., modern seashells, fossils, rocks, or minerals)

Procedures

1. Pair children or allow them to select partners.
2. One student chooses a natural object and describes its features, without naming it, to the other student who is facing the other way and cannot see the object.
3. The one who is describing the object must examine it closely (with and without a magnifying glass) and note the intricate detail of shape, texture, and color.
4. The other student must listen to this information and draw the object being described.
5. When finished, students compare the drawing with the object.
6. Students switch places and select another subject.

Discussion

Once the students have examined a range of subjects, begin discussing some of the controls on form. For example, shell growth can be considered to be controlled by both inherited and
environmental factors. The growth and shape of crystals are determined by their internal chemical composition and molecular structure. In addition, the processes of weathering and erosion break down and wear away rocks and landscapes, and often produce beautiful patterns.

References

Criswell, Susie Gwen, 1986, Nature with Art: Classroom and Outdoor Art Activities with Natural History: New York, Prentice Hall Press, 146 p. [Criswell's book describes a number of art activities that can be adapted for earth science classes.]