

Colorful marks: past and present  
perceptions of the development and use of  
the colored crayon.

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# Colorful marks : past and present perceptions of the development and use of the colored crayon



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## **Abstract**

This study investigated how the crayon has become a staple in schools and American childhood since its introduction in 1903 by the company of Binney and Smith (Crayola). At the dawn of the 20th Century Edwin Binney and C. Harold Smith began investigating the materials found within schools and seeking opportunities to improve the waxy sticks. The company's most notable product was the Crayola, which has not only become synonymous with the word crayon but has found a deeply rooted place in America's history. The goal of this research was to provide a narrative for a material that is often overlooked but utilized in classrooms, specifically art settings, throughout the United States. It also considers how the Crayola Crayon has impacted art education curriculum and speculates about the future implications of this common drawing implement. This study used historical interpretation of archive data from the Archives Center at Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, DC. An investigation of archived data, antiquated textbooks, creativity resources, and other available ephemeral items shed light on individuals and resources that have been overlooked since the Crayola Crayon's inception. Using historical investigation, two sets of data were put forth and explored through information gathered from the archive and other available sources. First, study was made into the historical evolution of the Crayola Crayon and the many advances made by Binney and Smith in efforts to support their product. Second, a detailed investigation was made into the available classroom textbooks and curriculum centering around the crayon, including auxiliary creativity resources. This research concluded with a reflection detailing the challenges that occur when conducting historic research and some avenues of the Crayola Crayon that are yet to be explored.

## **Department**

Art Education

## **Subject**

Art education

Material culture

Classroom supplies

Art supplies

Crayons

Colored crayons

Binney and Smith

Crayola

## **URI**

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