

Although face painting brings kid's birthday parties or a face-painting booth at the Carnival to mind, face painting dates back to ancient Egypt, when face painting was used to honor their gods with representations of oxen, rams, bulls and snakes. Minerals and the finest pigments were employed in their palettes.

Similarly, Native Americans had a face painting tradition using clay, minerals and plants, mixed with water to create richly colored paints to use in traditional dances, festivals and as war paints. Often, the entire body was painted. Motifs were heavily slanted to cultural symbols of nature and animals figured prominently.

The face painting tradition has universal appeal, as evident in the kid's face painting kits you can buy today. Children's birthday parties are a perfect occasion to introduce little ones into this fun tradition.

It's worth a little experimentation with face painting ideas by the designated adult face painter. Kids often have their own ideas ready to go by the time the party starts.

When purchasing face paint, be sure it's approved for use on the skin. These kits are available in powder and liquid forms. Choose a kit with a large selection of colors, to satisfy a variety of requests.

Girls tend to have a wider range of face painting ideas than boys, probably because butterflies, ballerinas and flower and leaf designs are viewed by boys as sissy subjects not suitable to their more manly tastes. Girls enjoy big painted silly eyelashes, rosy cheeks and painted lips. Fairies, kitty faces or a favorite My Little Pony character are enthusiastically received by girls. Fake hair is popular with girls, painted down the sides of the face, just down to the jawbone.

Boys aren't so open to the girls notions of proper face painting ideas. Boys want more masculine powerful looking face paintings. Pink and delicate flowers are not their cup of tea. The King of the Jungle, a roaring lion with two-toned mane, brings a smile to a little boy's face, as will a fierce tiger in orange, white and black stripes. Action figure heroes are also winners. Boys like brighter colors, black and white designs with a bold and growly look. Warrior face painting ideas will appeal to boys too.

Face painting ideas need not be confined to the face. Arm and leg designs can provide hours of wondrous examination to a child. Paint a bracelet or armband design. Little ivy vines twining down an arm or around an ankle is a lot of fun.

Adventurous adults should not be left out of the fun. Face painting is for

everyone. Be sure your kit is non-toxic and be prepared to closely supervise this activity. Kids have been known to eat paint!