CREATE A SUN PRINT

Materials Needed:
- Sun print paper
- Various objects to make prints with (leaves, shells, feathers, small toys, shapes cut out of cardstock, etc.)
- Index card or cardboard square
- Shallow container with water or sink with running water
- Paper towels.
- Sunny day and outside access

What To Do:
1. Gather objects to make your artwork. Small, flat items work best, but be creative. You can look at sun prints on the internet for inspiration.
2. Once you have decided on your design, place your objects to the sun print paper (blue side up). Be sure to prepare your sun print in a shaded area, as direct sunlight will expose the sun print paper too quickly.
3. Take your sun print outside. Place it in bright sun for five to ten minutes, until most of the color disappears from the paper. The sunnier it is, the less time it will take. If it is partly cloudy, leave the paper outside for longer.
4. Rinse your paper in the pan of water or in the sink for one minute, until it turns dark blue. Lay the paper flat on paper towels to dry. Your masterpiece is complete!

For the classroom:
Have students work in small groups to create their sun print art or designate classroom ‘sun artists’ to create the work. While all students won’t be able to create their own masterpiece, they will all have the opportunity to appreciate the underlying scientific principle.

How does it work?
Sun prints are a type of cyanotype, a process that uses sunlight to develop images. Sun prints are coated with a chemical that is sensitive to ultraviolet light. When the paper is exposed to ultraviolet light emitted by the Sun, two molecules react and form a new colorless molecule. Areas of the sun print that are covered by objects don’t allow the ultraviolet light to reach that area of the paper, so it remains blue. Rinsing the paper in water washes away the original blue compound, so those areas of the paper turn white. The water also reacts with the colorless molecule and turns it a deep blue. Together, you get a sun print!

Sun prints created by Janelle Lorenzen.