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# Clay Owls



**Grade:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

**Medium:** Ceramics

**Learning Objective:** Students will:

- Identify different kinds of actual texture: rough, smooth, bumpy
- Use tools to create texture in soft clay
- Create an object using the slab clay method that contains texture

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## Elements of Art

**Texture:** the art element that refers to how objects look or feel. Textures can be visual, seen with the eyes, or tactile, both seen with the eyes as well as felt when touched. Actual texture is natural (tactile). Simulated texture is artificial (visual).

## Principles of Design

**Balance:** the visual weight of the elements of the composition. In this lesson it is symmetrical, in which both sides are a mirror-image

**Pattern:** the uniform repetition of any of the elements of art.

## Vocabulary Words

**Clay:** A fine-grained, firm material that is plastic (sculpt-able) when wet and hardens under extreme heat, consisting primarily of water, silica (sand) and finely grained rock. It is widely used in making bricks, tiles, and pottery.

**Kiln:** the hot 'oven' for clay which gets much hotter than the kitchen oven.

**Glaze:** a layer of colored glass (silica) and minerals that can also harden during a kiln firing.

**Score:** to scratch hash marks on both pieces of clay where they are to be joined

**Slip:** wet clay the consistency of melted ice cream, used to adhere scored pieces of clay together.

## **Materials & Supplies**

- Clay slabs 3/8" thick ( cut 1" piece from clay block and then run through slab roller at 1/2" then turn slab 90 degrees and run through roller at 3/8" ). If prepping a whole class – run all through the clay roller at higher height then all through at lower height to save time.
- Texture tools (bolts, Legos, stamps, popsicle sticks) on trays to put at each table
- Canvas cloths for tables
- Pencils for temporarily placing through ears to create tunnel for later threading wire
- Styrofoam or paper 9" circle plates to use as template for making circle in clay
- Small cookie cutters (circles, stars, hearts) for making pieces for eyes and feet (talons)
- Clay plastic knives or skewers
- Small bowls with a little water or slip for smoothing edges and to apply to scored sections
- Dull pencils or skewers for writing names on back of project
- Old forks or wire scoring tools
- Wire 20-gauge
- Beads

## **Context (History and/or Artists)**

How long have clay projects been around? Clay pots have been found in current day Iran and China that date back to 5000 B.C. – that's more than 7000 years ago! People used clay to make containers for food and to make bricks to build houses (baked clay mixed with straw called adobe). Back then they used fire to cook and harden the clay. Today, in modern times, a kiln is used.

## **Advanced Preparation**

- Book two sessions – one for building and one for glazing.
- Allow at least one hour to roll clay into slabs. This can be done the day before and placed in a large plastic storage container. Place plastic trash bags between each layer of slabs and place moist sponges in the corners of the tub before sealing with a lid. Gather texture tools and other supplies ahead of time to use the day of the wet clay lesson.
- Create a beak template.
- For the glazing lesson, prepare the glazes by stirring and pouring into small bowls for the kids to paint on their projects.

## **Tips & Tricks**

- Don't forget to remove the pencil before leaving clay to air dry or it will get stuck as the clay shrinks while drying.
- Use one brush per color of glaze, this cuts down on mixing of glazes.
- When cutting clay, hold the cutting implement vertically to insure a vertical edge is cut.

## Tips for glazing bisqueware

- make sure glaze is well mixed (use a spoon or back end of a paintbrush to mix all the sediment at the bottom of the jar or your color will be much lighter)
- pour small amounts of glaze into tiny bowls and label the butcher paper next to the bowl since several colors may look alike in the liquid state (any unused glaze should go back in the container – we salvage every drop since it is expensive)
- apply 3 coats of glaze with a brush— the glaze is applied with a paintbrush but does not go on like paint. The liquid in the glaze will be pulled into the bisque clay causing it to dry very quickly. The brush is used to blot the glaze on since it can't be dragged very far before the liquid dries
- Glazing brushes should be used only with glaze
- Glazes may not look like the color they will turn out so use test tiles to show students the color it will be after the glaze firing
- Glazes do not mix like paint to create a blended color
- Glazed pieces can be stored indefinitely until glaze fired in the kiln however they should not be stacked on each other until after firing as the glaze can scratch off
- Glaze should not be applied to the part of the project that will touch the kiln shelf as it will adhere to the shelf and could break trying to remove it. If glaze accidentally gets on the bottom of the project, use a wet sponge and wipe off the glaze before firing in the kiln
- Glazed pieces should have at least ¼ inch space between each other in the kiln so that they don't permanently adhere to each other
- Fire the glaze load at cone 06 (make sure it's not 6 because this is much hotter and it will turn your low fire clay into a puddle)

### Discussion Points

- Clay is made up of minerals from the earth – specifically silica and alumina. Often clay is found near rivers where small particles of rock are carried down to a lower part and collect together to form clay.
- Clay is plastic when it's wet –which means it can be pushed, stretched, stamped, or impressed.
- Clay shrinks and hardens as it dries. When wet it has no structural strength. It can slump or distort if handled roughly. Bone-dry clay is quite brittle before firing.
- Clay vitrifies when subjected to sufficient heat in the kiln. It can become hard, durable and waterproof with the application of glaze.
- A special electric oven called a kiln is used to cook the clay. How hot does your kitchen oven at home reach when you are cooking food? 375 or 400 degrees F? Our kiln will cook these projects at about 1800 -2000 degrees F.
- Cooking in a kiln is called firing. This is important because it makes the clay stronger and more waterproof. Clay that has been kiln fired would not return to a soft state even if it were in water for a long time. That is because the extreme heat causes permanent physical

and chemical changes to occur. These reactions, among other changes, cause the clay to be converted into a ceramic material.

- When the project is completely dry it will be fired in the kiln for the first time (bisque fired) and look like this when they are done (hold up a sample of bisque fired piece).
- After that, there will be a second art session when students will paint the projects with glaze, a special liquid like a paint that's made of materials that include ground up glass. The piece will then be fired again in the kiln and will turn out like this (show a glaze-fired piece).
- Discuss texture, symmetrical balance and pattern. Write the definitions on the board, read them aloud and use those terms during the lesson.

### **Reflection Point (Assessment of Learning Objectives)**

- Students will identify different kinds of actual texture: rough, smooth, bumpy.
- Students will use tools to create texture in soft clay.
- Students will create an object using the slab clay method that contains texture.

### **Instructions for Lesson**

Use the overhead projector or gather the students close to show them this process. Demonstrate the whole process then walk the students through it again with them doing it at their desks.

1. Demonstrate placing a paper plate on their clay and cutting with their implement held vertically (like a tree), setting the scrap aside and smoothing the edges with their finger.

Cut out 9" circle of 3/8" thick clay slab  
by tracing a paper plate

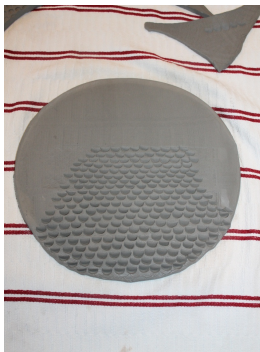


Smooth edges of circle & write name  
on back with a dull pencil



2. Talk about textures here. Have students practice making patterns in their scrap clay with multiple tools. They are looking for three textures that they want to use on their owl.
3. When they are happy with a tool & pattern then have them press the chest pattern they have chosen into the clay circle.

### Make Impressions on Circle



4. Have students watch this again, then let them fold in their wings and add texture to their wings.

Fold over both sides for wings



Add texture to your wings



5. Stop students and demonstrate this part again.
  - a. Gently place the pencil on the clay and then fold over the top portion about 1/3 the way down the body.
  - b. Pinch little 'ear' points at the edges of the fold
  - c. Stamp a pattern around the border of the head making sure to avoid the pencil.
  - d. It is important that they can move the pencil after they have pressed the texture around their owl's head.
6. Have students complete this step.

Place pencil, fold over head



## Pinch clay to shape ears



7. Demonstrate cutting out different sized circles for eyes and feet. If texture is desired, texture the clay before cutting out the circles.

## Cut out eyes



8. Demonstrate attaching the eye parts together by scoring and adding slip (or a damp finger) to both surfaces. Then gently press together. When you have completed one eye, demonstrate the same technique for adding it to the face.



9. Use a template to cut out the beak.

### Cut triangle for beak



10. Have students complete this step.

Score and Slip (scratch and wet) to attach clay parts  
(it's like making velcro so clay pieces stick together)



11. Attach the beak and feet in the same way as step 9.



Attach feet & remove pencil before drying



12. Have adult helpers gently place the piece face down in their hand and write the students name and year on the back.
13. Remove the pencil before the pieces dry, perhaps as you are storing them for drying.
14. When warm and dry to the touch (approximately 2 weeks later), bisque fire owls.
15. Using the tips for glazing bisque ware, have students glaze their owls.
16. Pieces can go directly back into the kiln for a glaze firing, no drying time needed.
17. Students can string wire, beaded wire, colored pipe cleaners or cording through the pieces for hanging.



Examples:





#### References and Attributions:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceramic\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceramic_art)

[https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building\\_lessons/elements\\_art.pdf](https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf)

<https://www.thoughtco.com/principles-of-art-and-design-2578740>

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#### **Notes for Educators:**

##### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Skills**

Thinking flexibly, persisting, creating, taking responsible risks, observing, making connections, visualizing, sequencing, comparing/contrasting, decision making.

##### **WA State Learning Standards**

(VA:Cr1.2.2) a. Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity. This happens when using the tools to make different textures

(VA:Cr2.2.2) a. Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces.

(VA:Cr3.1.2) a. Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork. This happens when choosing tools to make texture.

(VA:Pr5.1.2) a. Distinguish between different materials or artistic techniques for preparing artwork for presentation. This happens when planning ahead to hand the piece by making an opening for the wire, pipe cleaner or cord.

(VA:Re9.1.2) a. Use learned art vocabulary to express preferences about artwork. This happens when art vocabulary is used during this lesson.