

Slab Clay Figure Market Woman (art + social studies)

Students create a figure reflecting a culture. The hand-built sculpture must be an interpretation of the culture's economic and social development. The clay can be self-hardening or kiln-fired. The instructions for this lesson plan are based on self-hardening clay.

Grade Levels 9-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives

- Student's work must communicate and in visual form express humanities
- Art mediums, techniques and processes combine in the student's personal interpretation of history and culture
- This exercise is totally hand-built sculpture with limited materials

Preparation

1. Cover table with canvas, unprimed side up, to keep clay from sticking to the table. Tape the two rulers 10 inches apart on top the canvas. Keep parallel. Self-hardening clay is a perfect consistency to work with right out of the bag - it does not have to be wedged.

Process

1. Create a slip (glue) by mixing an egg-size lump of clay with water to form a paste. Reserve in a jar with lid for use throughout the project.
2. Cut two pieces from the clay block 1/4" to 3/8" thick using a nylon clay cutter. Use modeling tools to scratch a texture on one long edge of each piece. Apply slip to the scratched area of both pieces. Join the two pieces by pressing together prepared surfaces with fingers. Spend time to make sure they are joined well. If they aren't, they will separate when dry. Use the rolling pin to gently flatten the joined piece. Move the rulers around the piece to ensure consistent thickness.
3. The balloons are used for support during the building of the figure. Blow up one balloon to roughly 10" diameter. Place it on top of the slab. Make certain the slab will wrap around the slab with some overlap. Scratch the surface of the slab where the two ends will join and add slip to "glue" the piece together.



Materials

Amaco® Mexican® Self-Hardening Pottery Clay, (33205-3005) 5-lb block, cut to one 1/4" and one 3/8" thick piece per student

Student Clay Modeling Tools (30361-1009), 7-tool set, share three sets across classroom

Blick Plastic Ruler (55403-1012), need one per student

Wooden Rolling Pin, 10" (30345-1010), share one between four students

Nylon Clay Cutter (30357-0000), one to cut clay block

Fettling Knife (30349-1010), one to cut clay block

Bag of 10" balloons

Blick Matte Acrylic Colors 2-oz bottles (00727), assorted colors, share at least six bottles across classroom

Blick Economy Sable Round, 36-brush assortment (05147-0369), share set across classroom

Process, continued

Note: overlap can be in the front, side or back of the finished piece.

4. Work on the base first. Stand the slab up and tap the bottom on the table until it can stand. At this time exposed legs or trousers can be cut with the fettling knife. Make cuts in the front and back then curve together. Use the same slip method to secure. Tap on table again until balanced.
5. Remove balloon as soon as the bottom is balanced and supports the figure. Continue to form arms and head. Close the slab at the top for a head, or add one. Always scratch edges and use slip for any additions to the form.
6. Add texture and features to continue to bring expression and cultural symbols to the figure.
7. Set the completed artwork aside in a dry area. Drying time will vary depending upon the thickness of the construction. Allow at least 1 week. The sculpture will become more sturdy as it dries.
8. Paint to finish. Blick Craft Paint has a matte finish and the color is extraordinary. It is a liquid acrylic that looks rich on clay.

Hints

- Follow directions for using slip to attach any embellishments
- Keep clay moist, not wet while constructing
- To keep clay moist when you are not working on it, use a damp cloth to cover all surfaces. Place in a plastic bag.
- Make certain to leave open spaces in the clay design. Also leave some rough edges of slab pieces in order to maintain the character of the clay.
- Hardened clay is porous and will not hold water.

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **9-12** Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture

- **9-12** Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making

Content Standard #5 — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

- **9-12** Students describe meanings of artworks by analyzing how specific works are created and how they relate to historical and cultural contexts

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

- **9-12** Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues or themes in the humanities or sciences