

Navajo-Inspired Bottles

2 Projects by Mayco® Colors

(art + history)

Navajo culture is a curious blend of ancient traditions, symbols and craft and newer influences introduced by European settlers. Ancient crafts, such as weaving baskets and blankets, evolved to incorporate new materials and designs, reflecting the contributions of the Spanish explorers.

Navajo pottery tended towards functional ware and minimalist design and decoration. Pinch, slab and coil construction methods were used to make bowls and bottles, for carrying water and food consumption.

In these projects students will use their knowledge of Navajo symbols to create Navajo inspired designs on a clay bottles.

Learning objectives for these projects :

- How to recognize and understand the meaning of Navaho symbols
- About colors and design details used by the Navaho
- The differences between coil, slab and pinch construction
- How to use molding forms and decorative tools

Grade Levels 4-8

Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

Research Navajo culture and art, emphasizing symbols featured on pottery. Common symbols included birds, rainbows, deer, antelope, rabbits, ducks, cloud effect. Certain figures were forbidden to be used on pottery such as snakes, lightning, bear, badger, hawks, and the divinities (sand painting was one form of Navaho art on which divinities could be drawn).

A good resource is a website maintained by Navaho people, offering insight into their culture and history:<http://navajopeople.org>



Deity Bottle (pictured above)

Process Part 1 – Create Clay Coils

1. Use wire cutter to cut clay into 1-1/2 lb parcels. Note: amount of clay and size of cylinder can be scaled down to produce a smaller bottle.
2. After the students wedge their clay, tear off small chunks and roll balls.
3. Create clay “snakes” by rolling the clay balls with the palm of the hand against a flat surface until they begin to stretch out. The proper dimension for each clay coil should be 6-1/4” long x 1/4” dia.

Note: the length of the clay coil needed for a specific cylinder can be calculated using the formula **Circumference= Pi (3.14) x Diameter.**

Process Part 2 – Create Clay Cylinder, Bottle Neck & Bottom

1. Wrap the cylinder form with newspaper, trim off the excess paper on the ends.
2. Beginning at the bottom of the cylinder wrap coils around the cylinder. Use fingers to gently press the two ends of the coil together. Repeat this process until entire cylinder is covered with coils.
3. Use a soft rubber rib to smooth out the coils, removing all seams. The process is complete when the exterior of the clay cylinder is completely smooth and seamless.
4. Allow the form to harden until the clay cylinder is firm enough to stand on its own (approximately 30 minutes to one hour).
5. For the Bottle Neck: use one full-length coil to form a ring (press two ends together to eliminate the seam). Place this ring on a flat surface and begin to stack coil rings made from shorter coil lengths as you develop the neck of the bottle. Use the soft rib to smooth out all the seam lines. Note: place a pencil or dowel rod into the bottle neck to provide support during the ribbing process.
6. Finish the neck with a single coil at the top, to serve as the bottle lip.
7. Roll a circular piece of clay 1/4" thick, 2" diameter for the bottom. Note: the creation of the bottle components will most likely take one class session to complete.

Process Part 2 – Assemble the Bottle

1. Take a small marble size piece of clay and place it in the small cup. Add about 3 tablespoons of water and mash the clay with your fingers until the clay/water mixtures is smooth and creamy. Note: The slurry created is called "slip", which is liquid clay. Slip will be used to attach the bottle components and touch up seams.
2. To attach the bottom: score the bottom edge of the cylinder with a needle tool or toothpick. Score the bottom piece on the edge where the cylinder and bottom will meet. Apply slip with fingertip on both scored areas. Press the pieces together, use slip and finger to smooth

Materials for Deity Bottle

Blick® Red Earthenware Clay, 50-lb package (30543-3550); need 1-1/2-lb per student

Wire Clay Cutter (30327-1018); one to divide clay

Cylinder form, approx 2" dia x 12" High, such as a PVC pipe or paper towel cardboard tube

Kemper® Rubber Finishing Tool, soft rib (30314-0000); need one per student

Pro Needle Tool (34920-1063); need one per student

Blick® Scholastic Golden Taklon Fan Brush, size 4 (05383-1004); one per student

Blick® Masterstroke Golden Taklon Liner Brush, size 1 (09016-1001); one per student

Cellulose Sponge

Mayco® Designer Stamps, Totem Blanket (30396-1080); share one between three students

Mayco® Press Tools, Small Designs (30390-1006); share one set between six students

Mayco® Stroke & Coat® Wonderglaze® for Bisque need one pint each of the following colors to share across class:

Cotton Tail (30408-1426)
Tuxedo (30408-2246)
Hot Tamale (30408-3696)
Tiger Tail (30408-3796)
Rawhide (30408-8106)
Blue Isle (30408-5856)
Just Froggy (30408-7936)

Ma the seam (you may also use the rib to smooth out the seam).

3. Attach the bottle neck by scoring both pieces at the point of contact and using slip as outlined above.
4. Adornments: Roll small balls of clay, use slip to attach around the bottom of the bottle. Use a small design Press Tool to mark the clay ball.
5. Bisque fire to cone 04.

Process Part 2 – Glazing the Bottle

(The choice of symbols and decorating colors are for the student to decide. What follows is the decorating instructions for the bottle pictured on page 1).

1. Antiquing the adornments: Brush Tuxedo color glaze on the clay adornments, then use a dampened sponge to remove most of the glaze. Note: this technique creates a distressed or antique effect.
2. Glazing inside of bottle: If desired for waterproofing purposes, roll glaze of choice inside the bottle several times until interior is coated. If for decorative purposes only, proceed to step #3.
3. Brush the exterior of the bottle with two coats of Cotton Tail color glaze.
4. Symbols and Design: students may choose to use a pencil to sketch their designs directly on the dried glaze surface, or they may draw their designs on a piece of paper and then use carbon paper to trace their images onto the bottle. In either case the markings will burn off during firing.
5. Use the following colors to complete the deity figures. We recommend two coats:
 - Face and legs - Rawhide
 - Gowns - Hot Tamale, Blue Isle, Just Froggy. Trim is Tiger Tail.
6. To add design elements using rubber stamp Totem Blanket: use Tuxedo color glaze and a flat sponge or paper towel to lightly highlight sections of the stamp. Press moistened stamp onto the bottle.
7. Tiger Tail is used on the bottle neck and design at the bottom.
8. Tuscan Red is used to create the zigzag designs.
9. Clear glaze if desired and fire at cone 06.



Blanket Motif Bottle

(pictured above right)

Process Part 1 – Create Clay Coils

1. Use wire cutter to cut clay into 1-1/2 lb parcels.
2. Wedge clay. Tear off small chunks and roll into balls.
3. Create clay “snakes” by rolling the clay balls with the palm of the hand against a flat surface until they begin to stretch out. The proper thickness for each clay coil should be about 1/4”.

Materials for Blanket Motif Bottle

Blick® Red Earthenware Clay, 50-lb package (30543-3550); need 1-1/2-lb per student

Wire Clay Cutter (30327-1018); one to divide clay

Disposable bowl

Kemper® Rubber Finishing Tool, soft rib (30314-0000); need one per student

Pro Needle Tool (34920-1063); need one per student

Blick® Scholastic Golden Taklon Fan Brush, size 4 (05383-1004); one per student

Blick® Masterstroke Golden Taklon Liner Brush, size 1 (09016-1001); one per student

Cellulose Sponge

Mayco® Designer Stamps, Totem Blanket (30396-1080); share one between three students

Mayco® Press Tools, Small Designs (30390-1006); share one set between six students

Mayco® Slump & Hump Mold, 9-1/2" circle (30391-1030); need one per student

Mayco® Stroke & Coat® Wonderglaze® for Bisque need one pint each of the following colors to share across class:

Cotton Tail (30408-1426)
Tuxedo (30408-2246)
Hot Tamale (30408-3696)
Tiger Tail (30408-3796)
Just Froggy (30408-7936)

Process Part 2 – Build the Bottle

1. Starting in the center of the circle slump mold , begin to spiral the coils out and up the wall of the mold until the entire mold is covered.
2. Use a soft rib to smooth out the coils, removing all seams. The process is complete when the interior of the clay bowl is completely smooth and seamless.
3. Continue to build the top of vessel by spiraling coils in and up, reducing the opening by placing the coils slightly inside the previous coil.
4. Smooth the coil seams together with your fingers as you build height to the shape. Place your fingers inside the bottle for support as you use the soft rib to smooth the upper portion.
5. When the desired height is reached, make the neck with 2-3 coils to finish. Do not press the neck coils together or smooth with the rib.
6. Gently remove the bottle and place in a bowl or bowl shape to dry. Note: the creation of the bottle will most likely take one class session to complete. The bowl will help the bottle keep its shape as it dries - any such curved surface will do.

Process Part 3 – Create Blanket Pattern

1. Roll out a piece of clay about 1/8" thick about 9" long by 4" wide.
2. Center the Totem Blanket stamp on clay slab, using your fingers to press stamp into the slab.
3. Create a 1/4" margin beyond the top and bottom edges of the stamp. Measure and mark 1/4" from the top and bottom edges of the stamp. Use the ruler as a straight edge to score a line across the top and bottom. Repeat this process on the left and right side of the stamp, this time creating a 1/2" margin.
4. Use a needle tool to trim along all four margins. Then use the needle tool to create a fringe effect in the margin areas on the left and right sides.

Process Part 3 – Attach Clay Blanket

1. Take a small marble size piece of clay and place it in the small cup. Add about 3 tablespoons of water and mash the clay with your fingers until the clay/water mixtures is smooth and creamy. Note: The slurry created is called "slip", which is liquid clay. Slip will be used to attach the blanket and touch up seams.
2. Score the bottle where you wish to attach the clay blanket. Score the back of the totem blanket then apply slip to both scored areas. Gently press the blanket onto the bottle.
3. Let dry and bisque fire to cone 04.

Process Part 4 – Glazing the Bottle

(The choice of symbols and decorating colors are for the student to decide. What follows is the decorating instructions for the bottle pictured on page 1).

1. Glazing inside of bottle: If desired for waterproofing purposes, roll glaze of choice inside the bottle several times until interior is coated. If for decorative purposes only, proceed to step #2.
2. Antiquing technique: Brush on two coats of Tuxedo glaze color on the coil neck, base and one coat on the blanket. Use a dampened sponge to remove most of the glaze. Note: this technique creates a distressed or antique effect.
3. Brush the bottle body with two coats of Hot Tamale. Brush two coats of Cotton Tail to the coils. Allow the to remain visible in the coil crevices and around the blanket's edge.
4. Dip brush into Cotton Tail, and then tap the brush against a paper towel until the brush has a light amount of glaze on it. Sweep the brush across the blanket, depositing light layers of white. Repeat this step 2-3 times. Note: this glazing technique is called dry brushing.
5. Add detail to the blanket with choice of colors (Just Froggy and Tiger Tail were used for this sample).
6. Fire to cone 06.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

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

K-4 Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

Content Standard #2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

K-4 Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas

5-8 Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

Content Standard #3 Using knowledge of structures and functions

K-4 Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art

5-8 Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

Content Standard #4 Using knowledge of structures and functions

K-4 Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

