

## FOURTH GRADE CLAY - “TOTEM POLE VASES”



### Art Element:

Form, Texture

### Tools:

Clay Samples  
Art Term Posters

### Supplemental Tools/Ideas:

Music – use the boom box in the portable  
Books – check the Art Docent library, books from home, etc.  
World Map – show where pottery forms have been created

### Supplies:

#### Form Lesson:

Clay  
Texture Tools  
Canvas Desk Covers  
Toilet Paper/Paper Towel tubes  
Plastic Portion Cups (to use for Slip)  
Rollers  
Dowel (used to measure thickness)  
Clay Cutters

#### Glaze Lesson:

Finished sculptures  
Glaze  
Glaze Brushes  
Plastic Portion Cups

## **Introduction:**

\* Pass out a small chunk of clay to each student to play with while you are talking. This will allow them to answer your questions and take the mystery out of playing with it! Explain that they can manipulate this chunk however they want, but must be careful with the actual piece they get for their sculpture. ☺

1. Today we are learning about an ancient art form – pottery! The use of clay to create pottery has been used for a very long time; ancient pottery has been discovered from nearly 30, 000 years ago! Can anyone tell me where clay comes from? Yes, it is a natural substance on earth, it is a very fine-grained natural soil – sort of like mud. Some of you may even be able to dig some up in your backyards!

2. Can anyone tell me where you have seen pottery before? In your homes? At school? In museums? Sometimes it is art but often pottery is very practical and something you use every day! (dinner plates, coffee mugs, your bathroom floor even!)

3. Like we talked about earlier, you can feel how soft and malleable the clay in your hands is, right? How do you think the clay becomes hard to create your final piece? Yes, we cook it! We use a very special “oven” called a kiln that heats up to extremely high temperatures, this process is called “Firing.” If you are baking cookies in your kitchen you probably heat your oven to about 350 degrees – the kiln will heat your clay to about 1800 degrees! That’s as hot as a volcano!

4. Right now your clay looks gray and once you form this clay into your sculpture it will be called Greenware. That Greenware sculpture will sit in this room for about four weeks until nearly all of the moisture has dried out of it. After those four weeks, your piece will be ready for Firing in the kiln. The cooking process takes about 8 hours in the kiln and once it comes out, you’ll notice (show sample) that it turns white, this is called Bisqueware. This Bisqueware is quite hardy and ready for glaze.

5. Now that your piece has been fired, it is time to add some beautiful color. The process of painting your clay is called Glazing and we use very special glaze “paints” for this process. Does anyone know what makes glaze different from normal paints? Glaze is made with silica, which is a natural mineral that turns to glass when heated to high temperatures!

6. Now take a look at these two samples (one glazed and fired, one glazed and unfired). Can you see how shiny this piece is? That is because after you finish Glazing your pieces, we are going to Fire it in the kiln again to make it shiny! This second firing actually melts the tiny pieces of glass in the glaze and adheres it right to your pieces, making it shiny and extra durable!

7. So as you can see, the clay process takes a really long time! Your final piece will not actually be ready for nearly two months! Before we get started, let’s go over a couple rules

1. Do not throw clay
2. Do not ever touch anyone else’s sculpture
3. Do not ever “bend” or “fold” your clay piece\*

\*It is very important that the students do not create any air-holes or air-pockets in their clay; this can sometimes be caused when bending or folding the clay. Remind students not to fold their clay over - air bubbles can sometimes explode inside the kiln.

8. Let’s get started!

### **Technique – Form:**

1. First, before students arrive you will need to pre-cut the clay for each student. On each desk you will have a canvas sheet, the slab of clay, a rolling pin, two dowels, and a small portion cup with slip. To create the slip, simply place a small chunk of clay into a small amount of water and let it soak for about an hour before it is time to use it. The clay will be quite soft and can be mixed to form a slurry that will be used as “clay glue.”

2. Cutting the clay - Using the boxed clay and the clay cutters, each student will receive about a 1” inch slab. This is more than enough to create their piece. (Remember to encourage them to use any excess clay as well, rather than just throwing it away. Maybe they can create a charm for a necklace or a holiday ornament or a tiny bowl – be sure to have them FIRST focus and complete their project but then encourage them to experiment with the leftover pieces.)

\*\*Be careful not to overcut the pieces, use only what you need. One bag of clay should be plenty for one classroom. If you open a bag of clay and do not use the entire bag, be sure to SECURELY tie it shut so it doesn’t harden.



3. Rolling out the clay - For fourth graders, they should be able to roll out their clay but be prepared to help if it is too difficult. When rolling it out, place the two dowel rods one either side of the slab, this will help guide your thickness as you roll out the clay. Your final slab should be the thickness of the dowels.



4. For this project, students will be using the tp/pt rolls to form a standing vase as well as the slip method for adhering dimensional pieces and the bottom of their vase. First, they will take their rolled out slabs and use the stylus to cut a rectangle about 8” wide, wide enough to wrap around the tube, with a very slight overlap.

5. Students will use the slip method to adhere the two edges of their rectangle together. They will then cut out a circle from their leftover slab that will be the bottom of the vase. Students can use their clay wrapped tube to “measure” out the size circle they’ll need. They will again use the slip process to adhere the bottom piece to the vase. Students can now use their texture tools to texturize their totem pole as well as use the stylus to cut out eyes, beaks, wings, etc. to add dimension to their piece. Be sure to carefully use the slip method when adding any dimensional pieces! SCORE, SLIP, SMOOTH! (Slip is the watered down clay that you created before the lesson by soaking a small chunk of clay in water to create a slurry which can be used as “glue” in the clay process. When adhering items to the sculpture, students must first score the surface of both pieces, then gently apply a small amount of slip. Then stick the pieces together and gently smooth the edges to be sure there are no gaps.)

6. Once the student has completed their sculpture encourage them to step away from it before they begin to “overwork” the project.

7. Be sure to remind students to GENTLY carve their names into their sculpture. If possible, students should now very GENTLY remove the paper tube form the inside of their vase. Now very carefully move the pieces to the drying racks, they will stay there for four weeks until you fire them. Paper bowls will be removed before the firing process. \*\*Please refer to the kiln instructions when loading and unloading your classroom’s sculptures.

### **Technique – Glaze:**

1. Have sculptures out and ready for glazing when students arrive. Shake glaze well and then pour into small plastic portion containers. Only three or four colors to start, you can pour additional colors upon request. Be sure to use the glaze brushes inside the clay cabinet for glazing!

2. Students should use the colors as they are – DO NOT MIX GLAZES! Show the students the glazed tile samples that explain the color differences. One coat will show up quite light, multiple coats will make darker colors once fired. Encourage the students to glaze several coats! IMPORTANT – be sure to not get any glaze on the bottom of the piece! If any glaze drips onto the bottom, be sure to use a wet wipe to rub it off as soon as possible.

\*\*All pieces must have a clean surface, completely free of glaze, to set down on the kiln shelves. If any glaze touches the kiln shelves, the heat can cause it to fuse to the shelves; the piece can then be shattered in an attempt to remove it.

3. After students are done, docents can use the clear coat glaze to go over any missed spots. Then move pieces to drying racks for one week until you fire them. \*\*Please refer to the kiln instructions when loading and unloading your classroom’s sculptures.

8. Once pieces have been fired, docents will arrange a time with your teacher to bring wrapped pieces to classroom for taking home. Be sure to use the bubble wrap or newsprint to securely wrap the pieces before sending them home in backpacks!

### **Summary/Art Quiz:**

1. Once students have cleaned up their work area. Remind them what they learned today.

2. Can anyone tell me what art techniques we learned? And do you remember what tools we used? What was your favorite part of this lesson? Use the Art Quiz Door Poster for reference.