

# When Clay Speaks

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will learn about learn about clay characteristics, clay's impact on certain cultures and symbolic representations through clay.

## TIME ALLOTMENT

2-3 sessions of 45-60 minutes

## SUBJECT MATTER

This lesson includes instructional goals in Art, Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies and Social Skills.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- recognize clay as a natural resource used by a variety of cultures since prehistoric times
- identify characteristics of ancient clay artifacts and speculate on how the discovery of clay impacted early civilizations
- interpret symbolic decorations
- compare construction and use of ancient and modern pottery
- manipulate clay to create an original clay medallion, incorporating

historical examples as inspiration for carved designs

- peer and self evaluate finished products to justify choices in construction and decorative patterns.

## MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligences are all targeted in this lesson.

## STANDARDS

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) (<http://www.state.tx.us/teks>)

Perception	.1A	.1B	
Creative Expression Performance		.2A	.2B
	.2C		
Historical/Cultural Heritage	.3A	.3B	.3C
Response/Evaluation	.4A	.4B	

## MEDIA COMPONENTS

## WEB SITES

[www.palodurocanyon.com](http://www.palodurocanyon.com)

[www.textiles.com/features/pottery.htm](http://www.textiles.com/features/pottery.htm)

[www.texasbeyondhistory.net](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net)

[www.smith.edu/hsc/museum/ancient/invention/hse/hselist.htm](http://www.smith.edu/hsc/museum/ancient/invention/hse/hselist.htm)

[www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/lessons/](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/lessons/)

<http://southwesternpottery.com/Facts.htm>  
[www.navajo\\_coop.org/traditional\\_pottery.htm](http://www.navajo_coop.org/traditional_pottery.htm)

## VIDEOS

*Harding Black: An American Treasure*, Alamo Public Telecommunications Council, 1999.

“Interests in One of a Kind Pots”  
(03:40)

The clip begins with Black standing in front of his kiln discussing how pots can be one of a kind and continues with a discussion of Black’s early years and his initial interest in ancient pottery artifacts. This clip ends with a look at his early years at the Witte museum teaching pottery classes and digging his own clay at Elmendorf.

## MATERIALS

You will need the following to complete these activities:

### PER CLASS

- Clay
- Water

- Heavy canvas or cloth sheet for working surface
- Rolling pin or wooden dowel
- Board, box, or plate for storing individual pieces while drying
- A variety of tools and found objects for scraping, smoothing, and decorating (dull knife, fork, paper clip, dull pencil, etc)

## VOCABULARY

Artifact, ancient, shard, archaeologist, clay, pottery, hand wedging, pinch pot, coil, slab, carving, resource

## PREP FOR TEACHERS

Review web sites listed under Media Components and the following reading materials:

[The Children’s Book of Pottery](#) by Christine Row

[Pottery Making \(Crafts for Children\)](#) by Virginia Fowler

[Pottery in Ancient Time \(The Lerner Archaeology Series\)](#) by Richard L. Currier

## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY: SETTING THE STAGE

Read and discuss [When Clay Sings](#) by Byrd Taylor.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### DAY 1

1. After reading and discussing When Clay Sings by Byrd Taylor, discuss clay as a natural resource and identify other natural resources important to early Texas civilizations.
2. Look at samples of clay artifacts and speculate on usage. Be sure to show a variety of items such as jars, carvings, tools, sculptures, and broken shards.
3. As time permits, allow students to practice drawing one or more of the artifacts in a still life grouping.

### DAY 2

1. PLAY the video clip, "Interests in One of a Kind Pots," and discuss Black's interest in ancient artifacts. Inform students that Black's interest in ancient artifacts will be their FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION. Discuss students' responses.
2. Demonstrate hand wedging. Pass out a ball of clay to each child and allow the students to hand wedge the clay to work out all the air bubbles. Allow the students to make observations about the clay as they manipulate it in a variety of ways.
3. Roll out the clay to create a slab with a rolling pin or a wooden dowel. You may wish to use two strips of woods on either side of the clay to gauge the correct thickness.
4. Cut a medallion shape or a shape resembling a broken shard.

5. Allow the students to use their finger dipped in water or a smoothing tool to smooth the surface of the slab. Encourage the students not to overwork the clay or allow the clay to become too dry.
6. Choose an historical design as a pattern and transfer the pattern to the slab. You may wish the student to lay the paper on top of the clay and trace over the design with a dull pencil to transfer the pattern. Be sure not to flatten the clay too much or to draw too deeply into the clay.
7. Add decorative border or additional smaller designs around the edges of the piece.
8. Students may wish to use the pencil to create a small hole near the top of the medallion so it can be strung on a cord when dry. Students may also wish to make clay beads by rolling small balls and using a piece of wire hanger to create a hole and hang the beads to dry. The beads can be strung with the medallion on the cord later.

### DAY 3

1. When completely dry, paint the pieces before stringing or displaying. Spray or paint with a clear sealer.
2. Allow students to peer and self-evaluate their pieces.

## CULMINATING ACTIVITY

### Clay Creation: Medallions

The culminating activity for this lesson is described in Days 2 and 3 of the lesson plan above. Beyond the medallion workshop, an

exhibit can be created to display student work.

## LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

When Clay Sings by Byrd Taylor

The Pot That Juan Built by Nancy Andrews-Goebel and David Diaz

The Single Shard by Linda Sue Park

Children of the Clay: A Family of Pueblo Potters by Rina Swentzen and Bill Steen

## RELATED ARTWORK/ARTISTS

Samples of artifacts, photographs, posters, books and web-sites from a wide range of time and cultures depicting examples of clay artifacts with carved symbolic and decorative patterns should be displayed.

