

4th Grade: November
Lesson 2: Owls
Clay Sculpture

Note: This lesson can easily take 1½ hours. Please remind your teacher and your aides of the longer-than-usual time window and reserve enough time in the art calendar accordingly.

Objective: To model a clay sculpture of an owl, using clay forming techniques, and adding texture and detail with clay sculpting tools

Technique: Sculpting with clay

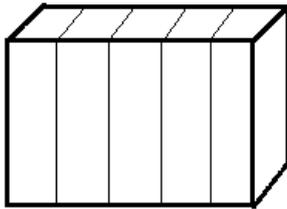
Set-up: (before lesson starts, docent and aides)

One and a half (1 ½), 25 pound blocks of clay

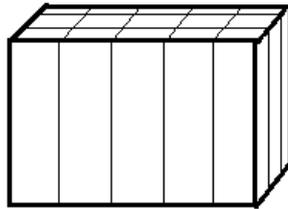
Clay wire with toggle handles to cut clay, and RULER to measure slabs

Clay cutting guide:

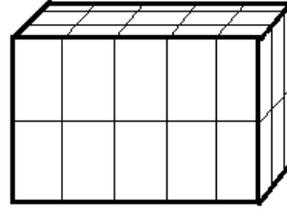
Note: clay blocks measure 10 inches x 6 inches x 6 inches



make 4 cuts into slab
2 inches apart



make 2 additional cuts
2 inches apart



cut in half, total = 30 pieces
3 inches apart

Tip: Clay carves better when it is cut in advance (24 hrs.) and left to dry out a little. If possible cut clay the day before the lesson, cover loosely, and arrange with teacher to store in classroom.

Note: Slip for Clay Repairs (docent and aides only)

For this lesson, use slip only if a feature of the owl breaks or falls off in the molding process, and needs to be re-attached:

- Always use slip when attaching clay pieces. Slip is a creamy mixture of water and clay. Score (scratch) the two surface areas to be connected; apply slip to both scored spots; and attach & press firmly to press out any air gaps between the attachment joint. In effect, the two pieces of clay have fused into one. Smooth joint by pressing/blending together with finger or thumb.

Set-up: (before lesson starts, docent and aides)

- Newspaper to cover desks
- Slip container (shake slip before pouring) for docent/aide--repairs only
- Clay sculpting tools
- Clay boards
- Spray bottles (use sparingly to keep clay projects moist)
- Paper napkins or towels

Visuals:

- Small Horned Owl on a maple branch under a full moon*, Utagawa Hiroshige
- Student sample
- Photographs of owls

Props: Owl sculpture

Teaching the lesson: (1 hour, total)

Give your aides a brief summary of the lesson

Introduce yourself and your aides

Animals are a part of nature that inspires artists. Show *Small Horned Owl on a maple branch under a full moon* by Utagawa Hiroshige. Hiroshige was born in Edo, now present day Tokyo, Japan in 1797. As a child he loved drawing and showed great artistic talent. He is known for making wood block prints and beautiful landscape paintings. Today you will be making a sculpture of an owl. Show sample artwork. Sculptures are a type of art that can portray nature: Sculptures are three-dimensional, can stand alone, and can be viewed from all sides. Sculpture can be carved and molded from large, solid forms of clay. A **form** has length, width and **depth**. It is three-dimensional (a *shape* is two-dimensional).

1. Plan (5 min)

Show photographs of owls. Point out the different shapes, head, eyes, and textures of feathers.

- Notice placement of features: eyes, beak, wings, and talons
- Notice body shape and proportion of neck to torso

Note: As tempting as it may be, do not allow yourself or your aides to “fix” features unless it is for the sake of structural integrity. Allow students’ creations to be their creations.

2. Shape and form (10-15 min)

- Make a big form with the clay. Round edges, compress clay in hands. It should feel like a big potato when you are done.
- Shape the neck. Working about 1/3 the way down, wrap your fingers around the form and **slightly** squeeze to mark the neck. Be sure to **leave it thick** and strong enough to support the head.

- Position and shape major features first (head, torso and wings & tail).
- Once features have been shaped and positioned, add initials and room number on underside of owl.

3. Detail and Texture (35-40 min)

Give the owl personality with carving and forming details.

- Use hands and fingers to press, pull, and form clay
- Use thumbs, fingers, and carving tools to shape features
- Use the sculpting tools to carve away excess clay
- Use the pointy stick to create eyes, beak, feather texture and talons
- Pay attention to **direction and length** of strokes: some feathers are short, some long
- Turn your project frequently, look at all the sides
- Revise and adjust figure as necessary

Clean-up: (after lesson ends, docent and aides)

Close the lesson, clean up the classroom

Display sculptures in a safe drying area in the classroom

(cardboard box tops are helpful for keeping the figures)

Return extra slip to storage container

Clean clay from clay boards and return to bin

Return clay tools to bin

Return all materials to the art closet

Finishing the clay projects:

Dry in class: Complete drying will take up to five or six weeks. When totally bone dry (will not feel cold or moist to the touch).

Transport to kiln room: The sculptures need to be taken the kiln room (according to kiln schedule) to be bisque fired. Transport clay figures to the kiln room in boxes labeled with room number, teacher name and date, docent name and contact info.

Glazing: After bisque firing is complete, arrange times with teacher for glazing (usually done in small groups at the back of the class during other lessons). The figures can be immediately returned to the kiln room, and then will be glaze fired.

Transport to classroom: After firing, projects need to be picked up and returned to the classroom.



Small Horned Owl on Maple Branch Under Full Moon, Utagawa Hiroshige



Student sample



Pictures of Owls