

4th Grade - Pencil Pot with Native American Designs

(two-part lesson)

Part I

Lesson Objectives

Students will be introduced to the slabbing clay technique to build a pot. They will learn how to roll out a slab, cut out pieces, and attach them together. Students will also solidify skills with adding texture, and with attaching pieces of clay together using the scoring and slipping technique.

Vocabulary

- *Pottery*: Vessels like bowls, jugs and other objects made from clay.
- *Hand building*: Using hands, fingers and simple tools to shape clay.
- *Clay Slab*: Clay that has been rolled out flat.
- *Slabbing clay*: A technique that includes rolling out slabs of clay, cutting out pieces, then attaching them together to create pots, cups and other objects.
- *Texture*: The feel or appearance of a surface.
- *Greenware or Boneware*: Unfired clay projects.
- *Bone Dry*: Completely air-dried clay.
- *Bisqueware*: Clay projects that have been fired once, without glaze.
- *Kiln*: An oven used for firing clay.
- *Fire*: To heat clay in a kiln.
- *Glaze*: Paint used to color clay; glaze turns to glass when fired in a kiln.

Project Supplies – 1st class

All supplies should be in the supply room on the clay shelves.

- Canvas table cloths (for white clay; one for each table)
- Wire cutter (to cut the clay block)
- White clay – ½” slice from clay block per student
- Rolling pins (one per student)
- Clay rulers (2 per student)
- Bamboo skewers (one per student)
- Wooden knives (one per student)
- Cardboard rectangles (8” x 4 ½”) (one per student)
- Color Symbology and Cherokee Nation Symbols handouts (pg. 6)
- Sample Pencil Pot (from supply room)



Lesson Summary:

Step 1: Roll out a slab.

Step 2: Cut out a rectangle shape.

Step 3: Use roller to help make the column part of the pot.

Step 4: Roll out excess clay to form the base of the pot.

Step 5: Use a skewer to cut out the base of the pot.

Step 6: Attach the base to the column part of the pot.

Step 7: Add Cherokee Symbols.

Instructions – 1st class

Play this step-by-step lesson video below during your class to assist you with the steps.

[Step-by-step lesson video](#)

(This video is also available to access via the Art Docent page on the PTSA site)

1. Hand out the pre-cut slabs and instruct students to place rulers either side of the clay slab and roll out the clay until it is the thickness of the rulers. Instruct students to roll mostly in one direction, but to pick up the clay slab and turn it around, then roll again in the other direction. The clay slab needs to be larger than the cardboard rectangle.

Note: Rolling multiple ways is important because it will help avoid cracks as the clay dries. It is also important to roll the clay down to the thickness of the rulers and not below this height. Thin clay will dry out too fast and cause cracks.

2. Instruct students to place the cardboard rectangle on the clay slab and use a wooden knife or bamboo skewer to cut around the cardboard to create a clay rectangle slab.
3. Instruct students to carefully turn the clay slab upside down and roll it around their roller. Make sure there is about ¼ inch overlap, score and slip the edges, then use a thumb to make thumb marks along the seam to seal the edges together (see tip below on scoring and slipping).
4. Instruct students to carefully take out the roller and keep the pot upright.
5. Have students roll out the excess clay using the two rulers as a guide. This will form the bottom of the pot.
6. Instruct students to place the pot on the rolled out clay and use a skewer to cut around the pot to make the base.
7. Have students carefully set the pot down and write their FIRST name and LAST initial on the bottom side of the base of the pot.
8. Instruct students to use the score, slip, press, compress technique to adhere the base to the pot. See Tips below for more information.
9. Have students carefully smooth the edge where the side of the pot meets the base.
10. Have students choose Cherokee symbols that they will add to their pot (show the class sample clay pencil pots and hand out the Cherokee Symbols handouts).
11. Have students understand that repeating the same symbol around the pot can create a nice effect.
12. Have students choose to either etch symbols onto the slab using a bamboo skewer, or make symbols out of excess clay and use the scoring and slipping technique to adhere the clay symbols to their pot.
13. Instruct students to place their finished pencil pot into a class cardboard box. Attach a clay log sheet to the cardboard box. The pencil pots will dry out on the kiln shelves for about 3 weeks before being fired in the kiln.

Clean-up Instructions

1. **Make sure to securely tie leftover clay.** To avoid hardening of the clay, ensure to tie the clay blocks or any leftover clay properly. Remove as much air as possible from the bag first.
2. **Remove cloth tablecloths** - Carefully remove excess clay bits from the cloth canvas tablecloths and put this in the trash, then fold the cloth canvas tablecloths in on themselves to avoid letting clay dust into the air or on the floor. Store them back in the correct plastic tub just inside the supply room (red clay tub or white clay tub).
3. **Wipe off the table with a wet rag** - if you cannot find a rag please ask the janitor.
4. **Do not allow students to wash their hands in the sink directly-** Keep a bucket of water near the sink and have each child wash in the bucket first and then in the sink. If the clay settles at the bottom of the sink, it will clog the drain.
5. **Clean all the tools used in the bucket-** Make sure to clean all the tools used for the project in the bucket first and then in the sink.
6. **Leave the bucket of clay water overnight to settle** - After the clay settles in the bucket, discard the water carefully in the sink without disturbing the settled clay at the bottom of the bucket. This clay can be either used as a slip or be discarded in the trash. This does not have to happen the next day, but should be done ASAP.
7. *****DON'T FORGET TO LOCK UP THE KILN CAGE AND RETURN THE KEY TO THE FRONT OFFICE!!*****

TIPS

Docents are welcome to practice making a pencil pot prior to teaching. Save your creation in case there are any absent children the day of the class.

Students can use a practice piece of clay to get a feeling for the correct amount of pressure to apply when etching clay with the bamboo skewer. They should not press all the way through and no more than halfway. Lighter impressions are okay. They can practice first with a finger to understand how soft the clay is and how deep the skewer should be pressed.

Students can use the *Score, Slip, Press, Compress* technique to join two pieces of clay together. Score the two clay pieces using a skewer or other sharp tool. Add slip to both clay pieces (water, or a pre-made clay/water mixture), press the pieces together, then use a finger or a tool to compress along the seams or edges of the clay.

Students will have a follow-up class to glaze their pencil pots at least one month after this class is completed. Ensure this class is scheduled with your teacher and ensure that your teacher has booked the STEAM lab in advance.

Clay log sheets to attach to class cardboard boxes can be found in the front of the blue Clay Lesson Plans folder on the clay shelves in the supply room.

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Part II

Once the pencil pots have been fired in the kiln, they are ready to be glazed.

Glaze Supplies – 2nd class

- Paper towels
- Fired projects
- Glaze colors; one for each table (e.g. red, white, yellow, black, green, blue, purple or brown) (see Color Symbology on pg. 6)
- Cups or white trays for glaze
- BLUE glaze brushes
- Samples of glazed projects (in the supply room)

Instructions – 2nd class

1. Set out paper towels, BLUE glaze brushes and two cups of ONE color per table. Start with about ¼" of glaze per cup.
2. Show examples of glazed pencil pots (samples may be found in the supply room).
3. Instruct students to place their pencil pot on a paper towel and to not lift their project from the towel when glazing.
4. They should rotate the towel as needed to glaze all sides of the pencil pot.
5. Instruct students that there is one color at each table, and that there are dedicated brushes for each glaze color. **THEY SHOULD NOT MIX GLAZES.** Explain that this is so that any leftover glaze can be reused instead of thrown away. **BRUSHES SHOULD NOT GO FROM TABLE TO TABLE.**
6. Instruct students that they should walk to a different table, holding their pencil pot on a paper towel, if they want to apply a different color.
7. Let students know that if they want a deeper/brighter color, they need to apply multiple layers of the same color. They should let each application dry before applying another layer. Three thin layers of a glaze color is better than one thick layer.
8. Once a glaze color is dry, other colors can be layered on top. Remember that dark colors will prevail. Use black color sparingly.
9. Explain to students that they **SHOULD NOT GLAZE THE BOTTOM** of the pencil pot, or 1/4" from the bottom, because the glaze may stick to the kiln shelves when it is fired.
10. Have students leave their pencil pots at their places. Art docents should follow important clean-up steps below.

Clean-up Instructions

1. Check the bottom of each pencil pot for glaze. If found, carefully wipe it off with a damp, warm sponge.
2. Place pencil pots into cardboard boxes (throw away paper towel). Do not stack glazed pencil pots on top of each other.
3. Fill out a log sheet and attach it to the cardboard box containing the pencil pots. You may need more than one log sheet if there are multiple boxes. Log sheets can be found in the blue Clay Lesson Plans folder on the clay shelves in the supply room.
4. Place the cardboard box(es) onto the kiln shelves in the kiln cage. Pencil pots will be fired by the kiln team in 3-5 days once they are dry. They will be available for pickup in the supply room after being fired.
5. Return any unused glaze to the correct jar.
6. When replacing the lid on a glaze jar, make sure the rim is clean; wipe it with a damp paper towel or sponge. Otherwise the jar may glue shut. If you come across a stuck jar, run the lid under hot water to loosen it.
7. *****DON'T FORGET TO LOCK UP THE KILN CAGE AND RETURN THE KEY TO THE FRONT OFFICE!!*****

Native American Nations' Color Symbolism

Native American Color Meanings - Symbolism of the Native American Indians (color-meanings.com)

Red: Can indicate war, earth, success, blood, energy, and power.

Black: Can be an aggressive color for victory, triumph, and strength, but can also represent death.

White: Can indicate peace, mourning, and can also represent heaven.

Blue: Can indicate peace, wisdom and confidence.

Green: Can indicate harmony, healing, and endurance.

Yellow: Can be the color of intellect.

Purple: Can represent animals.

Cherokee Nation Symbols

