

Clay Lesson with 1st to 6th Classes

'Coil a Pot'

Gemma Mc Girr

Curriculum Strand: Clay (Visual Arts Curriculum p. 36, 54, 72)

Objective: *Make simple clay pottery (p.36)*
Make simple clay pots (p.54)
Make simple pottery and sculpture (p.72)

Linkage: **Paint and Colour** > *Discover pattern and rhythm in natural and manufactured objects and use them purposefully in his/her work (p.50)*
Explore the relationship between how things feel and how they look (p.68)
Drawing > *Explore shape as seen in natural and manufactured objects and become aware of the shape of shadows cast by objects (p.30)*

Integration Possibilities:

History: Early Peoples and Ancient Societies: *Become familiar with aspects of the lives of these peoples (p.48, 67)*

Continuity and Change over Time: *Study aspects of social, artistic, technological and scientific developments over long periods (p.71)*

Developing this Activity in Class:

Getting Started: Before I start an art lesson I find it very helpful to do a little exercise with the children to unlock their imaginations and to create a safe environment in the classroom for them to show and discuss their work without fear of ridicule. Mankind's imagination got us out of the caves and onto the moon!! Anything can happen in our imagination if we only let it! "Close your eyes and imagine a big door. It can be any colour you like. Written across the door in big capital letters is the word IMAGINATION. Now reach out and slowly open the door, let your imagination out! Open your eyes and let me see the sparkle! Now we can do anything, our imaginations are at work and we are all different!"

Materials Needed: Potter's clay
 Wooden boards or strong card (to work on)
 Clay tools or lollipop sticks
 Poster paints or acrylics (to decorate when dry)
 Plastic bucket with tight fitting lid, or plastic bags for storing the clay

Stimulus: Show the children a selection of pots, vases, mugs, bowls or other earthenware containers. Allow them to handle them and discuss the shapes, textures and decorations they can see. If possible show pictures or slides of pottery from other countries and times and encourage the children to talk about what they see.

Activity: By now the children should be familiar with clay and how to manipulate it. Give them time to practise rolling out lengths/coils of clay, keeping them an even thickness, about the thickness of their finger. The children start on a base/slab of clay. (These can be rolled or pressed out by the children before they start to make the coils of clay). They lay down a coil of clay along the edge of the base and join it by smoothing or scraping it onto the base with their finger, so that the join is invisible. Another coil is placed on top of that and again smoothed onto the first so that the join is invisible. Each coil should be smoothed on in this way as it is put on. In order to keep the shape they want, when the children are smoothing on successive coils, it will help to keep their other hand cupped on the outside of the pot. The outside of the pot can also be smoothed or left as

it is, but it is very important that the coils are completely joined on the inside or they will fall apart when they dry out.

It may take several attempts before the children are happy with their pots. Given time to experiment with this technique, they will build interesting shapes which can be decorated, textured or marked as they wish.

Evaluation/Looking and Responding:

This will be happening as the children work. The children can then take turns describing the pots they have made and how they decorated them. Encourage the children to respond to pottery made here in Ireland and to pictures of pots from other cultures such as Moche pottery. Bring in a red brick and a terracotta flower pot or other piece of pottery and ask the children which one we place the most value on. It could start an interesting conversation about design and function, the bricks make a house.....

Extension Activities:

Coil pots can be inverted to make other interesting things....if bits are added what could it become? If bits are taken away, what could it become? If two coil pots are joined together what could they make? The children could join the pots with slip to make interesting 3D creatures.

ICT Possibilities:

http://www.handsoncrafts.org/vp_frame.htm

This is an interactive site where the children can throw a pot online (Shockwave required).

Using the I Am An Artist DVD:

The *Clay* programmes on the DVD offer opportunities to see and hear the children using clay as a medium for imaginative expression.

In the 'Can You' section of Clay in the *I Am An Artist* website (<http://www.iamanartist.ie/clay/>) you can see a coil pot being constructed.

Note:

I found that using a plant spray was best for keeping the clay moist as the children were working. Keep your slip in an airtight container for future use. If using poster paints to decorate the pots, they can be painted over with PVA to create a glossy finish. Acrylic paints can also be used. (Make sure the brushes are washed well before the acrylic paint dries on them).

Relevant Artists:

Mose Potttery
Bridge Pottery
Moche Pottery

Relevant Websites:

Learn about the ancient Moche people and their pottery

<http://www.museum.upenn.edu/Moche/mocheculture.html>

A Secret History of Clay (Tate Liverpool) is an exciting site for children and teachers alike. It explores the use of clay in modern and contemporary art and has artworks from Gaugin to Gormley

<http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/historyofclay/default.htm>

Scoilnet, which is a portal to lots of sites useful in the classroom

<http://www.scoilnet.ie>