

Crafting the Classroom



Integrating Visual and Tactile Learning
into Core Subjects

How to Use *Crafting the Classroom*

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) is a nonprofit arts organization founded to advance education about the process, product and history of craft. HCCC's major emphasis is on objects of art made primarily from craft materials: clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood or found/recycled materials.

Each *Crafting the Classroom* lesson teaches a science, math, social studies, or language arts objective, and a corresponding craft-based art project. Through integrating art into the core subjects, these lessons are designed to increase student engagement with the objective, promote higher order thinking and creative expression, and provide tactile learners with opportunities to excel.

Use these lessons to connect craft with topics that are meaningful to your students and curriculum. For example, many tools, vessels, furniture, clothes, and other items integral to daily life used to be made by hand. Learning about these objects, as well as the skills needed to make and use them, can be a unique way to study world history or other cultures. Replicating decorative patterns can give students a better understanding of geometry. Learning about how craft materials are made and used relates to chemistry, physics, and natural science. These are just a few of the connections that can be made.

Pair these lessons with a visit to Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, where your group can enjoy a free guided tour, visit the craft garden, and observe resident artists in their studios. Optional, hands-on workshops are available upon request.

Please share these plans with other teachers, parents, and administrators.

For more information about HCCC, or to schedule your visit, please visit our website at www.crafthouston.org or call 713-529-4848 Ext. 0

Leah Hamilton French

Volunteer Manager & Education Coordinator

lfrench@crafthouston.org

713.529.4848 ext. 0

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

4848 Main Street

Houston, TX 77002

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Collette Spears

Vase *Triptych*, 2015

White and stained stoneware

Photo courtesy of the artist

Lesson written and illustrated by Leah Hamilton French

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SOCIAL STUDIES AND ART: NATIVE AMERICAN COIL POTS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Fine Arts: Students will develop fine motor and creative arts skills as they create clay coil pots. Students will develop a deeper understanding of line, repetition, and pattern as they carve designs into their clay pots.

Social Studies: Students will connect their artwork to historical and contemporary clay vessels made by the Caddo Indians and other Native American tribes of Texas.

This lesson would be an ideal art component to a Texas History or Native American social studies unit.

*Relating to Craft Media: **Clay***

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Clay, polymer clay, or air-dry modeling clay
- Slip (if using clay)
- Plastic forks and knives
- Toothpicks, dull pencils, or other implements for carving designs into clay
- Glaze (if using clay) or acrylic paint and paintbrushes (optional)
- Images of Native American clay vessels

Further resources: <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/clay/index.html>

LESSON OVERVIEW

Introduce the New Material: Show students pictures of clay vessels by Caddo Indians and other native tribes of Texas. Explain that the techniques of working with clay, as well as designs used to decorate clay vessels, are traditional and have been passed down through generations. Discuss with students the various uses of clay vessels – cooking, decorative, and ceremonial – and how vessel use affects the **form** and **ornamentation**.

Build the Pots: Provide students with a ball of clay about the size of a kiwi or small apple. Model the coil pot technique for them, demonstrating how to roll coils, score and slip each layer, and smooth the surfaces when finished. For a detailed description of these techniques, please reference the “Coil Pots Process Guide” on the next page.

Allow students time to build and perfect their pots. If using clay, provide spray bottles to keep the clay wet and malleable. If using Model Magic, or other air-dry clay, be mindful of the time students have before the product becomes too hard to manipulate.

Decorate the Pots: The Caddo Indians decorated their pots by engraving lines and other geometric patterns into the unfired clay. Students can use dull pencils or toothpicks to engrave their pots in this style before drying them.

Allow pots to dry. If using clay, fire the pots in your school's kiln according to the manual. If using polymer clay, bake the pots in portable toaster oven. Students can then paint (or glaze, if using clay) their pots.

COIL POTS PROCESS GUIDE

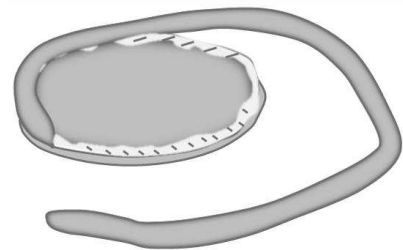
1. Divide your clay into two lumps, one smaller and one larger.



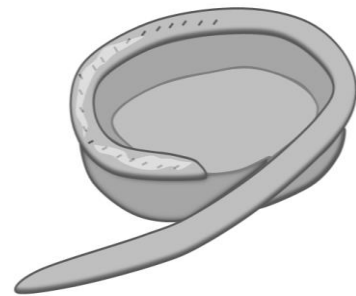
2. Flatten the smaller lump into a disk with the palm of your hand – this will be the base of your pot. Form the larger lump into a long snake by rolling it in the palm of your hand.



3. Using a fork or toothpick, make hash marks around the base. This is called **scoring** the clay. Smear a little **slip** across the scored area. Also score the underside of the long snake.



4. Begin coiling the long snake along the edge of your base to make the wall of your pot. Continue **scoring** and **slipping** each new section of coil. This will help the coils stay together.



5. With each layer, smooth and press the clay coil so that it sticks to the layer below it. You can use your thumb, fingers, or a plastic butter knife.

6. Gradually build the walls of your pot, coil by coil. Continue scoring, slipping, and smoothing each coil together.



7. When your pot is as tall as you want, smooth the outside and inside with your fingers, a smooth rock, or oval plastic scraper.