

Forest Dwellings: Toad House

by Mayco® Colors (art + science)

In this hand-building clay project students will create dwellings for forest animals and birds. Beginning with flat clay slabs students will learn how to use slump molds (and even a soda can!) to shape the slabs into three dimensional forms. They will use sprig and press molds to texture and embellish their structures to simulate trees, leaves, knot holes and burrows reminiscent of natural habitats found in woodlands.

Students will also develop an understanding of clay, clay properties and clay forming techniques, and investigate various glazes and application tools and methods.

Grade Levels 4-8

Note: Instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.



Preparation

1. Have the class review different types of forest animals and their habitats. This project can be modified for older age groups to make more complex house dwellings and/or explore habitats found in other ecosystems such as marine, wetlands, plains and others.

Process

1. **Create Slab** — Use a slab roller to flatten clay to approximately an 8-1/2" x 1/4" size using wood slats as thickness guides. Each clay slab will be used to produce all parts of the toad house. Additional clay can be provided if supplies allow.
2. **Make Slip** — Take a small marble-sized piece of clay and mix it with approximately three tablespoons of water in a small cup until smooth and creamy (using your fingers). The mixture is called "slip," or liquid clay. The slip will be used as a glue to attach clay

Materials

Amaco® No. 29 Brown Stone Earthenware Clay, two 25-lb blocks (30532-1050); need 2-lbs clay per student

Clay Thickness Strips, 1/4" (30323-1009); share 3 sets across classroom

Solid Maple Slab Roller, (30323-1024); share three across classroom

Fredrix® 568 Unprimed Canvas, 62" x 6-yd (07303-1662); cut into 13" x 18" pieces (makes 24 per roll)

Kemper® Fettling Knife, hard (30349-1020); need one per student

Metal Can (Cylinder Form)

Blick® Ceramic Brush Set, 7-brush set (05692-1009); share 4 sets across classroom

Mayco® Leaf Design Press Tools (30390-2040); share one set across classroom

Mayco® Design Press Tools (30390-1036); share one across classroom

Mayco® Stroke & Coat® WonderGlaze® for Bisque, assorted colors (30408-); share across classroom

Process, continued

- embellishments and seal the seams.
- Main Structure** — Cut a rectangular piece from the clay slab to serve as the wall of the house. Keep the wall size in proportion to the total amount of clay. Producing a wall that is too large will not leave enough clay to create the other components.
 - Use a toothpick to design the external surface, etching into the wall the location of the doors and windows. Cut-outs are completed at the end of the building process. Use Press Tools to stamp flower and butterfly patterns into the clay. Other stamps and tools can also be used.
 - Use a toothpick to etch score lines in the left and right edges of the wall. With the designed surface facing out, wrap the wall around a cylinder such as a can. Add slip to the scored edges and press the seams together. Remove the cylinder and smooth the inside and outside seam lines.
 - Roof** — Cut out a hosta leaf (see page 3) from the remaining clay slab. Use a stylus or toothpick to draw the outline and etch the veins. With a fettling knife, cut the leaf out and smooth the edges. Let the leaf harden until it retains its shape when picked up. Place it on top of the wall.
 - Remove the leaf and set aside. Score the top edge of the wall and dab slip along the edge. Place the leaf roof back on the wall. Create a thin coil of clay and tear off 6-8 small pieces to use like putty to attach the roof. Apply a small amount of slip to each piece and press each against the seam where the roof and wall meet.
 - Chimney** — Roll the remaining clay into a ball and gently flatten it to form a rectangle 1/2" thick. Create designs and textures on the external surface and connect the left and right edges as with the wall construction above. Use slip to seal the seam. Select a chimney location. Score the roof and chimney bottom, rub slip on each scored edge and gently press to attach.
 - Final Touches** — Cut out the doors and windows with a fettling knife. Smooth the cut edges with fingers, dabbing a small amount of slip on the cut edges if the

clay has become too dry to smooth evenly. Retrace any design lines that may have been marred during the construction process.

- Allow clay to completely dry and bisque fire to shelf cone 04.
- Glazing** — Choose from a variety of Stroke & Coat® glazes to add color. Allow the glaze to dry and fire to shelf cone 06.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

K-4 Students describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses

5-8 Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

K-4 Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

5-8 Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

