

# American Pie

(art + history; art + social studies)

Long known for the phrase “baseball, apple pie and Chevrolet\*,” American traditions are based upon the many things our large and varied country provides. A generous slice of clay “pie” contains symbols of each child’s favorite things — family, hometowns, friends and a country of heroes. They reflect the past, present and future.

Class discussion needs to include possibilities like gold arches, rock music, sports, cheerleaders, ice cream cones and American pride. Each slice contains as many items as possible. The clay sculpture is hand-built with air-dried clay (or ceramic-fired clay and glazes) and painted with Blick Matte Acrylic Paint. The Blick Matte Acrylic is very opaque and only a little is needed to cover the clay.

\*Chevrolet is a trademark of the General Motors Corporation

## Grade Levels 5-12

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



## Preparation

1. Divide the 5-lb bag of clay into three pieces. Cut with wire tool using firm pressure. Cover with damp cloth and put into gallon bag to keep usable.
2. Cover tables with plastic. Give each child a gallon bag for their clay. Discuss the clay tools and how they are used for construction and design.

## Materials

[Blick White Sulphite Drawing Paper](#) (10209-1075), 500 sheet package need one 12" x 18" sheet per student

[Blick Economy Graphite Pencils](#), package of 12 (20302-2009), need one per student

[Amaco® Mexican Self-Hardening Pottery Clay](#), (33205-3005) share one 5-lb box between three students

[Blick Matte Acrylic](#), 7-Color Sets, share one each across class:

Basic Colors (00727-0079) Pastel Colors (00727-1079) Neutral Colors (00727-1179)

[Round 10-Well Tray](#) (03041-1010), share one between two students

[Dynasty® Fine Ruby Synthetic Brushes](#), canister set of 72 assorted (05198-0729), share across classroom

[Weldbond® Universal Adhesive](#), (23819-1105) share six 8-oz bottles across classroom

## Materials for Clay Sculpting

[Thin Line Sculpting Tools](#), 5-piece set (30309-1009)

[Kemper® Wire Clay Cutter](#) (30327-1018)

[Mini Modeling Tools](#) 10-piece set (30354-1010)

[Kemper® Klay Gun](#) 19-piece set (30319-0100)

[Amaco® Hard Acrylic Roller](#) (33058-1001)

## General Supplies

Water containers

Paper towels

[Kwik-Cover Tablecloth](#) (04500-2472) to protect work surface

Zip-close freezer storage bags, gallon size

Thin cloth, approximately 12" x 16" to drape over clay to keep damp

## Process

1. Students draw a sketch of the objects they are putting in the slice of pie. Each object needs to be simple, without a lot of detail, so several can fit on the pie slice. Painting will add the final details to help identify each item.
2. Divide the clay in half, put one half in the bag to keep damp. Moisten hands and roll the clay into a ball. Flatten the ball with the palm of a hand, then use the roller to make a slab of even thickness. This will be the “pie crust,” and should be about 3/8” thick. Cut a wedge about 4” x 6” from the slab and remove the scraps, immediately placing them back into the zip-close bag. Keep the back edge uneven, as a pie crust would be. Lift the back edge up about 1-1/2” to 2” to form the pie shell. Add some extra clay to strengthen the base of the shell. Use slip technique in #4.

3. Start forming the symbols from clay. Where the symbols will attach to each other and to the pie crust, roughen the clay with a tool (called “scoring”) and mix a little water and clay to make “slip” (also called clay glue). Dab the slip onto the scored areas before joining the pieces to help them adhere. Place the objects into the pie shell, secure with the slip and use clay tools to attach.

NOTE: Self-hardening clay should dry in 24-48 hours, depending on thickness.

4. Paint the dry clay with Blick Matte Acrylic – a thick, opaque paint with excellent covering abilities. Use only a small amount of paint at a time. Keep the red color of the clay visible to mimic real pie crust. Select brushes small enough to fit into the tiny background areas of the symbols. Paint the background first and work the paint details to the outside. Acrylic may be thinned with water in order to get fine detail. Paint will dry with a permanent matte finish.

## Options

- Grades 9-12 use kiln-fired clay and glazes
- Grades K-3 use white Crayola® Model Magic (33214-1002). Once dry, add color and detail with Blick Broadline Water-Based Markers (21224-0089)
- Instead of “American Pie” the lesson could be “A Slice of –(city or state)”
- Use Paper Maché in place of clay

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## National Standards

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

**9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

Content Standard #2 – Using knowledge of structures and functions

**K-4** Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas

**5-8** Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

**9-12** Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art

Content Standard #3 – Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

**K-4** Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning

**5-8** Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

**9-12** Students evaluate and defend the validity of sources for content and the manner in which subject matter, symbols, and images are used in the students' works and in significant works by others

Content Standard #5 – Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

**K-4** Students understand there are different responses to specific artworks

**5-8** Students describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own artworks and to artworks from various eras and cultures

**9-12** Students reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art