

Pueblo Pots

(art + history; art + social studies)

There are 20 Pueblo villages left in the Southwest; there were at one time in history 200. Each of the 20 Pueblos has produced pottery at one time. The clay from each pueblo has its own mineral composition, allowing for rich differences in texture and color. Maria Martinez, 1887 - 1980, from San Ildefonso Pueblo, is one of the most famous Native American potters. Maria made her pots by combining dried clay and volcanic ash with water in small batches. She only made enough for one piece of pottery at a time, so that nothing was wasted. Maria had respect for the earth and its resources.

Most commonly, Native American pots are formed with coil technique - pottery wheels did not exist in traditional pueblo pottery making. Students build up the walls of a coil pot and decorate it with the colors of the southwest.

Grade Levels 2-4

Preparation

1. View examples of Pueblo arts and crafts, including the black pottery of Maria Martinez.
2. Divide the clay. Each student will need a piece approximately 3" x 3" x 6" for coils, and another piece approximately 3" x 3" x 1" for the base. Keep moist until it is time to distribute in the classroom by placing in a plastic bag with a wet paper towel. Secure tightly with a twist tie.

Process

1. Students divide their larger piece of clay into three equal pieces and roll each into a coil. To help them roll coils, have them stand up and use a gentle, forward rolling, then lifting, hand motion (not back and forth). When the clay moves toward the edge of the table, lift and move it back, starting over. Make a loose spiral with the coils and place in the plastic bag until ready to use again.
2. Students flatten the smaller piece of clay with a rolling pin. Tape thickness strips 8" apart on table and roll clay between for a uniform thickness. Press the lid from a small coffee can down into the clay and trim to make a slab circle. Place the base on a paper towel, so that it can be easily rotated while forming the pot. Save the excess clay to mix with water to form *slip* — a liquid clay that acts as a glue when joining pieces together. Mix in a foam cup and keep covered with a wet paper towel until ready to use.



Materials

Amaco® No. 25 White Clay, 50-lb carton (30505-1025), share across classroom

Slab Roller (30323-1024) and Thickness Strips (30323-1009), share four across the classroom

Student Modeling Tools (30361-1009), 7-tool set, share four across classroom

Blick Premium Grade Tempera, Turquoise quart (00011-5117), Sienna gallon (00011-8049) distribute across classroom

Blickrylic Gloss Medium, half-gallon (00711-1028) distribute across classroom

Blick Economy Black Bristle Brushes, 1/2" (05172-4012), one per student

Gallon size plastic bags

Paper towels

Small coffee can lids

Foam coffee cups

Process, continued

3. Students should gently *score* around the outside of the slab circle. Score by scratching a texture into the clay with a fork. Students then dip a finger into the slip and apply it over the scoring.
4. Removing one coil from the plastic bag, students score and slip along one side. Place the scored part of the coil to the scored edge of the circle base and press gently.
5. Wrap the coil, pressing gently, and pinch off and smooth together ends when it is wrapped around slab and they meet. Build three rows high, and then add some decorative finishes for the last two rows, such as “S” shapes made from coils, waves made over a finger, or rolling little balls, pinching them flat, and adding them in openings made by the wave designs.

NOTE: Everything that is added MUST be scored and slipped. Clay will not join well to clay if this step is skipped.

Do NOT pick up the pot until it is finished. Turn the paper towel as it is built to keep the walls evenly built.

5. Smooth out any cracks by painting water or slip over them. Dry completely and kiln fire according to clay specifications.
6. Mix three parts acrylic gloss medium with one part turquoise tempera, paint the top and sides of coil pot (not the bottom). Paint all crevices and allow to dry.
7. Paint Sienna tempera over the whole pot covering the turquoise color (not the bottom). Once again, paint all crevices and allow to dry.
8. With a wet paper towel, wash the sienna away from the surface of the pot, allowing it to remain in the deep crevices. This will create an aged, weathered effect to the pottery.

Options

- For a complete experience, play tapes or CDs of Native American drums and flutes for students as they work

Lesson Plan Idea and Artwork submitted by Anne Pietropola, Mechanicsburg, PA

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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

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures