

# **Form, Function and Symbolism: Art of The Pueblo Peoples**

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## **Abstract**

Form, Function and Symbolism is a visual art unit on Pueblo pottery designed for students in grades 6-8. It may be adapted for use in high school. The students observe and research pottery from historic and contemporary Pueblo communities from an anthropologist's viewpoint. The focus of the unit is on the form and designs on Pueblo pottery in order to understand the functional use and the stories they tell. Students learn and participate in the process of creating a clay pot from the gathering of clay to the firing of the finished piece.

## **Key Words**

Pueblo pottery, Maria Martinez, Jason Garcia, Ancestral Pueblo, Tewa, Santa Clara Pueblo, Taos, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Cochiti, Santa Domingo Pueblo, Acoma, Zuni, Pueblo Revolt

## **Unit Content**

Art preserves and documents our history. I believe that is why I am drawn to teach it. The past is as important as the present in the art classes that I teach. In this curriculum unit, my students will explore the form, function and symbolism of the art of Pueblo people, both past and present. The unit uses an approach that combines anthropology, ethnography and art history to explore the material culture of these peoples. My students will learn about Pueblo pottery from the past to the work of present day contemporary artists. In ancient times pottery was central to Pueblo life for not only utilitarian use but also for ceremonial use in the kivas. As time passed and life changed with the modern era Pueblo pottery also became an art form and for many is also a major economic resource.

After discussions with my students in 6th-8th grade I learned they had very little knowledge of Native Americans history, culture, or art. In elementary school there is a small unit on the Lenape and Columbus' arrival in the Americas and the killing of Native Americans. They do not know of the reservations, The Long Walk or migration of these peoples. They believe the Native peoples are still alive today but are not sure where they live. There is a disconnect in understanding about past and present-day Native Americans. I feel that it is important for my students to learn this history in relation to their culture and art that is created because they are tied together very closely. In this unit the art will tell the story, the history, the culture, the life of the Pueblo peoples of the past and the present.

This unit begins with a collaborative session in which students work in groups to list what they know about Native Americans. I will then be able to determine how much history will need to be discussed during the unit. I believe it is important to understand and know the history of Native Americans in this country in order to fully understand their culture and the importance of art in that culture. The National Museum of American Indians has written a Framework for Essential Understandings of American Indians that I will use to teach the students

key concepts of the history aspect of this unit. <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pdf/NMAI-Essential-Understandings.pdf>

Land acknowledgement will be discussed and given to the Lenape peoples who are the original inhabitants of the ancestral lands we occupy today. Students will discuss the Lenape and the fact that Pennsylvania is one of only 13 states that does not recognize Indian tribes.

“The word Pueblo means ‘village’ in Spanish and refers to a town and to its people.”(Trimble 3) “The Pueblos are one people and many people. They share a way of life, a worldview, and a landscape. They speak half a dozen languages and live in more than thirty villages scattered in a 350 mile arc that reaches from Taos, New Mexico, to the Hopi mesas in Northern Arizona. Their immediate ancestors lived in an even more vast area, from central Utah to deep in Northern Mexico and from Nevada to Texas.” (Trimble 2) They simply migrated on their own and in times of drought from their Ancestral community locations to the areas they occupy now.

“Pueblo languages have no word for ‘art’. Tewa people do speak of the concept of an artful thoughtful life. Prehistoric peoples made ceramic vessels for cooking, carrying water, and keeping food safe from insects and rodents....They just did it. It was life. These useful objects also happened to be beautiful, and potters worked even harder to create beauty when making ceremonial vessels.” (Trimble 5)

Earth, water, air, and fire when combined provide us with a substance that does not change or decompose over time; pottery. It is these pottery pieces that give insight to many previous cultures and settlements. One culture is that of the Pueblo peoples and their ancestors. Originally known as basketmakers they coalesced in the present day Four Corners region. It is through their pottery in its form and design that we are able to understand so much of their past culture. Pueblo artists today continue in the traditions, techniques, forms and symbolism of their ancestors to create pottery for both decorative and functional use. The lessons in this unit will teach the techniques used by the Pueblo peoples in gathering clay, creating pots using a hand building method consisting of coils, the use of polishing stones and the detailed designs to decorate the pottery and continuing to the creation of works by contemporary Pueblo artists. Students will learn from the first stage of breaking old clay pieces into fine granules and adding water to the final stage of firing their completed pottery.

In this unit the students will work as anthropologists in the beginning to ‘discover’ the pottery of Ancestral Pueblo peoples. Each small group of students will receive a box with a photo of Mesa Verde or Chaco Canyon on it. Inside will be photos of pottery pieces found in those areas. The students will use a close looking strategy to make observations about each piece, carefully drawing the form and paying close attention to the designs. Students will discuss what each piece might possibly have been used for. Discussing both the utilitarian function and the intricate designs, thinking about the question, ‘why take the time to decorate?’ Sharing out and having a whole class discussion about the findings from each group.

The student anthropologists/archeologists will travel the same migration routes as the Pueblos into eight geographical locations to ‘discover’ the pottery in those areas created both in the past and the present. Using specific photos and the close observation strategy students will

focus on the form of the work, the colors, and the designs on each piece. Writing these observations down in their sketchbook, along with a detailed drawing of each piece the pottery will tell the story of the land and the Pueblos that inhabit it. Students will be able to compare their findings to discuss the differences in colors and designs that are generally characteristic of specific Pueblo communities and their geographic locations. Students will begin each class period with a new piece from their area. They will note the form of the pottery and the design, so they can speculate and research the meaning behind the patterns noted. The eight Pueblos that will be looked at are listed below with their specific characteristics in color and designs used in historic and contemporary pieces. Both will be observed so that the students can see the evolution of the pottery within the pueblos.

*Taos, Picuris* - Located in the Northern part of the Eastern Pueblo area. In this area clay contains mica, a mineral that makes the clay gritty enough to not need a temper and sparkly enough to not need decoration. These pots were mostly created and used as utilitarian pieces, many being used to cook in. "Taos and Picuris people made both painted and unpainted pottery before the Pueblo Rebellion in 1680; in the centuries since, they have specialized in utilitarian micaceous pottery" (Trimble 38). Firing sometimes leaves 'fire clouds' formed by smoke stains that just add to the natural beauty and simplicity of the pots. These pieces are bronze or reddish orange in color with a glittery appearance. Students will look at older pieces as well as contemporary pieces comparing the differences and understanding the similarities and use of functional shapes. Environmental factors leading to change and even extinction of the natural clay will be discussed. "Pottery can indeed die within a pueblo. The primary clay source at Picuris, on land just outside the reservation, has been destroyed by road construction and mining" (Trimble 41).

*Tewa* - Is a linguistic group of Pueblo peoples who live in several small communities north of Santa Fe, New Mexico. They all speak the language Tewa. There are seven different pueblos that speak this language. My students will explore Santa Clara and San Ildefonso Pueblos and specifically the work of artist Maria Martinez from San Ildefonso Pueblo.

*San Ildefonso* - is another Tewa speaking Pueblo located just South of Santa Clara Pueblo in the Eastern Pueblo region on the Rio Grande, south of Taos, New Mexico.

*Maria Martinez* was one of only eighty-three people in her Pueblo to survive an influenza epidemic in 1918. She began with polychrome pottery shaping and polishing the pots, keeping in tradition with her pueblo. Her husband Julian would paint them in the polychrome style of black, red and white slip. However, it is the black-on-black design that they are most known and credited for. Maria would shape and polish the pots and then Julian had painted the same black slip over the polished pot. After firing the painted areas, the pottery had a matte finish, and the polished areas were shiny. This became a very popular style. "San Ildefonso black on black pottery became so popular that by 1925 several families in the pueblo supported themselves with money from "two-black pottery sales" (Trimble 46). Julian used several ancient designs in the new color, including the water serpent. This is a symbol that is popular among many Tewa potters and signifies rain and prayer for rain. Many potters worked within pueblos and Maria was the first to sign her work although she believed it was most important that it was San Ildefonso pottery and not that it was made by her.

*Santa Clara* - The pottery made in this Pueblo was usually plain and had no painted designs. Depending on the type of firing they used the pots could be red or black. In an open fire the pots came out red and a smothered fire produced black pottery. Large black storage jars with bear paw designs, the wedding jar, and melon jar are all common pottery found in this Pueblo by both ancient and contemporary potters. The bear paw design is representative of a legend where “a bear led the Santa Clarans to water during a drought. In remembrance of this act of salvation, Santa Clara potters began placing its tracks on their work” (Trimble 51). The wedding jar is a bulbous shaped bottom with two spouts coming from the top. It would be used in weddings, one side for the groom and his family to drink from and the other side for the bride. Melon jars are shaped with ribs around them, some were cut out of thick clay while others are formed with the shape of the pot. Carving is characteristic of Santa Clara pottery and can be found on black and red pots. The potter usually carves away the background leaving the designs to stick out and be seen.

*Jason Garcia* is a contemporary Santa Clara potter who creates tiles that “tell stories of the changing landscape of the Pueblo, of what it means to be a young Santa Clara dealing with violence, drugs, gangs, but still maintaining culture” (Trimble 54). He uses the polychrome style of his family to tell his stories using images from today's modern culture such as Grand Theft Auto video game. My students will relate to these modern images and hopefully see how ancient and modern can work together to create the pottery. In his “Tewa tales of Suspense” tiles he uses comic book and superhero figures mixed with Tewa historical figures to tell the story of the Pueblo Revolt. This will help my students learn a part of history that is not taught in school, and they will see how art can be used to tell the story.

*The Pueblo Revolt of 1680* - was a successful revolt against the Spanish beliefs of religion, economics and political institutions imposed on the Pueblos. This revolt kept the Spanish out of New Mexico for 12 years. It began when the Spanish governor in 1670 ordered the execution of several Pueblo holy men. Po'pay of Ohkay Owingeh was whipped during this time and he led the revolt against the Spanish. Knotted cords were sent by runners to each of the pueblos, one knot for each day. The leaders in each pueblo untied one knot each day and when there were no more knots all of the Pueblos acted together to rebel against the Spanish. The revolt killed 400 Spanish and pushed thousands of settlers out of New Mexico. This revolt was instrumental in preserving the Pueblo languages, religions, culture and lands.

*Cochiti* is a Pueblo located south of Santa Clara on the west side of the Rio Grande. It is the Cochiti who have shared their story of the first Pueblo potters. “Long ago, Clay Old Woman and Clay Old Man came to visit the Cochitis. Clay Old Woman mixed clay with sand and began to coil a pot while Clay Old Man danced beside her. All the people watched. When the pot was some eighteen inches high, Clay Old Man danced too close and kicked it over. He took the broken pot, rolled the clay in a ball, and gave a piece to each woman in the village, telling them never to forget to make pottery. Ever since, when Cochitis do not make pottery, Clay Old Woman and Clay Old Man come to the village and dance to remind the people of their gift of clay” (Trimble 65). It is stories like these that will explain the importance of pottery in the culture of the Pueblo peoples and how it is passed down through generations of families in all the communities. Historic Cochiti potters were known for pots incorporating animal forms such as

birds. It was figures that made Cochiti pottery collectable when the railroad came through in 1880. "Cochiti figures can be modeled from white or red clay, but red clay requires ten to fifteen coats of white. The slip goes on after the pot has been warmed in the oven. With each layer, the potter uses a clean, white rag to polish the chalky film" (Trimble 68). It is a tedious process that can show flaws only after it is fired. These figures included dancing bears, circus performers, and a singing mother. Popularity dwindled and these were seen as monos and dismissed by dealers. This changed one hundred years later when *Helen Cordero* invented the 'storyteller' in 1964 as a larger figure that evolved from the singing mother design. This is a male figure with the mouth open and eyes closed and many children all over it. Today many potters continue to create this figurative pottery telling stories with animals such as owls, kangaroos, or other animals they like not necessarily related to the area.

*Santo Domingo* is a Pueblo located south of Cochiti. This community has stayed very close to the original pottery designs from the 1700's. "The Santo Domingo bird is usually in a still life, with maybe the tails painted with designs, or the breast area" (Trimble 73). Negative painting is common and causes large black and red areas. The pots can have birds and flowers but rarely mammals and human figures are forbidden by religious leaders on pottery that is to be sold. The pottery is made to be used and serves to carry food to the kivas. The shape follows function, water jars, dough bowls, and storage jars with lids.

*Acoma* is a Pueblo also located in New Mexico but to the Southwest of those noted above. The clay found in this area is grey and very hard. It takes work to ground it fine enough to use and these potters use ground pottery sherds for temper when making the clay. These sherds are collected from the base of the ruins where, "long time ago some ladies fired their pottery. The broken pots themselves were made with ground sherds, so today's pottery may contain several generations of pots within its clay" (Trimble 89). The prehistoric pottery from Acoma was corrugated meaning that the coils were not smoothed together but pinched together leaving a textured pot. These were used as cooking vessels. Today they are made using a pointed tool to create the texture. Acoma pottery was also smoothed and polished and then painted in a polychrome style using swirling designs, flowers and parrots. "The Acoma parrot design might seem exotic, but traders brought parrots from tropical Mexico in prehistoric times. Today Pueblo people keep them for their feathers to be used on ceremonial costumes. To an Acoma steeped in tradition, parrots may symbolize the zenith and its clouds; the nadir, ancestors, and death; or the south and sun" (Trimble 90). Many designs can have several meanings depending on the Pueblo community and interpretation of stories passed down verbally. Many of the designs found on Acoma pottery today are from ancient designs found in Mimbres pottery. Mimbres pottery was made between 950 CE to 1150 CE. Animals were painted on their pottery and some Acoma potters today have revived this style.

*Zuni* Pueblo today is creating pottery again, however, only a few individuals are doing this work. "Even if utilitarian pieces are no longer made at a pueblo and no one has yet begun making commercial art pottery, the kiva leaders still need ceremonial vessels. A few stew bowls must be made for carrying food to the gods. Rain priests need canteens to carry water from the sacred springs" (Trimble 102). They began to teach pottery in the school to young students using pictures of old pots in books and collecting clay for them to use. Zuni pottery today is mostly fired in electric kilns; it is difficult to find manure. Some potters today learned their craft in school and continue to create and pass on their knowledge to others. Many animals are used on

Zuni pottery such as the deer, rain bird, owls, tadpoles, dragon flies, along with feathers, checkerboard designs and hatching lines. The deer has a significant meaning because when the Zuni landed in the world there was no water. “A deer led them to water, and everybody was happy that they found the water with that deer” (Trimble 104).

Specific designs can be found on pottery from different Pueblo communities. Most are attributed as rain, clouds, feathers, and animals. In some designs it is the negative space in which the importance or distinction of the design can be found. I’ve only mentioned a few here because I want my students to discover the designs themselves, to hypothesize the meanings and to research the reasons and beliefs behind them. My students will examine the images both ancient and contemporary to see the designs and adaptations through time. Noted will be the designs found after the Spanish came and after the railroad was introduced. Both of these events opened the Pueblo peoples to outside influences including beliefs, objects, and ways to improve economical resources.

The *line break* can be found on many Pueblo pottery pieces and has a few meanings depending on the individuals and traditions of the community. It is a line that does not meet so there is a space or small opening. “That line is a representation of your own life. If you meet it together, you end your own life. Daisy Hooee (Hopi) said the line break has to do with long life, children, and healthy people. Lucy Lewis (Acoma) stated she used the spirit break on her Acoma pots only when they were made to be used in the kiva or to be given by kachinas to children during ceremonies. Some women leave the line open if they can still bear children. Others say that two lines must be left broken, one through which the spirit of the pot can enter the vessel and one through which it can escape, allowing the pot to breathe” (Trimble 107). This is an example of the ways in which many stories and beliefs can be associated with just one Pueblo symbol.

After watching a video of Maria Martinez creating pottery from gathering clay to the final stage of firing students will discuss the techniques of Pueblo pottery and learn to use them in creating their own pottery pieces.

Pueblo people *gathering clay* from the earth where they live. Each area has different types and colors of clay. It is naturally occurring and once fired it hardens and will not decompose. “Clay is a gift from Mother Earth, and like all her gifts, it is sacred. Potters must thank her for the gift. Our Pueblo culture is an articulation of prayers and gratitude. Potters pray before taking the clay.

They make an offering of cornmeal (or dollar bills, or whatever valuables come from the pockets of their jeans) asking for permission from Mother Earth to take part of her body to use for pottery to support themselves and their children” (Trimble 10). Potters do not take more than they need, some follow rules like not digging in the winter or keeping their sources secret. However all Pueblo peoples realize the importance of the Earth providing for them. It is hard work to dig for clay and many times the task is done as a family with all helping, you have to look for it and there is a science behind it knowing how much water and temper to add. After the clay is picked it must be dried before adding a temper to it. Temper helps the clay soil to be sturdier in texture and not shrink or crack. Temper can be sand, old pot sherds, ground rock, volcanic ash or basalt that will slow down the drying time of the clay creating a more uniformed drying process. Different Pueblos use different tempers due to what is found in their

geographical area. Clay color is also determined by the soil in the area. Learning to mix the clay is a trial and error and scientific process that could make or break pottery, literally. “Experience teaches an instinctive certainty about the right consistency in the mix of water, clay, and temper” (Trimble 13).

Once mixed the clay must be kneaded to remove the air bubbles so that pots do not pop in the firing. A bottom slab of clay is laid in a ‘puki’- an old pot base or gourd bottom that is used to form the base of the pot. Modern potters use plates, pie tins, or bowls to form the base. The ‘puki’ supports the base of the pot as the coils are added and smoothed. “Coiling more than anything else defines Pueblo pottery. Coiled pots are built by hand, never thrown on a wheel. Pueblo clay cannot be thrown on a wheel. It doesn’t have the necessary plasticity”(Trimble 15). As each coil is made it is pressed into the pot to extend it up to the height and diameter the potter is trying to create. The right amount of water in the clay is important or the coils will not stick to the previous ones.

The shape of the pot is made by pushing out on the sides of the pot to make a wider diameter if wanted by the potter. The pots take their own shape depending on the potter and the clay. Shaping the clay is also done by scraping the clay with scrapers made from pieces of gourds, pot sherds, wooden spoons, sunglass lenses or whatever is available and will work. Sometimes patting the clay down also forms it to the shape wanted. The scraper smooths the coils away creating a smooth even finish.

The clay must dry before the sanding stage. Some clays can dry quickly in the sun while others need to dry slowly over time to avoid cracking. After drying the pot can be sanded using corncobs, sandstone, lava rock and window screen or steel wool if needed. “Sanding eliminates the ridge left at the top of the puki” (Trimble 19). Sanding not only creates a smooth finish but can also be used to sculpt the pot shape. Sanding creates clay dust, and it is dirty and can cause allergies and sneezing. Pots can easily crack in the drying or sanding stage and if this happens, they are broken and put in water to soften and go to the next batch of clay. The clay is not wasted.

The next step is polishing the pottery. Many potters use stones that have been collected or passed down to them from other potters. They become heirlooms and are cherished. “In most Pueblos, though, a thin solution of clay called slip is painted on and, while still damp, rubbed carefully with a polishing stone or clean rag to achieve a lustrous finish” (Trimble 20). Different Pueblos use different colored slip to create their unique styles. The pot must be warmed in order for the slip to adhere to it. The slip coats the pot creating a smooth coating of colored clay. It is this coating that can be polished, painted or carved into. It can take several hours to polish a pot depending on the finish wanted. The potters must be careful to not scratch the slip, or it has to be washed off and redone.

Pots are painted using naturally made brushes. “Potters may make brushes with strands of their own hair. Many use brushes made from dried yucca leaves, chewed so that exactly the right number of fibers extends from the tip, usually from one to twelve” (Trimble 23). Paint is made from natural plants that are boiled down and ground rocks and minerals. Mixing paint is a science, if not correct it will not change color in the firing. Potters must concentrate and have good eyesight to complete the intricate painted designs without mistakes. The yucca brush is

flexible enough to reach difficult places. “Each pueblo has a set of traditional designs that give a pot its character, and each potter paints these in an individual way– as if dressing a child.... In the old days, before Indian artists signed work, they had to be able to recognize their own pieces in a large array of pottery after a ceremony”(Trimble 23).

The most challenging part of the pottery process is the firing or baking as some potters call it. Anything can go wrong from the pot popping to the paint not turning the right colors. “A gust of wind at the wrong time can abruptly alter the temperature and make a pot explode. Air bubbles in the clay can also make a pot pop. A piece of manure falling on the polished slip can smudge the pot with ‘fire clouds’” (Trimble 26). Pueblo pottery is fired outside in ‘kilns’ built by the potters each time they are ready to fire. These outdoor kilns are built with careful attention to the weather, and many give an offering or have the ground blessed. They choose areas that are protected from wind. There is a grate placed a few inches off the ground and the pots are placed on the grate. Manure from cows or sheep, wood kindling, and bark from trees are all used to fuel the fire. The firing is crucial to the colors in an open fire clay may be red but if the same fire is closed or smothered the clay will turn black. Firing can be regulated by tribal governments to protect the environment if it is wildfire season or high air pollution levels firing may be prohibited. More potters today are using kilns to ensure the safety of the pots, there is a high market for the pottery, and they do not want to lose them to the firing process.

After seeing the video of Maria Martinez students will understand first-hand the importance of each step in the process as well as the difficulties involved in creating these works.

Students will use this learned knowledge to create a form and to design their own pattern or story on it. How will you tell your story?

Based on the context I have outlined several objectives of this curriculum unit

- Native American History
  - Students will be able to understand and discuss the history of the Pueblo Peoples in relationship to their geographical location, migration, religious and cultural beliefs, and the Pueblo Revolt
- Pueblo Pottery
  - Students will be able to apply the techniques used by Pueblo peoples in order to create their own clay piece focusing on the origin of the form, its function or use and the symbolism used in the design
  - Students will be able to distinguish pottery made at different Pueblo communities according to the design and colors used.
  - Students will be able to use the Pueblo techniques to create their own pottery forms and create their own designs to tell their stories.

### **Teaching Strategies**

The art and material culture of a group of people conveys in-depth knowledge into that culture if we take the time to look. My students today are used to the faced paced digital world of tik tok

videos, tweets, and texts. According to a recent study the average human attention span is 9 seconds. I use several teaching strategies in the art classroom to help my students focus and engage with works of art as well as create their own works.

*Close Looking Strategy* - is a practice where the viewer looks at a work of art for 8-10 minutes of simple observation. Looking at the form, patterns, color, and materials of a work of art can help us to understand the ideas the artist is trying to communicate. There are several steps to this strategy.

- Observe- just observe the work. Do not make assumptions, theories or stories about it. Just observe what you see.
- Draw- draw the work of art in your sketchbook. Focus on the details that you begin to notice from observing for this longer period of time.
- Describe- using words tell what details you see, talk about shapes, lines, colors, patterns.
- Think-based on your observations, develop your interpretation of the work. What might the artist be trying to convey?
- Make connections- based on the details observed make connections to your life, experiences, present day visuals or other works of art.
- Ask questions- what questions have you developed because of the observations that you made?

*Visual Thinking Strategy* - is a practice where students observe a work of art and answer the questions “What do you notice?” and “What do you wonder” The viewer is given a shorter period of time to observe and answer the questions. I use this in a whole group setting and students interact with each other and different viewpoints and observations. This is also used in the viewing of short videos that may inform the students of knowledge needed for the unit.

*Connecting to prior learning* - What do my students already know? What have they been taught? What have they retained? This is important in my classroom so that students can share their knowledge, discuss any differences and all be on the same page entering the unit.

*Sketchbooks/process journals* - all of my students are required to work and reflect in a sketchbook. They use this as a visual journal or process journal in which text and visuals are required. Students will use the sketchbook to write down the close looking process and drawings for each artwork. Students will also use the sketchbook for knowledge learned about designs and culture of the Navajo and Pueblo peoples.

*Choice Based Learning* - In my art classroom I use a modified choice based curriculum design. Students work within units where they are taught the techniques of using certain materials. They then create art using those materials and techniques. What they create is their choice based on parameters of the unit.

*Studio habits of Mind* - In my classroom the Studio Habits of Mind are used for guiding the units, inclusion of information, and assessment. The habits are used in any order and combined throughout the unit and creation of art.

- Observe- what do the students see? This can include close looking and discussing works and also actual observation of an object in order to draw it. Students will look closely and observe new things.
- Develop craft- This is the process of learning and using materials. Students are given demonstrations on the techniques of a medium in order to learn the processes of that medium in creation of an art form.
- Stretch and explore- The process of the student experimenting with the medium and techniques taught so that risks can be taken, new ideas created, and learning from mistakes are essential.
- Engage and persist- challenges will be encountered and the student learns from these challenges through persistence and trying again.
- Express- how does the artist create art that expresses what they want to say? This habit can include both the student trying to express their story, belief, emotion and also how the artist of specific works expresses themselves.
- Envision- how does the student see their work through the process and most specifically to the next steps through completion.
- Understanding the art world- exposure to other artists and works is inherent to understanding and inspiring the student to create.
- Reflect- how does the student see their work? The reflection process is important for full understanding of the work created. All students use their sketchbooks to reflect through the process and creation of art. An artist statement is required to accompany each work they create.

### **Classroom Activities**

My role as a visual art instructor is guided by the National Arts Education Standards which consist of 4 areas: creating, performing, responding, and connecting. This curriculum unit includes several lessons and spans several weeks. The production of art takes time.

#### **Lesson #1:**

Time - 1 class period

*Objectives/I can statements*

- SWBAT discuss and list prior knowledge of Native Americans
- SWBAT identify new knowledge of Native American Culture in order to discuss their history, stereotypical beliefs and cultural appropriation

### *Do Now*

- On a sheet of paper list as many Native American Tribes as you can remember

### *Warm Up*

Discuss how many tribes could be named and from where did they learn this?

We will work together to share all prior knowledge of Native American history and culture, learn new knowledge, discuss stereotypes and cultural misinformation. I want the students to understand that each tribe has different beliefs, language, and customs.

### *Activity - small group cooperative learning*

working in small groups in response to the question “What do you know about Native American Culture and History?” students will discuss and list the stories they heard, art they may have seen, etc.

Each group will create a list of their knowledge to share with the class. From this knowledge listed we will discuss stereotypes they have formed.

### *Whole group instruction*

I will share and teach information about the key concepts of Native American history and culture. This will be ongoing throughout the unit as it comes up in discussion. Students can research information to determine if it is accurate.

A land map will be shown and land acknowledgement will be discussed and given.

### *Closure*

List and share the differences between prior knowledge and new knowledge of native americans. Each table shares out.

### *Evaluation of learning*

Work written in sketchbook to be based on prior knowledge

## **Lesson #2- Pueblo pottery-creating the pot**

Time - 25 class periods

### *Objectives*

SWBAT make observations and discuss findings in pottery viewed IOT determine the form and function of the piece

SWBAT use their new knowledge of form and function to design pottery that is functional to them for a specific reason

SWBAT learn the culture of Pueblo peoples and to apply that knowledge when discussing works of art by them

SWBAT decipher a few of the symbols and patterns used in Pueblo pottery

SWBAT learn the techniques used in acquiring clay and creating a pot IOT create their own pottery based on a form that is functional to them

### *Materials Needed*

Dry clay, water, slip, clay tools, polishing stone, paint brushes, sketchbooks, images of Pueblo pottery

### *Day 1*

#### *Do Now*

Students in each group will view a map of the Four Corners Region and Ancestral Pueblo ruins. They will make observations and develop questions about the inhabitants.

#### *Activity*

Students working in groups will be given a box. In each box will be photos of Ancestral Pueblo pottery.

Students working together as archeologists will discover this pottery. Using close looking strategies they will make observations on each photo in their sketchbook. This day will focus on the form of each piece. What do they think it was used for? The designs on the pieces, What do they see and what do they think it means? Students will develop ideas and questions, they will use their chromebooks to research the answers. Students will write everything down in their sketchbooks.

#### *Closure*

Class discussion will consist of each table group 'sharing out' something they learned about the pottery and the people that used it.

### *Day 2*

#### *Do Now*

Students will view the video of Maria Martinez picking clay, creating pottery and firing it. We will discuss as a class what they notice and what they wonder. The beliefs of Mother Earth and the need for a prayer or offering will be discussed.

#### *Class Demo*

Day 2- I will demonstrate grinding dry clay and mixing it in with water to create a liquid or more solid wet clay for use

The students can not gather their own clay but they will be able to grind dry clay and mix with water in an attempt to make their own clay. The students will learn the challenges and difficulties of this process. I hope it helps them to understand the life of the Pueblo People and the way of everyday life.

### *Activity*

Students will grind their own clay and mix with water just enough clay for a pot.

### *Closure*

Students clay will be placed in a bowl and placed into a group plastic bin to keep it moist. Students will wash hands. Students will reflect in their sketchbooks today's lesson and their challenges and discoveries. Each table will share with the class.

### **Day 3**

#### *Do Now throughout the rest of unit*

Table groups will be broken down into 8 groups and each group will be discovering the pottery from a specific Pueblo community. Each group will look at one piece from their community each day of this unit. Each day students will use close looking strategies to look at photos of Pueblo pottery. They will draw them in their sketchbooks and reflect on the observations that they make. Students will research the meanings or stories behind the patterns they see. We will discuss as a class the possible use for each piece based on its shape, the patterns and symbols used in decoration, the importance of decoration on a functional piece "Why not just make it plain for use?" Work of contemporary Pueblo artists and ancient pieces will be examined

### *Warm Up*

Ongoing throughout the unit:

Maps of Pueblo migration routes and land acknowledgement discussed

Cultural stories of importance

Discussion of designs and meanings

Tik tok of Native American personalities

### *Class Demo*

Day 3- I will demonstrate pinching and flattening a bottom and using a form for the base

Day 5- I will demonstrate making coils and attaching them to the bottom piece

Day 6- I will model my thought process for designing a pot for a specific function and show ways to create each shape through placement of coils and pushing out of the clay to the desired shape.

What is the use?

What is the item to be carried?

How far will I transport or how long will it be stored?

Day 7- I will demonstrate how to use a scraper to smooth the coils together and form the pot

Day 8- end of unit- I will work alongside students to create actual pottery piece

Day 9-15- I will help students to create their own pottery

Day 16-18-Pottery is drying and students begin lesson 3

Day 19- I will give a demonstration on how to apply colored slip to their pot.

Day 20- I will give a demonstration on how to use a polishing stone to polish the slip.

### *Activity*

Each day the students will work with the clay following the demo I have given them. They will not create anything specific yet as this is a bootcamp type learning for them to use the new material.

Day 7-8- students will work to design a form for a functional piece they will eventually create

Day 9-15- students will use clay to create their functional piece using the techniques of handbuilding and the coil method.

Day 16-18- clay will be drying while students move onto lesson #3 to learn about Pueblo designs and apply that knowledge to their own culture or stories to create designs unique to them. Cultural appropriation will be taught and discussed.

The students will be encouraged to tell their own stories about family or events in their life using the pottery. Referring to the work of Jason Garcia and other contemporary Pueblo potters.

Day 19-20- students will use colored slip or glaze to paint the designs from lesson #3 onto their pottery pieces and attempt to use a polishing stone.

Day 21-25- creation of a second piece or finishing up of what is needed

### *Closure*

Each day the students' clay will be placed in a plastic storage container according to their table group. This container will keep the clay moist and make distribution each day easier.

Daily reflection in the sketchbook

Discussion of daily discoveries and challenges

### *Evaluation of learning*

Formative

observations of students working and developing questions and studio habits

Summative-

pottery piece and design

Artist statement reflecting on process, design and tying into the Pueblo history

### **Lesson #3- Pueblo designs and the stories behind them**

Time - 10 class periods

#### *Objectives:*

SWBAT decipher a few of the symbols and patterns used in Pueblo pottery IOT develop their own designs to tell a story that is personal to them

SWBAT present information to their classmates and discuss their findings on the Pueblo community they have been studying.

#### *Materials needed:*

Poster board, sketchbooks, pencils, images of Pueblo pottery

#### ***Day 1-2***

##### *Do Now*

Each group will determine, from the pottery they discovered, the objects they liked best and why. Each student may choose a different piece or they may all like the same. It is a personal choice for them.

##### *Activity*

Each group will work together to create a presentation either digital or on Posterboard for the Pueblo community they researched. Each student in the group should focus on the piece they liked the most and expand on its design elements. Each presentation should communicate the findings of each archeology/anthropology team fully, including the Pueblo name, pottery colors,

forms used often, designs used to decorate and other useful information. Students should also include any specific stories they have learned from the pottery designs.

### *Closure*

Students will reflect in their sketchbook and develop their verbal presentations. They should speak for a few minutes each.

### ***Day 3-4***

#### *Do Now*

I will play a video of Native American Hip Hop artists and tic tok videos

#### *Activity*

Each group will present to the class the information and stories they have learned from the pottery and the research they have done.

Students can ask questions if they have them. The importance of this is for the students to learn about the other Pueblo communities looked at by other groups. A specific focus on designs and stories will occur so that students can begin to understand how designs can evolve and communicate ideas and beliefs.

### *Closure*

Students reflect in their sketchbooks and ask any questions they may have.

### ***Day 5-10***

#### *Do Now*

Students discuss with each group any questions they have and look at the visual presentations from each group

#### *Warm up*

Students determine an important story from their family or life event that they want to communicate. It can be a social issue that is occurring in today's world or in the past. Jason Garcia communicated the events of the Pueblo Revolt so it would be appropriate for students to choose a social issue they feel strongly about.

#### *Activity*

Each day students develop designs or visuals to use on their pottery to communicate their stories. No Pueblo designs should be copied and cultural appropriation will be discussed. Students will develop their final design and put it on their pot using glaze or slip.

## Closure

Students will reflect in their sketchbooks daily. On the last day they will write an artist statement that includes their story and information about their pot.

## Resources

“Art Talks: Pueblo Warriors Jar by Jason Garcia Joins Rockwell Collection.” *Rockwell Museum*, 17 Oct. 2019, <https://rockwellmuseum.org/blog/art-talks-jason-garcia/>.

“A Brief History of the Pueblo Revolt.” *Indian Pueblo Cultural Center*, 6 Aug. 2020, <https://indianpueblo.org/a-brief-history-of-the-pueblo-revolt/>.

Brody, J. J., and Rebecca Allen. *Beauty from the Earth: Pueblo Indian Pottery from the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology*. University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1990.

Chapman, Kenneth Milton. *Pueblo Pottery Designs*. Dover Publications, 1995.

Fowler Williams, Lucy. “Telling Stories of Today: Collecting Native American Material Culture in the 21st Century.” *Penn Museum Blog*, <https://www.penn.museum/blog/collection/telling-stories-of-today-collecting-native-american-material-culture-in-the-21st-century/>.

*HS Health Creating a Movement through Resilience*. [https://indianpueblo.org/wp-content/uploads/HS\\_HEALTH\\_Creating-a-Movement-Through-Resilience\\_v2.pdf](https://indianpueblo.org/wp-content/uploads/HS_HEALTH_Creating-a-Movement-Through-Resilience_v2.pdf).

*Objects with Stories: Pueblo Pots and Pedro De Lemos ...* <https://www.pgmuseum.org/blog/2015/6/26/objects-with-stories-pueblo-pots-and-pedro-de-lemos>.

Shurley, Daniel, et al. “Philadelphia's Forgotten Forebears: How Pennsylvania Erased the Lenape from Local History.” *Hidden City Philadelphia*, 23 Aug. 2019, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2019/08/philadelphias-forgotten-forebears-how-pennsylvania-erased-the-lenape-from-local-history/>.

“Tewa Tales of Suspense!” *The Newberry*, <https://www.newberry.org/tewa-ales-suspense>.

Trimble, Stephen. *Talking with the Clay: The Art of Pueblo Pottery in the 21st Century*. School for Advanced Research Press, 2007.

Weideman, Paul. “Duality by Design: Mirror Images and Meaning in Ancestral Pueblo Pottery.” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 10 May 2019, [https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/art/duality-by-design-mirror-images-and-meaning-in-ancestral-pueblo-pottery/article\\_a0caede4-98c5-59b8-999f-5d60d1aa15e6.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/art/duality-by-design-mirror-images-and-meaning-in-ancestral-pueblo-pottery/article_a0caede4-98c5-59b8-999f-5d60d1aa15e6.html).

## Videos

Maria Martinez: Indian Pottery of San Ildefonso (Documentary, 1972, VHS), YouTube Video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkUGm87DE0k>

## Appendix

### National Core Art Standards

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

- VA:Cr1.1.8a Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media.
- VA:Cr1.2.7a Develop criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work

- VA:Cr2.1.8a Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.
- VA:Cr2.2.8a Demonstrate awareness of practices, issues, and ethics of appropriation, fair use, copyright, open source, and creative commons as they apply to creating works of art and design.

Anchor Statement 3: Refine and complete artistic work

- VA:Cr2.3.7a Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

- VA:Cr3.1.7a Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work

- VA:Re.7.1.6a Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.
- VA:Re.7.2.6a Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

- VA:Re8.1.8a Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, artmaking approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

- VA:Re9.1.8a Create a convincing and logical argument to support an evaluation of art.

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

- VA:Cn10.1.6a Generate a collection of ideas reflecting current interests and concerns that could be investigated in artmaking.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

- VA:Cn11.1.8a Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity.

## **Unit Resources**

Many images of ancient pottery are in the collection of Penn Museum. You can explore the collection using this link

[https://www.penn.museum/collections/search.php?term=anasazi+pottery&submit\\_term=Submit+Query](https://www.penn.museum/collections/search.php?term=anasazi+pottery&submit_term=Submit+Query)

Images for works used in my unit are all from University Of Penn Museum of Anthropology and Archeology and can be accessed here

<https://www.penn.museum/collections/list.php?id=11381>

<https://www.pinterest.com/kimcola/form-function-and-symbolism/>

## **Videos for student viewing**

Maria Martinez: Indian Pottery of San Ildefonso (Documentary, 1972, VHS), YouTube Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkUGm87DE0k>

Jason Garcia: Native Arts and Culture Foundation, You Tube Video

<https://www.nativeartsandcultures.org/jason-garcia>

Diego Romero: Craft in America video <https://www.craftinamerica.org/artist/diego-romero>

## **Websites used**

The hidden city <https://hiddencityphila.org/2019/08/philadelphias-forgotten-forebears-how-pennsylvania-erased-the-lenape-from-local-history/>

<https://www.eyesofthepot.com/glossary.php>- glossary of terms

<https://indianpueblo.org/a-brief-history-of-the-pueblo-revolt/>