Lesson Plan: Clay Animal Whistles

Overview:

Historically, North Carolina potters made miniature forms, toys, or animals during their leisure time and for the amusement of children, in contrast to the production of utilitarian pottery for food preservation.

Age Group

Secondary (grades 6-12)

Standards

NC Essential Standards Addressed:
Visual Arts

Visual Literacy

V.1 Use the language of visual arts to communicate effectively.
V.3 Create art using a variety of tools, media, and processes, safely and appropriately.

Contextual relevancy

CX.1 Understand the global, historical, societal, and cultural contexts of the visual arts.

Critical Response

CR.1 Use critical analysis to generate responses to a variety of prompts.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

• Describe and interpret NC pottery examples using vocabulary specific to ceramics and referencing cultural contexts.
• Create a clay animal whistle using pinch and coil construction methods and incising and applique decorative methods.
**Length of Lesson**

Day 1 – Introduce the project and address pottery production stages: dig the clay, refine the clay, pug the clay, wedge the clay, create form (wheel throwing and hand building – pinch, coil, slab, drape mild, press mold), green ware, bisque ware, glazing and finished piece. Also introduce types of clay – (earthenware, stoneware and porcelain) as well as glaze types – (Alkaline, Lead and Salt glaze). Provide a brief background of North Carolina pottery, utilitarian forms and face jugs.

Day 2 – Students select animal form and make decisions about the whistle body design. Students will work on their thumbnail sketch and four quadrant or rectangle design characteristics. Students need to keep in mind how the whistle body is going to be incorporated in their animal design.

Day 3 – Students will create their whistle body.

Day 4 / 5 – Demonstrate the application of facial features, coil legs, pinch pot head and textural techniques with various tools. Students will transform their whistle into their animal. *Stress to students if an air pocket is created they must create a way for the air to get out or else their whistle will go off in the kiln like a grenade. Remind students that the more detail added the better their animal will look.*

Allow whistles to air dry for 2 weeks. When you can put a whistle against your cheek and it feels room temperature they are ready to go into the kiln. If they feel cold there is still moisture in the clay and they need to dry further.

After firing, students are ready to glaze whistles. Remind them to be careful not to glaze over the air passageway or else the whistle will not work. Also be careful not to put an excessive amount of glaze on the bevel, this may also cause the whistle not to work.

**Assessment**

Discuss rubric at beginning of the project so that students understand the project objectives.

At the end of the project, students will complete rubric as a self-evaluation and critical response exercise.
Preliminary Planning and Sketchbook Design: Animal Whistle Project

1. Students will research an animal. Limit student choices to any living animal, dinosaur or mythical character. Avoid cartoon or animated characters.
2. Students will decide whether the animal’s head, body, or an object that their animal is sitting/standing on, wrapped around or leaning against, will constitute the whistle’s body shape.
3. To setup the sketchbook page, students will fold page in half and in half again to create four equal rectangles. Label each rectangle with the following:
   - Attributes, Colors/Textures, Front view and Side view (see example).
4. In the attributes section, students will list five to six key attributes or characteristics of their animal to include in their design.
5. In the colors and textures section, students will include plans for specific glazes or paint colors as well as textures that will simulate animal’s skin, fur, feathers or scales.
6. In the front view and side view section, students will sketch a design idea for their final whistle. Students can lightly sketch the whistle body within their animal’s composition so they understand how to construct the animal’s appendages around the whistle body.
7. Students will use these animal sketch designs and research for visual reference throughout the project.

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Great White Shark

**Features**
- **Teeth**: Large and serrated
- **Fins**: Two large side fins
- **Dorsal Fin**: Large
- **Lips**: Large
- **Nose**: Two large openings
- **Tail**: Five vertical slits
- **Gill Slits**: Five - Five slit cuts
- **Skin**: Smooth
- **Skin on Belly**: White
- **Skin on Top**: Gray

**Colors**
- Between gray and white

**Side View**
- Bolded line shows whistle body
- Whiskered mouth piece
- Whiskered mouth piece

**Front View**
Clay Whistles

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Use the pinch pot technique to hollow out a clay ball.
Wall thickness should be around 1/4 inch thick.
Encourage students not to leave the opening too big. After hollowing out the ball, pinch the open end close.
After finishing the first stage, students should have a hollow round ball.
Position your clay ball so the closed opening is facing away from you. Gently tap the top of the whistle on a flat surface to flatten it then form a mouthpiece with your fingers.
Mouthpiece should align with the flat side of whistle. Make sure thickness of mouthpiece is left thick enough for a popsicle stick to go through.
Insert the dowel stick through the (top) flat side of the whistle. Insertion should be aligned with the middle of the mouthpiece. Stick should penetrate just inside front wall.
Wiggle dowel stick to double the diameter of the hole. This creates a bevel.
In a cross section, you can see the flattened clay needed to create the part of the bevel inside your whistle.
Roll the dowel stick back and forth between your finger tips to flatten the bevel edge on the inside of the whistle. Your opposite hand thumb should be placed on top of the whistle to provide pressure pushing down so that the stick does not protrude through the clay.
In these cross sections, you can see the before and after images of the inside bevel edge.
Insert the popsicle stick through the middle of the mouthpiece, align it with the bevel hole. This creates the air passageway for you to blow into your whistle.
As the popsicle stick is pushed through the mouthpiece, clay will get pushed into the bevel area.
Use dowel stick to clean this excess clay out of the bevel hole area.
Roll the dowel stick back and forth between your finger tips to create the outer side of the bevel. Notice that the popsicle stick remains in the mouth piece to provide pressure from the inside so that the dowel stick does not cave in the bevel area.
Roll the dowel stick on the outer bevel area until a “ramp” is created and the tip of the bevel is very thin.
Roll the front inside wall of the whistle with the dowel stick to flatten any protruding clay.
In this cross section, see that the bevel edge must align perfectly with air passageway for the whistle work.
You should now have a working whistle. If not, see troubleshooting steps.
Trouble Shooting

Why doesn’t my whistle work?
Bevel hole is too big and bevel is non existent. This whistle will probably need to have the bevel hole filled in and redone.
Here clay obstructs the air passageway. To fix, reinsert the popsicle stick through the air passageway and remove excess clay with dowel stick. Sometimes the front inside wall needs to be rerolled and flattened.
In this cross section, the whistle is not working because the bevel is angled incorrectly, pointing down too far.
In this cross section, the bevel is angled pointing up too high. These problems can be resolved by reinserting the popsicle stick through the mouthpiece and re-rolling the bevel with your dowel stick.
Clay Animal Whistle Texture Tutorial

A variety of clay tools, untraditional tools, and found objects can be used to create a diversity of textures.

Before working on your actual whistle, experiment with a practice piece of clay, using the tools and objects to explore different textures.
A popsicle stick can be used to create scales for fish or reptiles.

Layer small rectangles to create a texture of scales or feathers; make sure each row is offset from the previous row.

Incise a texture of short hair with a needle tool or other sharp tool. To achieve a better outcome, scratch with the tool in the direction that the animal’s hair would lay.
For specialized textures, students can create their own stamps out of clay and fire them.

A garlic press is an affordable, untraditional tool to create long hair or a mane.
When applying the hair, start at the bottom and overlap the hair as it is applied working from the bottom to the top. Blend the section of the hair touching the head before applying the next section of hair which will overlap the previous attachment.

When one side is completed, use the same technique for the other side. Small strands of hair may need to be applied in the middle to complete the hair.

When the hair dries it will be extremely brittle. To avoid breakage, take a sponge and gently press the hair down so that it aligns with the contours of the whistle. Do not press too hard or the texture of the hair will be damaged.
Clay Animal Whistle Eye Design Tutorial

When creating the animal eyes, it is important to look back at your sketch and animal pictures to observe the form, shape and contours of the eyes. All animal eye shapes and details are different as is placement on the animal’s head. Consideration of all of these characteristics is important in creating a likeness of your animal.

After locating placement of eyes on your animal, gently make indentations with your thumbs to create an eye socket. Not all animals have eye sockets so be sure and check your animal’s profile.

Create two clay balls for your animal’s eye balls. Whenever you are creating two or more of the same appendage, make them at the same time so that sizes and proportions are similar.

Roll out four coils and attach them above and below the eyes to serve as eye lids. This will not only hold the eye balls in place, it will help give your animal a more realistic look.
Using a clay tool or your fingers, blend in the outer side of the coil into your animal’s face to create eyelids. Blend until the seam lines disappear and the eyes appear as natural forms.

Dip your finger in a cup of water to complete the blending for a smooth finish. Do not go overboard with the water. You do not want mud.

Use a needle tool or dowel stick to apply pupils to your eyeballs. This will add more character to your animal and help bring it to life.
Clay Animal Whistle Leg and Neck Design Tutorial

When creating an animal depiction of the whole body, legs will be needed to complete the design. If your animal has thin legs, it is better to make your animal appear to be lying down. Remember thin clay forms protruding from the whistle body are extremely fragile and easily broken. So when making something thin, try to have it hug the form of the whistle body so that it will be more protected. If making animal with thicker legs, the legs will be strong enough to support the weight of the whistle body.

Start by rolling out a long coil. You will create a small donut with the clay to start the leg.

Layer the coils one on top of another. Try to make sure that the breaks in the coil do not align with the previous coil. This will help add stability to your leg.

All four legs should be made before attaching the legs onto the whistle body. By making all four legs at the same time, sizes and proportions can be made to match.
Using a clay tool or your fingers, blend in the coils. Use one finger on the inside of the cylinder to apply pressure from the inside pushing out while blending. Coils should be blended completely so that no seam lines are visible.

Use a damp finger to go over the final form for a smooth surface.

Before attaching the legs, look to see if any other details can be added to create a more realistic look. In this example, small clay coils are being added to create toes.

When all four legs are completed, attach the legs onto the clay body.
To create a smoother transition from the animal’s body to their leg and to add more stability, wrap a coil around the leg at the seam where the leg connects onto the body.

Blend the coils in entirely so that the seam lines are no longer visible.

This technique should be used when applying all four legs.

This same coiling technique can be used to create animals with elongated necks or to create a trunk.
Clay Animal Whistle Snout and Mouth Design Tutorial

When creating the snout and mouth for your animal, it is important to look back at your sketch and animal pictures to observe the form, shape and contours of your animal. Also observe the placement on the animal’s head. Consideration of all of these characteristics is important in creating a likeness of your animal.

The two most common ways to create an appendage like a snout or neck on your animal are another pinch pot or a coiled form. If using a coiled form for a giraffe neck, for instance, read the tutorial on creating animal legs. Encourage students to think three dimensionally and create a snout instead of just attaching the eyes, nose and mouth onto the side of the whistle body.

The snout can be created from one piece of clay and then cut to create the mouth opening or the upper jaw and lower jaw can be made separately and attached. After attaching the pinch pot blend out the seam line entirely. A damp finger can be used to achieve a smooth finish. If the mouth is to be made closed, keep in mind that an air hole is needed somewhere to allow air flow in and out. If no air hole is made then the snout would explode off of the whistle during firing.

In this demonstration, the mouth was made in one piece and then cut open to create an upper and lower jaw.
After piercing the snout, the mouth can be opened.

Teeth can either be handmade and then attached or for a more traditional feel; shards of broken plates can be used for teeth.

The shards of plate can be inserted into the gums of the animal.
Clay Animal Whistle Horn / Beak Design Tutorial

Animal horn, beak shapes, and details are all different as is the placement on the animal’s head so be sure to review your sketch and animal pictures to observe the form, shape and contours of your animal’s feature. Consideration of all of these characteristics is important in creating a likeness of your animal. After creating the appendage attach it onto your animal’s head.

Wrap a coil around the base of the horn and then blend in only the side of the coil that touches the animal’s face. This will help to keep the horn in place and simulates the overlapping of skin that occurs on real animal’s horns.

Look to see if any final adjustments need to be made as to the angle of the bend of the horn or add any final details or textures to finish your horn. The same steps would be used for creating beaks for birds.
Animal Whistle Project Critique

1. What animal did you select? Why did you select this as your subject?

2. What characteristics of your animal did you include to accomplish a likeness of your animal?

3. What textural techniques did you include to accomplish a likeness of your animal?

4. Did the glaze perform as you expected? Did you get the color and result you were hoping for?

5. What was the most challenging part of this project for you?

6. Are you pleased with the final outcome of your project? Is there anything you would go back and change or would have done differently?
Clay Animal Whistle Project Rubric

All sections should be completed using complete sentences, proper spelling and grammar!

Name ___________________________  Medium ___________________________

Date ___________________________  Animal Depicted_____________________

**Keywords and Techniques**

Hand building – pinch and coil,

Textural techniques – impressing, incising, appliqué, piercing

Hand building and Textural techniques used - ________________________________

Glazes Used - ___________________________________________________________________

(10)________  Completed Sketchbook work  __________

(10)________  Inclusion of Animal Characteristics & Color  __________

(20)________  Clay Construction  __________

(20)________  Texture  __________

(20)________  Glaze / Painting Craftsmanship  __________

(10)________  Time Management and Clean Up  __________

(10)________  Whistle functionality  __________

(100)________  Total  __________

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