

Building Caddo Homes

By Alisa Ripley

About the lesson:

This Art lesson was created to compliment historic lessons related to the Caddo Indians. Caddo Mounds State Historic Site is the sponsor of this lesson and related historical materials as they pertain to the Caddo Indians. The lesson was written by Alisa Ripley, Cushing ISD elementary art teacher, and edited by Caddo Mounds State Historic Site staff. This lesson is one of a series that incorporate Art with History in relation to the Caddo people while meeting necessary national and state standards.

Where it fits into the curriculum:

Topics: The lesson could be used in correlation with History lessons related to the Caddo Indians. The following Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills are met with this lesson.

§117.114. Art

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(1) Foundations: observation and perception. The student develops and expands visual literacy skills using critical thinking, imagination, and the senses to observe and explore the world by learning about, understanding, and applying the elements of art, principles of design, and expressive qualities. The student uses what the student sees, knows, and has experienced as sources for examining, understanding, and creating artworks. The student is expected to: (A) explore and communicate ideas drawn from life experiences about self, peers, family, school, or community and from the imagination as sources for original works of art;

(2) Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills. The student is expected to: (A) integrate ideas drawn from life experiences to create original works of art; (B) create compositions using the elements of art and principles of design; and (C) produce drawings; paintings; prints; sculpture, including modeled forms; and other art forms such as ceramics, fiber art, constructions, mixed media, installation art, digital art and media, and photographic imagery using a variety of art media and materials.

(3) Historical and cultural relevance. The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture by analyzing artistic styles, historical periods, and a variety of cultures. The student develops global awareness and respect for the traditions and contributions of diverse cultures. The student is expected to: (A) compare content in artworks for various purposes such as the role art plays in reflecting life, expressing emotions, telling stories, or documenting history and traditions; (B) compare purpose and content in artworks created by historical and contemporary men and women, making connections to various cultures; (D) investigate connections of visual art concepts to other disciplines.

(4) Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and analyzes artworks of self and others, contributing to the development of lifelong skills of making informed judgments and reasoned evaluations. The student is expected to: (A) evaluate the elements of art, principles of design, intent, or expressive qualities in artworks of self, peers, and historical and contemporary artists;

§113.15. Social Studies, Grade 4

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(1) History. The student understands the origins, similarities, and differences of American Indian groups in Texas and North America before European exploration. The student is expected to: (A) explain the possible origins of American Indian groups in Texas and North America; (B) identify American Indian groups in Texas and North America before European exploration such as the Lipan Apache, Karankawa, Caddo, and Jumano; (C) describe the regions in which American Indians lived and identify American Indian groups remaining in Texas such as the Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, Alabama-Coushatta, and Kickapoo; and (D) compare the ways of life of American Indian groups in Texas and North America before European exploration.

(4) History. The student understands the political, economic, and social changes in Texas during the last half of the 19th century. The student is expected to: (D) examine the effects upon American Indian life resulting from changes in Texas, including the Red River War, building of U.S. forts and railroads, and loss of buffalo.

(9) Geography. The student understands how people adapt to and modify their environment. The student is expected to: (A) describe ways people have adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present, such as timber clearing, agricultural production, wetlands drainage, energy production, and construction of dams; (B) identify reasons why people have adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present, such as the use of natural resources to meet basic needs, facilitate transportation, and enhance recreational activities; and

(10) Economics. The student understands the basic economic activities of early societies in Texas and North America. The student is expected to: (A) explain the economic activities various early American Indian groups in Texas and North America used to meet their needs and wants such as farming, trading, and hunting; and

(14) Government. The student understands how people organized governments in different ways during the early development of Texas. The student is expected to: (A) compare how various American Indian groups such as the Caddo and the Comanche governed themselves; and

(19) Culture. The student understands the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to Texas. The student is expected to: (B) identify customs, celebrations, and traditions of various cultural, regional, and local groups in Texas such as Cinco de Mayo, Oktoberfest, the Strawberry Festival, and Fiesta San Antonio; and

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to: (A) use social studies terminology correctly; (B) incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication; (C) express ideas orally based on research and experiences; (D) create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies; and

Objectives for students:

- 1) To identify the traditional materials used to construct a Caddo house.
- 2) To consider the culture and environment of the Caddo that led to creating the grass Caddo house.
- 3) To compare and contrast the homes of the Caddo to other Native American homes.
- 4) To identify and use the elements and principles of design when creating sculpture, a 3 dimensional form.
- 5) To evaluate the elements and principles of design in each individually created Caddo home.

Materials for students:

- 1) Cardboard boards, 1 square foot each. Size can vary on each one; they need to be at least 8"x8" to fit the house in the center.
- 2) Cottage cheese, sour cream, yogurt, etc. circle lids.
- 3) Pencils
- 4) Scissors
- 5) Green Tree sticks. We use privet, young tree saplings, and crepe myrtle. The teacher will need to collect enough to bring to school. You want "green" branches that bend, not dead branches that snap in half. Preferable with leaves so the students can experience removing the leaves.
- 6) 7 sticks per student. Sticks need to be 8" to 12" long, and a diameter of 1/8th of an inch.
- 7) Low temp glue gun and glue sticks.
- 8) Pipe cleaners (chenille sticks), about 7 per student. You might need more.
- 9) Manila paper (This resembles dried grass better than other colors).

Getting Started:



Inquiry Question: How did the Caddo Indians construct these Dome shaped homes?

Setting the Stage:

The Early Caddo Indians lived in the East Texas piney woods from around 750 AD to 1250 AD. The Caddo lived in East Texas, they moved to the Brazos River reservations in the early 1840s, and have been absent from Texas as a cultural group since their removal from the state in 1859. They created communities of homes; hunted deer; gathered wild foods; and farmed beans, corn, squash and other crops. Potters created usable vessels out of east Texas red clay and they wove baskets and mats out of the native grasses that grow in the East Texas region. The Caddo community would come together and work as a group when building a new house. It began with the collection of “green” wooden poles harvested from the forest. The poles were cleaned of leaves and smaller branches. Then these poles were driven into the ground, in a circle formation, ending with the poles being 30 to 50 feet across. The top of the poles would be pulled down to a center pole and lashed together forming a dome shape.



Next, they would attach a lattice, made of the same poles just smaller diameter, in a grid formation around the house, bottom to top. This created the framework for attaching the walls. Finally, thick bundles of grass were woven tightly across the framework starting at the bottom and continuing all the way to the top. This method was called thatching and was very effective in protecting the inhabitants from wind, rain, cold, and hot weather.

The interior of the homes would include beds arranged around the wall of the house. There were also shelves to store baskets of nuts, corn, and tools necessary for food preparation. In the center of the home there would be a fire pit used for warmth and cooking. The exterior of the house would include family gardens, covered areas for people to work, and worn paths connecting the multiple structures.

Determining the facts:

- 1) Each student will have a piece of cardboard and a pencil. Use the circle lids and draw a circle in the center of the cardboard.
- 2) Use the scissors and poke at least 6 holes, evenly spaced, around the circle.
- 3) Poke one hole in the center of the circle.
- 4) Give each student enough sticks to put in the holes of the circle. Give one, larger diameter, stick for the center.
- 5) Stand the stick up in the hole and add glue from glue gun around the base of the stick. You will have to hold it in place while it dries. Repeat till all holes are filled with sticks standing up. This step requires patience. Note: step 1-6 will take around 45 minutes
- 6) Attach a pipe cleaner (chenille stick) at the top of the center stick. Pull one stick at a time, from the top, down onto the center stick. The stick should bow into a dome shape. Wrap pipe cleaner around the stick to hold it against the center stick. Repeat with each stick till the dome shape is complete.
- 7) Attach one end of pipe cleaner to a stick about 1 inch up from the bottom. Stretch pipe cleaner over to the next stick and wrap around and go to the next stick. Repeat this process all the way around. Leave about 3/4 of an inch between each row. Be sure to leave an opening for the door.
- 8) Cut the Manila paper into 1 inch strips.
- 9) Cut thin slits into paper strips so it resembles fringe.
- 10) Start at the door opening, on the bottom pipe cleaner, with a dot of glue from glue gun.
- 11) Attach one end of strip to the glue.
- 12) Stretch paper along bottom pipe cleaner, attaching with dots of glue where needed. Attach the end of the strip. Repeat this step all the way to the top of the house.
- 13) If time allows, have them decorate around the house with sand, dirt, shrubs, firewood, etc. Basically, have them create a realistic setting around the home.

Putting it All Together:

Once the homes are completed have a classroom discussion on the construction of the traditional Caddo house. Questions to ask students:

- 1) Why are green wood and grass used for the Caddo houses? These items are native to the East Texas Region, and where readily available for the Caddo to use.
- 2) How are the Caddo houses the same or different than other Native American houses? Refer to <http://www.native-languages.org/houses.htm> to show other Native American housing options. Discuss the similarities and differences based on environmental location of the given tribes.
- 3) Was this construction easy? Why or Why not? This question will lead to a discussion about the time, and complexity of the construction. Point out the community involvement when constructing the homes and how it would have been impossible to do on your own. Without community the Caddo would not have endured the years they lived in this terrain.
- 4) Review the elements and principles of design. https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/principles_design.pdf , https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf Ask how we used these in our construction? Compare and contrast individual constructions focusing on the Elements and Principles of Design.

One final project would involve creating a Caddo village with the homes that have been constructed. Arrange the homes into a village setting on a group of tables or on the floor of the classroom. Talk about how the community would have functioned on a daily basis. Bring into the discussion the role of men, women, and children in the daily activities of the tribe. Finally, open up your display for the other grades to view.

Supplementary Resources:

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis.html

https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/principles_design.pdf

https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf

These three sources will give definitions and explanations of using the Elements and Principles of Design. If you are not familiar with these Art terms, please review before beginning this lesson.

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/houses/grass.html>

This source provides valuable pictures of the Caddo House Construction.

<http://www.native-languages.org/houses.htm>

This source provides visual references to a variety of different Native American Homes.

<http://www.caddolegacy.com/Pages/GrassThatchedHouse.aspx>