

Caddo Pottery

By Alisa Ripley, January 2017

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 lessons 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 Nation 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 Nation. The following Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge 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;(B) use appropriate vocabulary when discussing the elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value, and the principles of design, including emphasis, repetition/pattern, movement/rhythm, contrast/variety, balance, proportion, and unity.

(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 and techniques used to create Caddo pottery.
- 2) To consider the culture and environment of the Caddo, that led to creating functional pottery and specific cultural designs.

- 3) To compare and contrast the pottery of the Caddo to other Native American pottery techniques and design.
- 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 pottery piece created by themselves and their peers.

Materials for students:

- 1) Clay – store bought, earthenware clay. Laguna **Soldate 60** is a great option, and any clay suitable for a Raku firing will also work for a pit fire. You want the clay with “grog”. If it does not have grog you will need to add some, like sand, before building with the clay. The Ceramic Store, based out of Houston, is a good source for buying clay. 50lbs of clay is enough for 40 students.
- 2) Sponges and water containers (coffee, cottage cheese, sour cream containers work well)
- 3) Rag Towels
- 4) Clay Boards (options: canvas covered plywood, Masonite board, or sprinkle fine sand or flour on a smooth table surface)
- 5) Clay tools (options: store bought set, small pieces of leather for smoothing, pencils for carving designs, wire for cutting/dividing clay)
- 6) Hard wood, dried, for making a small campfire
- 7) Large tongs, pitchfork, or other tool suitable for removing items from the fire.

Getting Started:

Inquiry Question: How did the Caddo Indians create pottery, both functional and ceremonial?

1. What is the type of clay used by the Caddo?
2. Which handbuilding techniques were used by the Caddo?
3. What are the most common designs found on Caddo pottery and the symbolic references?
4. What are the traditional steps in a Pit Fire process?

Setting the Stage:

The Caddo Indians lived in the East Texas piney woods from around 800 AD to the mid-19th century. They created communities of homes, hunted deer, gathered wild foods, and farmed. Potters created usable vessels out of east Texas red clay and they wove baskets and matts out of the native grasses that grow in the East Texas region. They traded with other communities and flourished in this region until they moved west to the Brazos River area and then were relocated to Oklahoma.

Pottery was used by all Native Americans. There are basic types of pottery, bowls, jars, bottles, etc. Utilitarian pottery was used for everyday needs, storage, food, and water. Ceremonial pottery was used for special occasions like, burial, display, etc. The Caddo are known for their pottery, which has been practiced for over a 1000yrs, and is very different than the pottery of other Native Americans. This fact helps archeologist to learn where the Caddo lived and helps to identify the time period they lived in a place. During the early years of Caddo pottery, everyday pots were not decorated, but ceremonial pots would include engraved circular or rectangular patterns. Later, Caddo pottery included more detailed decorations including changing the color and polishing. Later the Caddo ceremonial pottery became very detailed, polished, fine examples of pottery as an Art. Decorations on pottery can represent parts of the Caddo beliefs and traditions. Pictures representing the sky, earth, water, sun, and the moon became common along with gods, goddesses, and animals important in the Caddo culture.

Caddo clay was made out of clay that would have been found near a Caddo settlement. They would dig up the clay and mix it with A Temper (a material that can be added to clay to make it stronger). Dried, ground up bones, shell, or broken pieces of pottery would be used as a temper. Today, dried mussel shells, or sand is comely used. The Coil Handbuilding Technique was commonly used by the Caddo. Coils of clay are rolled out and placed on top of each other around a base. These coils would be smoothed together to create a solid form, decorated, and then allowed to dry. Pottery was fired (cooked) in an open fire called a Pit Fire. The pottery would vary in color, depending on the type of clay and the pit fire temperature. Most Caddo pottery is grey, black, oranges and reds.

At this time go through the gallery of Caddo pottery pictures with the class.

<http://www.caddopottery.com/index.php>

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/clay/galleries/index.html>

Discuss the different forms and what they were used for. Also, notice the different techniques used to decorate and the symbols used. Talk about how these details are distinctive to the Caddo. At this point pull up a google image search using this term: "*native American historical pottery*". This will give an excellent reference for contrast and comparing the different tribes. Discuss what design techniques are make Caddo pottery so easy to identify. Finally, carefully decide which Caddo design technique you want to use on your own pottery.

Before we watch a video on the Pit Fire process there are two terms you need to remember, Oxidation and Reduction. **Oxidation** is when there is plenty of oxygen to burn and create a fire. Remember there are oxygen molecules in the clay and they react to the Oxidation and Reduction. **Reduction** is when the oxygen is reduced creating a carbon rich atmosphere. This can be done by adding something to the fire that will smoother and burn, a compostable material like leaves.

Watch the video on how to do a pit fire. Once the video is done, have a discussion on safety during a pit fire. Also, if you plan to do a pit fire with the class, discuss and assign jobs for the pit fire.

Chase Kawinhut Earles: <https://vimeo.com/180030664>

Determining the facts:

Part 1: Making the clay

1. Store bought clay - (optional): if using store bought clay you can add some temper by kneading into the clay.
2. Make your own clay

Part 2: Create your own pottery

- 1) Students will have a small ball of clay on a clay board
- 2) Break off a piece and roll it out into a rope. About 1/4 - 1/2" thick
- 3) Start on one end of the rope, hold and wrap clay rope around to create a flat spiral, about 3-4" diameter circle.
- 4) Repeat step 2
- 5) Place the rope along the diameter of the spiral circle. When the rope reaches itself, continue by placing on top of previous rope.
- 6) Gently smooth the rope together on the interior of the pot. Repeat this along bottom and up the sides of the pot.
- 7) Repeat step 2, 5, and 6 till you reach your desired height. 2-4" is suitable
- 8) If you would like a smooth exterior then repeat step 6 on the exterior of the pot
- 9) Create a traditional Caddo design on the exterior of the pot using any available tools or your finger.
- 10) Sign your name to the bottom using a sharp pencil
- 11) Allow pottery to air dry. This could take several days depending on environmental conditions

Part 3: Pit Fire

1. Build a small camp sized fire. Pine is not recommended since it burns hot and fast.
2. Place clay pieces along edge of fire. Let them rest there for about 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Using tools rearrange the fire around the pieces, or place pieces into the center of the fire.
4. Allow about 30 minutes in the fire. Some pieces might take less or more time depending on the size and thickness of the pot.
5. Using tools remove pieces from the fire and place on a non-combustible surface.
6. Allow the pottery to cool naturally for about 45 minutes to an hour.

Putting it All Together:

Once the pottery is completed have a classroom discussion on the construction of traditional Caddo pottery. Questions to ask students:

- 1) How did the Caddo make the clay they use?
- 2) How is Caddo pottery the same and/or different than other Native American pottery?
- 3) Why do you think the Caddo used the Pit Fire method? What did think about the Pit Fire we did as a class?
- 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.

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.

Chase Kawinhut Earles is a Caddo Indian practicing the traditional pottery methods at his studio in Oklahoma. He, along with Jeri Redcorn, has revived this Caddo pottery tradition. The following website provides a gallery of his work and a brief history on Caddo Pottery: <http://www.caddopottery.com/index.php>. You can learn about Jeri Redcorn and her work at: <http://www.redcornpottery.com/>.

Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, *Caddo Pottery*: <http://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/caddo-mounds/history/caddo-pottery>

Texas Beyond History, *The Caddo Pottery Tradition*: <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/clay/index.html>