

ART ACTIVITY

Revolution in Art

Background

Ceramics is a long-standing and important art form to the Pueblo and Hopi nations that dates back to the fifteenth century. Pottery is a useful tool that allowed for more efficient cooking and storage, and thus its production has traditionally been a woman's job. Pots vary in size and shape, and painted designs are diverse, having evolved over time because of changing cultural influences. Today, ceramics continues to be a vibrant form of artistic expression practiced by these nations.

Task

Students will create their own clay pots using the coil-construction method. By doing so, they will explore the authentic artistic process used to make Pueblo pottery and discover the skills needed to successfully produce a pot that is both functional and aesthetic.

Materials

- Air-dry clay (suggested brands: Sargent Art Sculpt-It, Crayola, Amaco)
- Disposable work surface: paper plates or cardboard
- Optional plastic sculpting tools (suggested brands: Duran or Richardson)
- Water cups

Art Vocabulary

- **coil construction:** A method of forming pottery or sculpture from rolls of clay layered upon each other.
- **form:** An element of art that refers to shape and volume.
- **score:** Creating marks on the surface of wet clay to join two pieces of clay together.
- **scraping:** Blending layers of coils together to eliminate signs of each coil.
- **slip:** A liquid form of clay used to join pieces of clay or fill in a void.

Steps

- Invite students to closely examine the **two Zuni water jars** and discuss the following:
 - Size and shape
 - Purpose
 - How it was made
 - Women as skilled artisans
 - Symbolic imagery
- Give each student a slab of clay and clay tools.
- To begin the pot, each student should create a round flat disc about 2½" to 3" in diameter and ¼" in thickness. This will serve as the base of the pot upon which students will build. Students will construct the pot using the coil construction method, in which thin rolls of clay are stacked on top of each other to create form.
- Students should roll the clay into thin coils similar to a snake. Coils should be about ¼" to ½" thick.
- One layer at a time, coils are added to the base of the pot using the score and slip method. Scoring is creating marks on the surface of clay. This rough texture is essential for joining two pieces of clay. Students then add water to the scored clay to create a slip. This acts as a glue to adhere the two surfaces together.
- Coil circumference should increase as the pot is built, thus creating a bowl shape. When students reach the widest part of the pot (five or six coils), they should scrape the coils together to create a smooth surface.
- Once this is complete, students can continue adding coils that now decrease in circumference, creating the spun sphere shape seen in the Zuni water jars.
- When students reach the top of their pot, they should slip and scrape the remaining edges and check that there are no cracks.
- Conclude the project with a reflection on the art-making process.
 - *What was this process like?*
 - *What was challenging when making your pot?*
 - *Why is it important to recognize that women were the primary artisans behind this art form?*

- *Imagine trying to create these pots during an uprising and how hard it must have been. Why do you think women continued to produce pots during and after the Pueblo Revolt?*
- To extend learning, invite students to respond to the following prompt — *Zuni women add traditional symbols and imagery to their pots. If we were to embellish your pot with symbols reflecting your own background or family history, what would you add and why? (Students can use acrylic paint to add these to their finished pot at a later time or write a paragraph describing what they would include.)*

Sculpture Tips

Air-dry clay will dry out the longer it is exposed to air. Sculpture should ideally be done in one sitting to avoid having to store unfinished pots overnight or in between classes. To keep clay from drying out, store in plastic zip lock bags with as much air removed as possible.

Coil-pottery takes time. To ensure students complete their pots, start with bases that are roughly the diameter of a golf ball.

If you do not have access to clay tools, toothpicks or pencils can be used to score and attach clay pieces.