

## LESSON PLAN

# WISE FORMS: SCULPTING SYMBOLIC OWLS

 Suggested Levels: Grades 6 - Advanced  
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*Owls have long been symbols of wisdom, mystery, and mythology across cultures. Students will design and sculpt ceramic owls that express a mood, idea, or symbolic meaning using form, texture, and surface decoration. By shaping owls that express emotions and cultural meaning, they develop creativity and refine craftsmanship.*

## OBJECTIVES

**I CAN...** explain the symbolic meaning of owls across cultures.

**I CAN...** design and sculpt an owl that expresses an idea, emotion, or trait.

**I CAN...** apply clay building and glazing techniques to create texture and mood.

## NATIONAL VISUAL ART STANDARDS

### Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

- Creativity begins with ideas inspired by observation, research, and imagination.
- Students research owl symbolism across cultures, sketch multiple concepts, and select one design.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

- Artistic work develops through planning, experimentation, and refinement.
- Students experiment with slabs, pinching, and texturing, adjusting their design as they build.

### Refine and complete artistic work.

- Refinement and attention to detail elevate an artwork's expressive qualities.
- Students refine features and textures before glazing.



## SUPPLY LIST

### CLAY

- Clay body of choice

### BRUSHES & TOOLS

- Needle tools
- Brushes
- Ribs
- Sponges
- Carving/modeling tools
- Plastic wrap or wet box
- Slip and scoring tools
- Rolling pin
- Tools for texture (stamps, combs, mesh, natural items)
- Wooden paddle



### COLORS BY MAYCO

Mayco's Foundations glazes are used in this lesson plan.

*Foundations offer a variety of opaque and sheer color options that highlight texture and detail. Foundations work well in the classroom as they are quick drying, allowing students work to get into the kiln faster. Unfired colors are similar to the fired color, which assists students in selecting colors for their designs.*



### Accommodations

- Visuals: Provide step-by-step photo guides and cultural images.
- Physical Support: Pre-rolled slabs, lightweight texture tools, peer partners.
- Timing: Break into stages (sketching, building, glazing) with flexible work sessions.
- Choice: Symbolic meaning options, color palettes, or templates.
- Verbal: Scaffold steps with demos and "I do, we do, you do."



### Teacher Tips

- Stress hollow construction to prevent cracking.
- Encourage exaggerated features for expression.
- Demonstrate layering washes or glazes for surface variety.

## HISTORICAL CONNECTION

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### Athena & Her Owl

In Ancient Greece, the owl symbolized Athena's wisdom and protection, appearing on pottery and coins such as the "owl tetrachms." This enduring image

inspires students to see owls as carriers of cultural meaning.

*"The owl of Athena sees all and symbolizes wisdom, insight, and protection."  
– Adapted from Greek mythology*



# DIRECTIONS - CLAY BUILDING PROCESS

## Method 1

1. Roll two even-sized balls of clay. Turn each ball into a pinch pot. Use a paddle to keep the walls smooth and even.



2. Place one pinch pot upside down in your hand and press to form protrusions. This becomes the bottom of the owl (legs and tail area).



3. Score the rim of both pinch pots. Make sure the openings fit neatly together before adding slip.
4. Slip and attach the two pinch pots to form a hollow body. Smooth the area where the two pots meet and fill in any gap.

5. Roll small balls of clay (and flatten) and coils to create and shape the eyes. Score



both the area where the eyes will attach and the backside of the eyes and generously slip the eyes onto the face.

6. Cover with plastic wrap between steps to prevent drying too quickly.
7. Use clay tools to add feathers, patterns, and surface textures to the body.
8. Create the beak, score, slip and attach.



9. Add additional coils of clay around the eyes by scoring, adding slip, and attaching.
10. Attach small clay shapes at the bottom for talons using the score and slip method. Remember: these thin parts dry faster than the body so keep them wrapped in plastic while you continue working.

11. Once small flakes of clay dry slightly, gently brush them away with a soft fan brush.

12. Don't forget to poke a small hole at the bottom of the owl so potential air and moisture can escape during the firing.

13. Continue using tools to carve, smooth, and adjust details until your owl is finished.



14. Some students may have thicker walls that may require more drying time. Thinner areas or parts that stick out may dry quicker, so a wet box or wrapping with plastic wrap can help slow the drying process and prevent cracking. Prop the box or gradually remove plastic wrap to allow the clay to dry evenly.

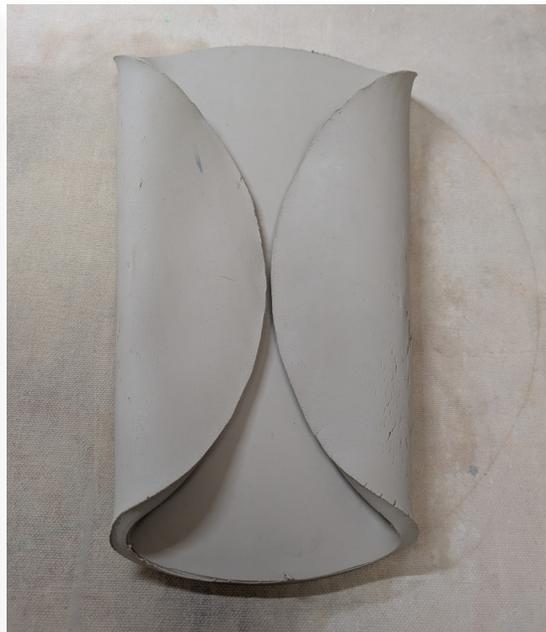
15. Make certain the creations are completely dry before firing. Moisture in clay can cause items to break or pop in firing. If the items feel cool to the touch, they probably need more drying time. Bisque fire slowly to cone 04, decorate with fired colors, and glaze fire to the recommended temperature for the clay body selected and colors used.

# DIRECTIONS - CLAY BUILDING PROCESS

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## Method 2

1. Roll out low fire clay into a slab and compress both sides with a rib or plastic card. Place the paper plate on top of the slab and trace around the edges.
2. Cut out the traced circle of clay with a toothpick and fold two opposite sides over until they touch in the middle. Press down to adhere.
3. Cut a triangle out of the top of the circle to create the feathery "ears" of the owl. Using the toothpick, scratch and attach the cut out triangle onto the clay below right above the folded wings to create a beak.
4. Use the end of a tongue depressor to press in feather shapes to the wings and body. Use a toothpick to carve in details like feathers, feet, and eyes.
5. Allow to dry and bisque fire to cone 04.



## DIRECTIONS - DECORATING PROCESS



Using Mayco's Foundations glazes to add depth, highlight texture, and bring pieces to life.



## EXTEND THE LEARNING *using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory*

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### LINGUISTIC (Word Smart)

Write a short story or poem about your owl.

### SPATIAL (Picture Smart)

Sketch your owl from multiple viewpoints before sculpting.

### INTERPERSONAL (People Smart)

Collaborate to make a "parliament of owls" each showing different traits.

### BODY KINESTHETIC (Body Smart)

Act out owl movements, then translate them into clay.

### NATURALIST (Nature Smart)

Research owl habitats & compare features to your design.

### LOGICAL/ MATHEMATICAL (Number Smart)

Explore symmetry and proportion in your owl.

### INTRAPERSONAL (Self Smart)

Journal about your owl's meaning and how it connects to you.

### MUSIC (Music Smart)

Listen to owl calls or night sounds while sculpting.

# RUBRIC

	<b>EXCELLENT (5 PTS)</b>	<b>GOOD (4 PTS)</b>	<b>SATISFACTORY (3 PTS)</b>	<b>NEEDS WORK (1-2 PTS)</b>
<b>CREATIVITY &amp; SYMBOLISM</b>	Unique, expressive, strong symbolism	Clear symbolism	Basic symbolism	Limited symbolism
<b>CLAY CONSTRUCTION</b>	Hollow, sturdy, excellent craftsmanship	Mostly secure	Adequate structure	Fragile/incomplete
<b>TEXTURE &amp; DETAIL</b>	Highly detailed, enhances mood	Strong details	Some textures	Little to no textures
<b>SURFACE TREATMENT</b>	Glaze enhances symbolism & texture	Mostly effective	Adequate finish	Uneven, rushed, or unfinished
<b>REFLECTION/ PROCESS</b>	Insightful, strong symbolism link	Clear reflection	Adequate reflection	Little to no reflection

**Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_/25**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVELS</b>
<b>25-20 POINTS (A): OUTSTANDING</b>
<b>19-15 POINTS (B): GOOD</b>
<b>14-11 POINTS (C): FAIR</b>
<b>10-7 POINTS (D): WEAK</b>
<b>6-0 POINTS (F): INCOMPLETE</b>