

# Haida Inspired Wall Plaques



**Grade:** 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Medium:** Clay, Glaze, Raffia

**Learning Objectives:** Students will learn about the totem animals and style of Haida art. They will use both sculptural and painting techniques to express their personal totem animal.

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## Elements of Art

**Forms:** 3-dimensional shapes.

**Line:** mark with greater length than width.

**Shape:** closed line, geometric or organic.

## Principles of Design

**Pattern:** uniform repetition of the elements: in this lesson, shape and color.

**Symmetry:** both sides of a composition are the same, as in a mirror-image.

**Unity:** all elements fit together.

## Additional Vocabulary Words

**Formlines:** the special shapes repeated in this style: ovoids, U-forms and S forms.

**Stylistic Conventions:** the 'rules' dictated by the style, on the use` of color, shape and form.

**Totems:** symbolize characters in mythology or convey the experiences of ancestors.

## Materials & Supplies

- Low-fire white clay (and wire cutter)
- Wooden tools for scooping thick lines
- Class set wooden skewers to cut clay
- Class set or less small natural sponges
- Glaze: red, black & clear
- Disposable paper cups
- Flat paint brushes
- Plastic straws cut into ¼" to poke hanger holes
- Red or black raffia
- Class set of canvas or vinyl placemats
- Class set or less of rolling pins
- Images of NW Coast totem animals that are simple faces looking forward
- Paper towels
- Cups of slip (clay blended with water)
- Plastic forks (to scratch & attach slip)
- Clear plastic (plastic sandwich bags or painters' plastic) to make templates of totem animals – instructions below

## **Context (History and/or Artists)**

Northwest coastal tribes, Tlingit and Haida, use animal emblems as crests to identify different families' characteristics. They paint or carve images out of cedar to label blankets, boats, houses, and poles that marked their address. Strict rules (stylistic conventions) dictate how each animal is drawn, using ovoid shapes, u-form and s-form lines. The color black is the most important, used on main lines, red is secondary in importance. White or natural wood is used as a background color. Animals represent families.

- **The Beaver:** artistic ability, builder, resourcefulness, determination.
- **The Bear:** strength, solitude, motherhood, teaching, friendliness.
- **The Raven:** creation and knowledge, bringer of the light.

## **Advanced Preparation**

- Using a wire cutter tool, cut cubes of clay the size of a navel orange, enough for each student. Wrap in plastic until time to use.
- Put clay tools (cutters, mats, rolling pins and straws) in the middle of each table group, or at a couple of central locations.
- At each seat or using an overhead projector, display photos of Haida animal faces of the beaver, bear and raven. These should be authentic styles using ovoids and u-form lines, with black, red and white or wood.
- Make clear plastic templates of totem animals (10 per animal)
  1. Print out each animal template the size you want your students' animals to be.
  2. Lay plastic over the image.
  3. Using a black and red sharpie permanent marker trace the image onto the plastic using the appropriate colors on the image.
  4. These templates can be laid onto the clay slabs and traced with a dull pencil or blunt end of a skewer.

## **Tips & Tricks**

- Straws make the best holes because they remove clay cleanly. Poke holes 1/4" or more from the edges. They will crack if they are closer to the edge.
- Mask slabs can't be thinner than a piece of bread. Thicker is better for this project since you will be modeling it slightly, keep it between 1/3 - 1/2".
- Observe and limit access to sponges if necessary. Otherwise, students may over-water and waste time with the sponge.
- Check the slabs the next day and remove the paper towels so they will dry evenly.

## **Discussion Points**

Our land has been populated for centuries by native tribes that evolved their own art, recognizable with its unique style. When all artists are expected to copy an agreed upon style, they are sticking to the stylistic conventions, or 'rules', of that style. The NW Coast tribes used certain animals as their identifying totems. Ancestors related to the same good qualities that the animals were known for.

**Explain** the qualities as listed above. Encourage students to think about which one fits their family the best.

Using color reproductions of Coastal art, **point out** the repeated ovoid shape and the U-form lines.

**Point out** the grooves in the wood, and/or painted lines to make outlines and details.

**Point out** the repetitive use of red, black and white. Green was used for emphasis on small areas in some art.

### **Reflection Points (Assessment of Learning Objectives)**

Students will reflect on totem characteristics to choose 1 of the 3 totem animals described and depict it in a clay plaque.

Students will use clay tools correctly to form a slab, trimmed to desired shape, with details modeled and attached or modeled with a tool, to resemble their chosen template.

Students will apply conventional colors.

Students will practice good craftsmanship.

### **Instructions for Lesson**

Give students a background on this art style, using colored examples of traditional totem designs used on longhouses, Chilkat blankets, totem poles, canoes, etc. Another option is to read "Storm Boy," by Paul Owen Lewis. with its thorough depiction of the Killer Whale totem. Demonstrate each step and then give students time to complete each step on their own, with guidance.

#### **Day 1: Building the Masks**

1. Group students around you and roll out a clay slab, applying even but light pressure in up-down, side-to-side directions until the slab is large enough for the animal template. While you're rolling, give a brief description of your animal. Lay the other 2 templates out and describe their characteristics.



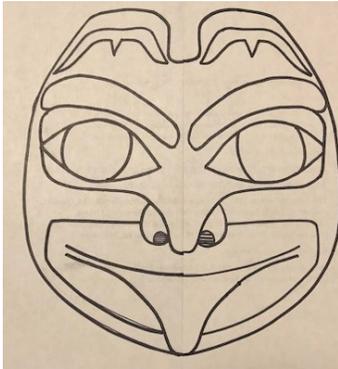
2. Rest the template carefully on the most even part of the slab, trace the image lightly, making sure to trace all the lines in the template, not just the outline.
3. Cut out with the wood skewer in a vertical (like a tree) position, all the way around the template, before removing.
4. Poke 2 hanger holes with the straw, reminding students not to get too close to the edge.
5. Dip your fingers in the slip and rub them around the edges to smooth out rough cuts.
6. Using the dull wood tool, gently delineate the lines for eyes, nose, mouth and fill in, make marks or lightly carve spaces symmetrically.

7. With the clay you just trimmed off, roll a small thick piece the size of a small potato, roll it out and cut a beak, or tongue or teeth. Using the fork and the slip, scratch to attach a small ball the size of an olive. Using the back of the skewer and your pinky finger, press in 2 nostrils and shape the 'nose' if it's a bear or a beaver. If it's a raven keep it round but tap flat the top and bottom to thin it.
8. Check the size relationship of the teeth, tongue or beak then trim or roll bigger if needed.
9. Attach it with fork/slip: scratch to attach wherever both pieces will adhere. Don't skimp on the slip but also don't use too much water.
10. With a squeezed-out wet sponge wipe down any slip, smooth any areas drying too quickly. If there are bigger cracks, use the slip like spackle to fill them in.
11. With their non-writing hand, spread gently across the mask, flip it over and write names on the back, with the skewer, but not deep enough to crack it. If desired, adults may do this.
12. To dry, curve the mask slightly convex and lay over balled up paper towels. Adjust it to desired look.
13. Once the masks are dry (approximately 2 weeks, once no longer damp or cold to the touch), brush off the cut edges with a damp paper towel before firing.

### **Day 2: Glazing the Masks (can be done in small groups or as a full class)**

1. Demonstrate applying black glaze from a paper cup in dots, lines, outlines, eye and other major details. Stress the more background you leave white, the stronger the effect of the black and room for the red.
2. Switch brushes and add additional details with red, either to fill in a shape or run parallel to the black lines as an accent. Be careful not to paint red too close to wet black glaze, which usually dries very quickly.
3. A significant amount of white should be left as background. This can be glazed clear by the students or the parents assisting.
4. Switch brushes and add a few additional details with teal, either to fill in a shape. Be careful not to paint too close to wet glaze, which usually dries very quickly.
5. Optional is to have a 'station' monitored by adults to bring the mask to paint it.
6. Using a damp towel or sponge clean all glaze from the backs of the mask before firing. Fire the masks a second time.
7. Raffia can be attached (for hanging) when the mask is completed.





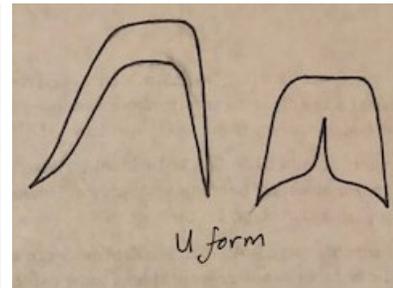
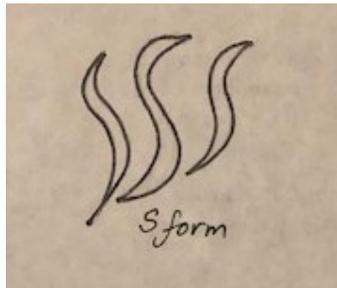
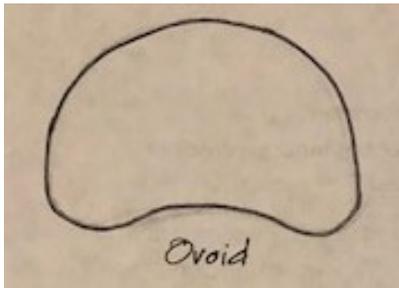
**Bear** - Always has a hanging tongue; Ovoids used in eyes, mouth; U-forms over ears; S-lines are other curved lines.



**Beaver** - Always has big teeth; Ovoids in eyes, mouth, U form over ears, S-lines are the other curved ones



**Raven** - Always has a pronounced sharp beak; often holding the sun; this design is from a totem; Ovoids used in eyes, s-lines in the beak, and other lines.



### **References & Attributions**

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## Notes for Educators

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Skills

Goal setting, observing, making connections, visualizing, sequencing, classifying, determining main idea, fact and opinion. determining point of view, decision making, synthesizing.

### Washington State Performance Standards

(VA:Cr2.1.5) a. Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice. This happens when skills previously learned in clay hand-building & painting are combined.

(VA:Cr2.2.5) a. Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment. This happens when students use appropriate tools to do a precise job.

(VA:Cr2.3.5) a. Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance. This happens when the significance of each totem animal is considered as a personal choice.

(VA:Cr3.1.5) a. Create artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art-making. This applies only if the students talk or write about their choice of animal totem and/or the process used. (See Arts Integration below)

(VA:Re7.2.5) a. Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery. This happens when students learn which animals are associated with which character traits.

(VA:Re9.1.5) a. Recognize differences in criteria used to evaluate works of art depending on styles, genres, and media as well as historical and cultural contexts. This happens when students learn the 'rules' of making this style of art.

### Arts Integration Opportunities

**Writing:** Students can write about their totem animal's significance within the tribe's culture, and why the student chose that totem animal.

**Reading/Dance:** "Storm Boy" by Paul Owen Lewis. Teach each other the family totem's special dance as in the book.

**Social Studies:** Learn about the other totem animals' characteristics and examine totem poles.