TAKING A NEW LOOK AT CERAMICS: CLAY LOOMS

Recommended for Grades 3 and up
by Mrs. Amanda O’Shaughnessy (@artoshaughnessy)

MATERIALS

**CLAY DAY**
- Chinet Paper Plates (8¾” diameter)
- Scissors (to cut paper plate)
- Clay
- **Multi Slab Cutter**
- Slab Mats
- **Plastic Wrap**
- Sharpies
- **Needle Tools**
- Slip or Water Cups
- Texture Too

**COLOR DAY**
- Water Cups
- Sponges
- Brush Assortment
- Glaze (or Paint)
- Special Fun Glazes
- (optional):
  - **Duncan Shimmer**
  - **Mayco Jungle Gems**
  - **Amaco Crystaltex**

**WEAVING DAY(S)**
- Yarn Assortment
- Scissors
- Tape (optional)
- Twisteenz (optional)
- Pipe Cleaners (optional)
- Beads (optional)
- Hot Glue (optional)
- Fishing Wire (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Discuss and plan for creating a semi-circle loom out of clay. Create a class list of ideas then sketch them out on paper before getting out the clay. You can use the ½ paper plates for template tracers to aide with the sketching process.

2. In pairs, have kids cut 1 paper plate per pair in ½ through the diameter. (You could also do this step ahead of time). Have kids write their name on the back of the paper plate and pick up a piece of plastic wrap. They can also start gathering their other materials for creating in clay.

3. Either pre-cut slabs or use multi-slab cutter in front of class (they’ll think this is sooooooo satisfying!).

4. Demonstrate using paper plate as a template guide for lightly sketching out the design.

5. Cut out design using a needle tool. Teach them to hold it perpendicularly to the slab mat & to make sure it is going all the way through. Remind them to not cut off anything they want to have attached to the loom (like cat ears, legs, tails, zig-zag lines, bumpy lines, etc...).

6. Remove scraps and lay off to the side (don’t crumple)...kids can use this for embellishments like drips, a fly for a frog head or additional appendages later.

7. Place plastic wrap over clay and then place the paper plate on top so that kids can see their names--making sure to align the perimeter of the plate with their design.

8. Slip one hand under the slab mat and one hand on top of the plate/project stack and gently lift/turn it so
that the plate is now at the bottom and the slab mat is on top. Take the slab mat from the top and put it under the paper plate. The slab of clay should now be on top of the paper plate.

9. **Gently** press clay into the plate form.

10. Smoothe any rough edges with water or slip.

11. Gently add texture to your design. Use scraps to scratch/attach anything that couldn’t fit earlier or to make other embellishments to attach later to your project (one of my students made Tabasco Hot Sauce bottle to go with his taco loom!).

12. If notches are not included in your student’s design, then guide them through using a craft stick to evenly distribute 10-11 notches along the arc of the semi-circle loom. You can have them cut a triangle in the middle of the bottom edge or you can do that later when you add names to the back of their projects before fully drying, so I keep a couple just for using on clay.

13. Collect clay scraps for re-wedging and use for other projects. I save my clay bags for this purpose because they are heavy-duty and come with the clay.

14. Remove paper plates and plastic wrap (all re-usable) and add names, year and class code to back with a pencil, stylus or underglaze applicator/pencil. I like the quality of line that is produced from using a pencil to write names on the back of projects.

15. Dry on porous surfaces (wire racks, dry foam sponges, etc...) to prevent cracking. Once bone dry, kiln fire according to clay instructions.

16. Once the looms have been kiln fired, glaze or paint looms. This will take approximately 1 class period. Kiln fire again, if you choose to glaze.

17. Once the clay has been glaze fired, or paint has dried, get started warping looms in preparation to weave.

18. Pull approx 2 arm spans of single colored yarn for the warp. Leave a “tail” out the back and start wrapping the yarn around each notch, always going back through the center. When finished, tie beginning tail to ending tail and trim excess yarn. **Optional: use tape to secure ends of yarn**

19. Allow students to select their yarn and the amount of yarn (I limit their pulls to no more than 1 arm span to keep it manageable for them, and they may only have 1 piece of string at a time).

20. Lead with a loop at the end of the cut yarn and weave using an under/over pattern.

21. When you reach the end of the warp, pull the yarn but leave a little tail at the end.

22. Make a “U turn” around the warp string where the yarn just ended and go back the other direction, like a rainbow, continuing the under/over pattern. Don’t keep going round and round like in a circle loom. Repeat process of weaving in a “rainbow” arc with each new string until you run out. No need to tie knots. Simply tuck excess behind weaving or trim excess at end.

23. If your student is making an animal face for their loom, they may want to warp 4 strings on each side of the loom, instead of the entire thing (as to not cover the face). They may weave each side separately for a whisker or bow-tie effect.

24. If your student wants the string to hang, like a rainbow, or hair, or jellyfish tentacles, then they may
want to use a fresh piece of string each time they weave across their loom. They can give their ends a “haircut” at the end to create an even edge.

25. Attach embellishments according to the necessary customizations...use hot glue, wire, Twisteex, pipe cleaners, beads, cotton balls, etc...to put the finishing touches on their ceramic loom.

LOOM THEME IDEAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANIMALS</th>
<th>FOOD</th>
<th>WEATHER</th>
<th>MISC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turtle</td>
<td>Pizza</td>
<td>Rainbows</td>
<td>Paint Palette</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hedgehog</td>
<td>Taco</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Dinosaur</td>
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<td>Porcupine</td>
<td>Pie</td>
<td>½ Moon &amp; Shooting</td>
<td>Stegosaurus</td>
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<td>Dolphin</td>
<td>Lemon</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Flower</td>
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<td>Whale</td>
<td>Lime</td>
<td>Cloud</td>
<td>Bouquet of Flowers</td>
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<td>JellyFish</td>
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<td>Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crab</td>
<td>Ice Cream Cone</td>
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<td>SeaShell</td>
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<td>Peacock</td>
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<td>Treasure Chest</td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gemstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract--Just have fun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>adding texture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Person Head w/Bow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tie (weaving)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Person Head with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rounded edge as chin</td>
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</tbody>
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TIPS

1. Split the instructions into 4-5 days worth of classes:
   - Day 1: Discussion & Planning
   - Day 2: Clay Day
   - Day 3: Clay Color
   - Day 4: Weaving
   - Day 5: Continue Weaving & Finishing Touches

2. Interested in building a class set of sealable slip containers? Wash & save any 4oz glaze containers you have around and use those for slip!

3. If you use real needle tools with your students, keep them accountable for the care of their materials and stress safety information.
4. Got Crumbs? When cleaning up after creating with clay, have students collect crumbs of clay and put them in the slip containers!

5. For beginning students, have them intentionally create an even amount of warp strings. That way, each time they make a “U-turn,” (or reach the end of the warp strings going one direction and turn around to go the other) they will always have the same motion (i.e. they should always end going under and start going over, or visa versa).

6. Have students work on soft surface, such as the carpet or hand towels, when warping and weaving their looms—this will keep their projects extra safe from breakage.

7. Students love to be “Student Teachers” so if you notice kids catching on to the pattern/concept, they’re really proud and happy to help when others run into issues!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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