

Storyteller Sculptures Inspired by the Art of Helen Cordero

Helen Cordero (1915-1994) from the Conchiti Pueblo in New Mexico is the originator of the storyteller doll. She made her first storyteller to honor her grandfather who was a storyteller. Songs and stories were very important to the Pueblo Indians, and storytellers were responsible for preserving their history and culture.



Authentic storyteller owned by teacher



Teacher-created storyteller

Target Grade: 5

Goal (Terminal Objective): Students will hand-build figurative sculptures inspired by the art of Helen Cordero. The sculptures will show students' understanding and respect of the Conchiti Pueblo in New Mexico.

Objective: Students will design and build traditional or contemporary clay sculptures that represent the art of storytelling. They will combine hand-building techniques. The storytellers will be decorated in traditional colors used by the Pueblo Indians. Students will learn about Helen Cordero and the Pueblo culture.

National Standards:

Visual Arts Grades 5-8 Content Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Visual Arts Grades 5-8 Content Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

Visual Arts Grades 5-8 Content Standard 4: Understanding the visual art in relation to history and culture

Visual Arts Grades 5-8 Content Standard 5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

Visual Arts Grades 5-8 Content Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines – social studies cross curriculum connection

Purpose: Students will view and discuss storyteller sculptures. They will learn the history of storytellers and be able to identify the art of Helen Cordero. Through hand-building, students will understand the process involved in making this art form. The completed sculptures will help students understand the Native American culture of the Cochiti Pueblo.

New Vocabulary: Helen Cordero, Cochiti Pueblo, storyteller, hand-building clay techniques, figurative sculpture

Materials:



#56-6012 Natural Hair Rainbow Brush Assortment



#66-5421 acrylic jar paints



#22-3003 Bright White Air-Hardening Clay



#22-9803 large/flat palette



#22-1593 Assorted Bold Chisel Tip Markers



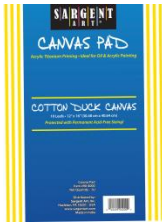
#22-7244 144 ct. Graphite Pencils



#23-5027 60 sheet Sketch Pad



#22-9111 11 ct. Sculpting Tool Set



#90-400x Canvas Pads



#98-9816 Paint Storage Tray

zip-lock baggies

Time: 4 lessons (45-60 minutes each)

Introduction and Motivation (Set):

1. Teacher shows students several pictures of authentic storyteller sculptures. What do all of the storytellers have in common? Look at the eyes, mouths, seated positions, clothing, and smaller attached figures. Are all of the storytellers figurative? Are some of them animal figures? How are they painted/decorated? What colors are used?
2. Teacher introduces new vocabulary.
3. Teacher shows students photos/pictures of the Cochiti Pueblo. Where is New Mexico? How do you think your life would be different if you were living on the Cochiti Pueblo? Do you think families were closely connected? Why?

Instruction:

Lesson 1:

Teacher presents pictures and slides of authentic storyteller sculptures. Introduction includes group discussion about the Cochiti Pueblo culture and Helen Cordero. What materials are used to make a storyteller? What other objects do Native American Indians make out of clay? Students look at teacher exemplars. Teacher reviews body parts for the figurative sculptures. After teacher demonstrates, students use pencils to sketch ideas for their storytellers. Teacher offers templates to students who wish to have a guide for

their sketches. Animals may also be represented as storytellers. Students may draw traditional storyteller designs or contemporary representations.



Teacher-made templates for storyteller designs

Lesson 2:

Teacher demonstrates sculpting the parts of the figurative sculpture. Students refer to their drawings from Lesson 1 and sculpt body parts for their storytellers. Store on plastic trays. Cover trays tightly with zip-lock bags.



Lesson 3:

Teacher demonstrates attaching the body parts to complete the figure. A thin coil of clay may be added to secure the head to the body and another to create the illusion of hair. Teacher reminds students that a sculpture is 3-dimensional and is seen from all sides. Teacher demonstrates pinch/pull method to make the smaller “children” sculptures. Teacher demonstrates attaching the smaller sculptures and defining the nose and mouth.

Following work time, students place their storytellers (uncovered) on plastic trays to dry overnight.



Lesson 3

Lesson 4:

Students look at authentic storytellers and discuss how they are painted/decorated. What are traditional colors for storytellers? Teacher demonstrates painting the entire storyteller with a base color of beige (or another color selected by student). Students paint their storytellers and allow them to dry.



Lesson 5:

A review of line drawing (thick, thin, curved, angled) is given. Teacher shows students a variety of patterns and designs used by Helen Cordero. Teacher demonstrates traditional painting/decorating of a storyteller using small brushes. Students again refer to their sketches and paint their storytellers in traditional or contemporary styles. Students may use a color palette beyond the traditional colors of beige, black, and terra cotta. Students detail one side of their sculptures. When paint is dry, the other side is detailed. Further embellishment is added with permanent black markers. Storytellers are exhibited and time is allowed for students to evaluate their own work and appreciate the work of others.



Activities:

(1) Guided Practice:

- A. Students learn about Helen Cordero from the Cochiti Pueblo and the art of Native American storytelling. Students watch teacher's step-by-step demonstrations and discuss teacher exemplars.
- B. Students create original imaginative storytellers using Sargent Art air-dry clay and acrylic paints. (Clean up with soap and water. Store on plastic trays.)

(2) Independent Practice and Check for Understanding:

- A. Teacher circulates through the room during student work time, answering questions and offering support as needed.
- B. Teacher notes students' understanding of directions and reviews them with the class if necessary.

(3) Closure:

- A. Students show their storytellers to the class and explain the process of making clay storytellers.
- B. Students discuss the importance of respect for individuality.

Evaluation:

Level One -- The artwork conveys excellent knowledge of the traditional storyteller sculpture and includes at least two smaller figures. The sculpture is very imaginative

and the pieces of the air dry clay are molded together with no seams visible. Painting and detailing are very carefully executed. Student handles materials with complete confidence.

Level Two -- The artwork conveys good knowledge of the traditional storyteller sculpture and includes at least two smaller figures. The sculpture is imaginative and the pieces of the air dry clay are molded together with no seams visible. Painting and detailing are nicely executed. Student handles materials with confidence.

Level Three -- The student has made an effort to convey some knowledge of the traditional storyteller and has attempted to include smaller figures. The sculpture shows some imagination. Some seams are visible where the air dry pieces have been connected. Execution of painting and detailing varies. Student handles materials with varied confidence.

Level Four -- The artwork does not convey knowledge of the traditional storyteller sculpture. The sculpture lacks imagination and seams are visible where the air dry pieces are molded together. The student needs much support in handling materials. Execution of painting and detailing is poor.

Extension:

Students can write a stories or songs that their storytellers could be passing down to their children and grandchildren. Students can learn more about storytelling through the website <http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/storyteller/about.htm>

Resources:

<http://www.collectorsguide.com/fa/fa014.shtml>

<http://www.canyonart.com/s-teller.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storyteller_doll

http://www.adobegallery.com/detail.php?item_id=1139642881

<http://www.friendsofbandelier.org/currentnews.asp>

<http://www.pueblodecochiti.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cochiti_Pueblo

Pueblo landscape

http://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g46992-Cochiti_Pueblo_New_Mexico.html#1640792

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