



Y1 – Sculpture with clay

Why do sculptors sculpt?



Overview of learning

In this sculpture unit using clay, children will learn what sculpture is and its purpose. They will develop skills with clay as a creative material, beginning their journey towards becoming proficient in sculpting techniques. Pupils will explore the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers, describing the similarities and differences between various practices and disciplines and making connections to their own work. The elements of art that will be focused on in this unit are colour, texture and form.

Knowledge and understanding objectives

NC KS1:
Children will:

- use a range of materials creatively to design and make products
- use drawing, painting and sculpture to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination
- develop a wide range of art and design techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space
- know about the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers, describing the differences and similarities between different practices and disciplines and making links to their own work

Key vocabulary

Tier 1: create, nature, press, roll
Tier 2: 3D, emotion, experiment, flatten, imprint, inspired, layer, sketch, texture
Tier 3: clay, ceramic, coil, kiln, pottery, sculpt, slab, tile

Possible misconceptions

Some misconceptions children may have are thinking sculptures must be smooth and perfect, that clay is easy to shape without technique and that colour mixing is random rather than based on primary colours. They may believe sculptures are finished once dried, not knowing about painting or varnishing. Also, they might think evaluating art means only saying if it looks nice, rather than talking about feelings and materials.

Practical materials

air-dry clay, clay tools (toothpicks, BBQ skewers, wooden cutlery can be used), mats for clay use, objects to create imprints (natural and human-made), leaves and sticks, varnish (or PVA glue and water), brushes for varnish, small brushes for paint, acrylic paint

Previous learning

In **EYFS**, children use a range of small tools, including scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery. They explore the natural world around them by making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants. They begin to understand important processes and changes in the natural world, such as the seasons and changing states of matter. Children safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function. They also share their creations and explain the process they have used.

Future learning

Year 2 – Pupils will use imprinting and relief in clay sculpting.
Year 3 – Pupils will make a pinch pot and 3D model.
Year 4 – Pupils will make a coil pot with decorative lid.
Year 5 – Pupils will sculpt a flower.
Year 6 – Pupils will sculpt a piece of food.

How are the art core and supporting skills developed in this unit?

Core skills	Supporting skills
 Exploring sculptures and the purpose of clay and observing nature's influence on sculpture	 Experimenting with shaping, rolling, texturing clay; using tools or natural objects to create varied surfaces
 Shaping, rolling and texturing clay	 Creating stable, well-formed sculptures with attention to proportion and balance
 Making clay imprints with natural textures	 Documenting ideas, creative choices and reflecting on the sculpture process
 Crafting a clay leaf using learned techniques	 Learning about artists who use clay and nature
 Mixing colours and applying them to sculptures and refining details with tools and textures	 Discussing how sculptures express emotions and meaning
 Assessing strengths, improvements and emotional impact	 Mixing colours to create different shades and using them to add expression and detail in artwork
	 Using art language to give and receive constructive feedback

Videos

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qleEw9kRAvM>
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_IIEbHjOsQ





Unit overview

Why do sculptors sculpt?



Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Key question: What is sculpture and what is clay?	Key question: How can nature inspire sculptors?	Key question: How can I be inspired by nature and make a leaf sculpture?	Key question: How can I use colour to improve my sculpture?	Key question: How can I evaluate my sculpture?
Learning objective: I can experiment with clay by manipulating it into different shapes; I can identify what makes an object a sculpture.	Learning objective: I can appreciate and reflect on sculptures inspired by nature; I can discuss how artists use natural forms in their work.	Learning objective: I can sculpt a leaf by applying techniques I have practised; I can use natural inspiration in my work	Learning objective: I can develop my technique by mixing primary colours to create secondary colours; I can use paint to add detail to my sculpture.	Learning objective: I can finish my sculpture by varnishing it; I can evaluate my own and others' work using art vocabulary.
Success criteria: By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to create clay forms such as balls, slabs and coils. They will understand what clay is and be able to distinguish sculptures from non-sculptures. Pupils will have sculpted a clay letter of the alphabet.	Success criteria: By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to describe and respond to the work of two craft makers inspired by nature. They will create a range of clay imprints based on natural patterns.	Success criteria: By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to create a clay leaf sculpture using coils, slabs and imprints developed in previous lessons.	Success criteria: By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to mix colours confidently and apply paint carefully using a brush to enhance their sculptures.	Success criteria: By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to varnish their clay sculptures to protect them and use art vocabulary to give constructive feedback on artworks.
Cumulative quiz: Q1 – Q2	Cumulative quiz: Q3 – Q4	Cumulative quiz: Q5 – Q6	Cumulative quiz: Q7 – Q8	Cumulative quiz: Q9 – Q10
Core skills:  Experimenting	Core skills:  Appreciating and reflecting	Core skills:  Sculpting	Core skills:  Developing technique	Core skills:  Appreciating and reflecting
Supporting skills:  Exploring materials and techniques  Building balanced 3D artworks	Supporting skills:  Exploring materials and techniques  Studying artists, movements and history  Recording inspirations and progress	Supporting skills:  Exploring materials and techniques  Building balanced 3D artworks	Supporting skills:  Exploring materials and techniques  Refining lines, shading and expression	Supporting skills:  Exploring materials and techniques  Evaluating with art vocabulary  Recording inspirations and progress

Unit overview

Stretch and challenge ideas

Children could:

- use a variety of natural objects to create different and unique textures in their clay imprints
- experiment with clay tools to add detailed patterns and refine their sculptures
- explore famous sculptures and compare similarities and differences with their own work
- collaborate with a partner to combine their sculptures into a larger, shared piece
- present their sculpture to the class, explaining their inspiration and the techniques they used
- try alternative materials such as salt dough or papier-mâché to discover different sculpting methods
- invent and share a short story about their sculpture
- organise a display of their sculptures and invite another class to view and ask questions

Core skills key



Appreciating and reflecting



Experimenting



Creating



Drawing



Sculpting



Developing technique

Assessment

The **knowledge organiser** introduces key vocabulary such as 'sculpture,' 'imprint,' and 'texture,' supporting learning both in class and at home.

A **post-unit assessment** checks understanding of sculpting techniques, texture application and colour mixing through discussion and simple activities.

Hands-on assessment allows children to demonstrate clay skills by shaping, imprinting and painting their sculptures, observed by the teacher.

A **cumulative quiz** reinforces key concepts like identifying sculptures, recognising textures and colour mixing, with feedback to guide future learning.

Supporting skills key



Exploring materials and techniques



Refining lines, shading and expression



Building balanced 3D artworks



Recording inspirations and progress



Studying artists, movements and history



Understanding art's impact and culture



Evaluating with art vocabulary

