



LESSON 24 LEVEL B CLAY

NATURE-PRINT WIND CHIMES

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

impressing and applying slip or sandstone buff to a clay slab object

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: terra cotta or other clay; rolling pin; white or sandstone buff clay slip; assortment of small, fresh leaves and ferns with prominent veins; a flat brush; soda straw; twine or fishing line; plastic bags



Wind Chimes

“TIPS”: Clay and slip are available from ceramic supply stores and most hobby shops. Self-hardening clay will not make a windchime sound. It will be a decorative hanging instead. If you want to make a wind chime without clay, see **MORE IDEAS** at the end of the lesson.

You can use a bottle instead of a rolling pin to flatten the clay.

WORDS TO LEARN:

terra cotta clay: the red clay from which flower pots are made

slip: creamy liquid form of clay used for decorating and joining clay pieces

sandstone buff: a light tan color of clay

A NOTE TO PARENTS: These lessons work best with terra cotta clay, but other clays will work also. Terra cotta or similar low-fire clay can be obtained at most ceramic supply stores and many hobby shops. Ceramic clay keeps indefinitely if stored in an airtight container (a plastic bag will do). It can be softened, even if thoroughly dry, by soaking it in water. “Self-hardening” clay or clay you can bake in your own oven is more expensive, but will also work in this lesson. We do not recommend plasticene because of its oily texture. Check your community resources for a kiln to fire terra cotta pieces.

Getting Started: Look at several kinds of wind chimes. Notice that pieces hang from a support at



different levels. This allows them to bump together gently to make sounds when the wind blows them. After they are fired, flat pieces of clay will “ring” when they strike each other. The pieces can be decorated by pressing leaves into them while the clay is soft. Slip, a creamy liquid clay, serves as paint to cover the background surface. It makes the leaf design show up better.



Three clay pendants

1. Cover the work surface with an old place mat or cloth-backed vinyl, cloth side up.
2. Roll a lemon -sized piece of terra cotta clay into an egg or potato shape. Place it on your mat. Then flatten it with your hand. Roll over it with a bottle or rolling pin until it is as thick as your thumb: 9-12 mm (3/8” to 1/2”).
3. Lay a small leaf or piece of fern, vein side down, on the clay. Press it into the clay with the rolling pin.
4. While the leaf is still in place, paint over it with the slip using a flat brush. Try not to let the slip flow beneath the leaf.
5. Use a soda straw to punch holes at both the top and bottom of the slab. Move it to a cool place to dry slowly. Gently remove the leaf.
6. Make at least eight more leaf or fern slabs.
7. Put some damp paper towels over the slabs. Then cover them loosely with a layer of plastic bags to slow down the drying process. Turn them over after 24 hours to keep the slabs from curling.
8. After one week, the slabs will be dry enough to fire in a kiln (bake in a special, very hot oven.) The fired pieces will be a rich, earthy color that contrasts with the white slip you put on the slabs.
9. Use short lengths of heavy twine or fishing line to tie one slab to another for a string of three or four pieces. Then tie each string onto a piece of

driftwood or a small tree branch. Tie another length of twine to both ends of the support and hang your wind chime where the breeze can find it. If your hanging doesn't make sounds, hang it against a wall for a decoration.

CLEAN UP: After each part of the wind chime project, put all your materials away. Take any leftover clay and make it into a ball. Use the ball to pick up all the scraps of clay you can see. Then take a DRY paper towel or cloth and sweep the dry powder which is left into a small pile and into your hand. Take it outside and put it in the dirt. Brush your hands together to get the last bits off. Now wash your hands with soap and water. Brush off the mat you used for a work surface out of doors. Clay must be stored in an airtight plastic bag with a few drops of water to keep it moist. Don't let scraps of clay get into the sink or they could clog the plumbing.

TALK ABOUT IT: Enjoy both the sound and the sight of your wind chimes. Which leaves or ferns made the best designs? Why?

MORE IDEAS: Fasten shells, bits of wood, metal, plastic, or glass to lengths of string with bits of duct tape. Experiment to see what sounds they make when they strike together.

CONNECTIONS: What is an "aeolian harp"? How are the "wind instruments" of a band or orchestra played? Is your wind chime *really* a wind instrument? What are some other ways of making sound?

