

THE ART OF CELADON: FOR USE WITH LINDA SUE PARK'S *A SINGLE SHARD*

GRADES: Four through eight

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SUBJECT: English, Reading and Art

TIME REQUIRED: One class period, preferably an extended period. The clay can be prepared a few hours in advance if refrigerated.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn about the artistry and craft involved in the creation of celadon pottery.
2. Experience an artistic process which parallels the actions of the main characters in the novel.
3. Create an individual work of art.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Flour, salt, water, food coloring and toothpicks.
- Mixing bowls, paper towels and aluminum foil (or paper plates).

BACKGROUND:

Linda Sue Park's young adult novel, *A Single Shard*, tells the story of life in a potter's village in the mid to late 12th century. The protagonist is present at the pivotal moment when the artistry of celadon pottery evolves by incorporating a new process called *sanggam* or inlay decoration. At the end of chapter five, the young hero has observed a master potter creating an inlay design in a piece of celadon pottery. To appreciate the complexity and artistry of *sanggam*, the students will have the opportunity to create their own "celadon" tile, complete with an inlay design of their own creation. This lesson is best done after students have completed reading and discussing Chapter 5.

It will be useful to show color pictures of real celadon pottery to the class during earlier discussions. Linda Sue Park has a wonderful website with pictures of the pottery pieces specifically referenced in the novel. NOTE: Teachers may not wish to send students directly to the site as there are some plot spoilers embedded in the narrative. To access these pictures:

Go to www.lspark.com

Click on "Books"

Click on the link for "A Single Shard"

Scroll down and click on "If You've Read the Book"

Click on "Behind the Scenes"

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide class into small work groups. Give each group a bowl in which to mix 2 parts flour, 1 part salt and enough water to moisten dough. Knead the dough into a large ball. Separate about a 1/3 of the dough off to one side. (This dough will be used for the inlay.) Ratio Hint: Using 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt and 1 cup of water will provide enough dough for approximately 4 student tiles.
2. If time permits, allow the students to create their own shade of "celadon" by experimenting with different amounts of food coloring. Very little green dye is

needed, but each work group should be encouraged to find the shade of blue green which they find most pleasing. Take the separated dough and dye some of it red, while leaving some of it white; these colors will be used for the inlay.

3. Divide the “celadon” dough so that each student has roughly the amount equal to a deck of cards. Using the aluminum foil or paper plates as a work-mat, have the students flatten the dough and shape it by hand into a flat tile.
4. Using the toothpicks, encourage the students to lightly trace a design or pattern into the tile. Gently carve out the design pattern, discarding what has been carved out.
5. Using their fingers, the students will fill-in the depressions with the red and white dough to complete their inlay designs. Encourage students to flatten the inlaid dough so that it is flush with the original tile.
6. Depending on humidity conditions, the tiles may take over 24 hours to dry. Because the dough does not have any preservatives, it will likely have small cracks in the finished product which can be likened to the cracks in the real glazes used by celadon potters.

EVALUATION:

- In the next class, take the opportunity to discuss the difficulties the students encountered in the process. It is important to call attention to the significant difference between our lesson and the real inlay process. As described in the book, *sanggam* is liquid and is painted into the carved depressions before glazing and firing it in the kiln.
- If time permits in the unit, younger students may enjoy staging their own market stalls for an “emissary” to award a royal commission to one of the students for their artistry—much like the event in chapter six of the novel.

ENRICHMENT:

- The protagonist in the book is particularly gifted in molding little figurine animals which adorn many pieces of celadon. Students can be encouraged to make their own figurines (animals or detailed leaves) using this same recipe at home or from commercially available play-dough.

The appendix pictures include an image of the figurines, a modern day example of inlaid celadon and a sample tile of the completed lesson plan.