



CLAY MANDALAS
Grade Band: 3
Content Focus: Visual Arts, Health, & Math



LEARNING DESCRIPTION

Students will create a mandala using clay. They will focus on coil building, creating simple forms, radial symmetry, and wax resist techniques.

LEARNING TARGETS

Essential Questions	"I Can" Statements
What is balance and what are the different types?	I can differentiate between three different types of balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial).
What is radial symmetry and how is it used in art?	I can explain what a mandala is and create one using clay handbuilding techniques.
What is a mandala?	I can use clay handbuilding techniques to turn a two-dimensional design of a mandala into a three-dimensional mandala made out of clay.
How can I use clay handbuilding techniques to turn a two-dimensional design of a mandala into a three-dimensional mandala made out of clay?	



We bring learning to life.

GEORGIA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards (if applicable)	Arts Standards
<p>Math 3.NR.4 Represent fractions with denominators of 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 in multiple ways within a framework using visual models.</p> <p>3.GSR.6.3 Identify lines of symmetry in polygons.</p> <p>Health HE3.1 Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health. HE3.1.c Prevent and manage emotional stress and anxiety in healthy ways.</p>	<p>VA3.CR.1 Engage in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas by using subject matter and symbols to communicate meaning.</p> <p>VA3.PR.1 Plan and participate in appropriate exhibition(s) of works of art to develop identity as an artist.</p> <p>VA3.CR.5 Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and appropriate use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.</p> <p>VA3.RE.1 Use a variety of approaches for art criticism and to critique personal works of art and the artwork of others to enhance visual literacy.</p> <p>VA3.CN.3 Develop life skills through the study and production of art (e.g. collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication).</p>

SOUTH CAROLINA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards (if applicable)	Arts Standards
<p>Math 3.NR.2.1 Identify unit fractions as the quantity formed by one part when a whole is partitioned into 2, 3, 4, 6, or 8 equal-sized parts. Express each part as a unit fraction of the whole.</p> <p>Health Standard 1: "Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health" (NHES, 2007). M-3.1.1 Identify examples of mental, emotional, social, and physical health. M-3.1.3 Identify healthy ways to communicate (e.g., verbal, nonverbal, written).</p>	<p>Anchor Standard 1: I can use the elements and principles of art to create artwork. Benchmark VA.CR I can combine several elements of art to express ideas. Indicator VA.CR NM.1.2 I can combine several elements of art to construct 2D or 3D artwork.</p> <p>Anchor Standard 2: I can use different materials, techniques, and processes to make art. Benchmark VA.CR NM.2 I can use some materials, techniques, and tools to create artwork. Indicator VA.CR NM.2.2 I can use three-dimensional art materials and techniques to make art.</p> <p>Anchor Standard 4: I can organize work for presentation and documentation to reflect specific content, ideas, skills, and or media. Benchmark VA.P NL.4 I can show and describe the idea of my artwork. Indicator VA.P NL.4.2 I can describe my artwork.</p>



We bring learning to life.

KEY VOCABULARY

Content Vocabulary (if applicable)	Arts Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Radius</u> - The distance between the center of a circle and the edge of the circle • <u>Fractions</u> - Equal parts of a whole • <u>2D shapes</u> - Shapes that are flat • <u>3D shapes</u> - Shapes that have height, width, and depth • <u>Mindfulness</u> - The practice of intentionally paying attention to the present moment with openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Shape</u> - A flat, enclosed line that is always two-dimensional and can be either geometric or organic • <u>Form</u> - An object that is three-dimensional and encloses volume (cubes, spheres, and cylinders are examples of various forms) • <u>Hand building techniques for clay</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Coil</u> - A rope of clay ○ <u>Pinch</u> - A hand-building method where the artist shapes the clay by pinching it between their fingers and thumb to form the desired shape ○ <u>Slab</u> - A sheet of clay ○ <u>Score</u> - Scratch marks used to connect two pieces of clay • <u>Wax resist</u> - A technique used in ceramics where a waxy substance is applied to areas of a clay surface to repel glaze • <u>Balance</u> - This is a sense of stability in the body of work. Balance can be created by repeating the same shapes and by creating a feeling of equal visual weight. • <u>Symmetry</u> - One side of an object, shape, or composition mirrors the other. • <u>Radial symmetry</u> - A type of symmetry where elements are arranged evenly around a central point • <u>Mandala</u> - A circular design made up of repeating patterns, shapes, and symbols that are usually arranged with radial symmetry around a central point • <u>Pattern</u> - Repetition of specific visual elements such as a unit of shape or form

MATERIALS

- Examples of balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial)
- Examples of mandalas from various artists



We bring learning to life.

- Paper
- Pencils
- Clay
- Clay tools
- Clay mats
- Water
- Rulers
- Circle templates
- Oil pastels
- Black India ink
- Paint brushes
- Water cups
- Paper towels
- Varnish
- “[Cup 2 Picasso](#)” by Jasper Johns
- “[The Great Wave](#)” by Hokusai
- “[Resurrection](#)” by Alma Thomas
- Examples of radial balance in art: [Charger of Charles II in the Boscobel Oak](#), [Rayonnant Gothic rose window of the Notre-Dame Cathedral](#), and [Tibetan mandala](#)
- Examples of mandalas

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Opening/Activating Strategy

- Students will explore the concept of balance and how artists use balance in their work.
- They will examine all three types of balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial).
- They will use this knowledge to compare and contrast works of art by various artists.
 - Example: “[Cup 2 Picasso](#)” by Jasper Johns
 - Example: “[The Great Wave](#)” by Hokusai
 - Example: “[Resurrection](#)” by Alma Thomas

Work Session

Day 1: INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING

- Students will do a close study of radial designs and discuss the importance of a circle's radius. Students will observe how they will use this information in their design.
 - Examples: [Charger of Charles II in the Boscobel Oak](#), [Rayonnant Gothic rose window of the Notre-Dame Cathedral](#), and [Tibetan mandala](#)
 - Spend time looking at the lines and shapes in each of the designs.
- Next, have students look at [examples of mandalas](#). Ask students what they see that is similar and what is different.
 - Students should notice repeated patterns and colors and how they are organized.
 - Discuss how the art of mandalas helps with the practice of mindfulness.
- Students will then get a piece of paper and trace around a circle stencil on the front and back of the paper.
 - On one side of the paper, they will divide the circle into fourths.
 - They will begin using lines and simple shapes to fill one fourth of the circle with a design using shape and line. Students will repeat that design in each section creating a mandala.
 - Encourage students to create simple designs as they will be translating the drawing into a clay sculpture.
 - They will repeat this process on the back but will divide their circle into eighths.



We bring learning to life.

Days 2-3: CREATING WITH CLAY

- Students will choose one of the mandalas they made on day one to recreate using clay.
- Students will use hand building techniques, such as coils, slabs, and pinching to create lines and simple shapes to create their mandalas.
- Once they have created their design with clay, they will score the back and smear wet clay on the back to attach all the pieces.
- Students will turn their project over to reveal their final design.

Days 4-5: WAX RESIST TECHNIQUE AND VARNISH

- After students' clay mandalas have been fired in the kiln, they will use oil pastels to add color to their mandalas making sure to continue the pattern with color. Review examples of mandalas as needed.
- Students will then use a black ink wash to paint over the entire front of the mandala creating a wax resist effect.
- Students will then run their projects under the sink to take away any extra ink to reveal their colorful designs.
- Once they are dry students will add a clear varnish on top to protect the finish.

Closing/Reflection

- Close the lesson with a gallery walk having students observe each other's work. Students can provide "a glow and a grow" for three different mandalas.
- Ask students to reflect on how creating their mandalas helped them with the practice of mindfulness.

ASSESSMENTS

Formative

- The teacher will observe students':
 - Responses to class discussion to determine their understanding of the different types of balance, particularly radial balance.
 - Planning process and initial mandala designs.

Summative

- [Artwork rubric](#)

DIFFERENTIATION

Accelerated:

- Students should use a larger denominator for the mandalas; provide students with various fractions to create in their mandalas.
 - Examples: $\frac{1}{2}$ of the mandala should use a warm color scheme; $\frac{1}{3}$ of the mandala should have organic shapes and $\frac{2}{3}$ should have geometric shapes, etc.

Remedial:

- Brainstorm as a class various patterns that students could use for their mandala designs.
- Provide guided practice to create patterns for mandalas.



We bring learning to life.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- What is a mandala: [What is a Mandala? About Mandala art](#)
- What is Balance: [Principle of Balance in ART - elementary - YouTube](#)
- Wax resist on clay: [Wax Resist with Clay](#)

CREDITS

U.S. Department of Education- STEM + the Art of Integrated Learning

Ideas contributed by: SAIL Grant Teacher Leaders—Chad Itnyre, Kristen Alvarez, Leah Patel, Lucerito Gonzalez, Tamu Clayton, Sandra Cash, Erin Smullen

**This integrated lesson provides differentiated ideas and activities for educators that are aligned to a sampling of standards. Standards referenced at the time of publishing may differ based on each state's adoption of new standards.*

Revised and copyright: August 2025 @ ArtsNOW



We bring learning to life.