



# RELIEF Mexican SUNS



## OBJECTIVES

*Students will...*

- Complete a relief sculpture of Mexican traditional art after studying the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional art

## INTRODUCTION

The sun is extremely important in Mexican culture and appears everywhere, especially as wall hangings. Ancient Aztecs worshipped the sun as a god, and the symbol remains popular today. The Mexican people usually paint these objects very brightly and hang them in their doorways for good luck. This lesson makes a great folk art unit from Mexico.

To save money, you will be using watercolors to paint the clay. Watercolors paint clay well, but be sure to use high-quality watercolors or the colors may be dull and lifeless.

## VOCABULARY

Relief Sculpture

Media

Wedge

2-D/3-D

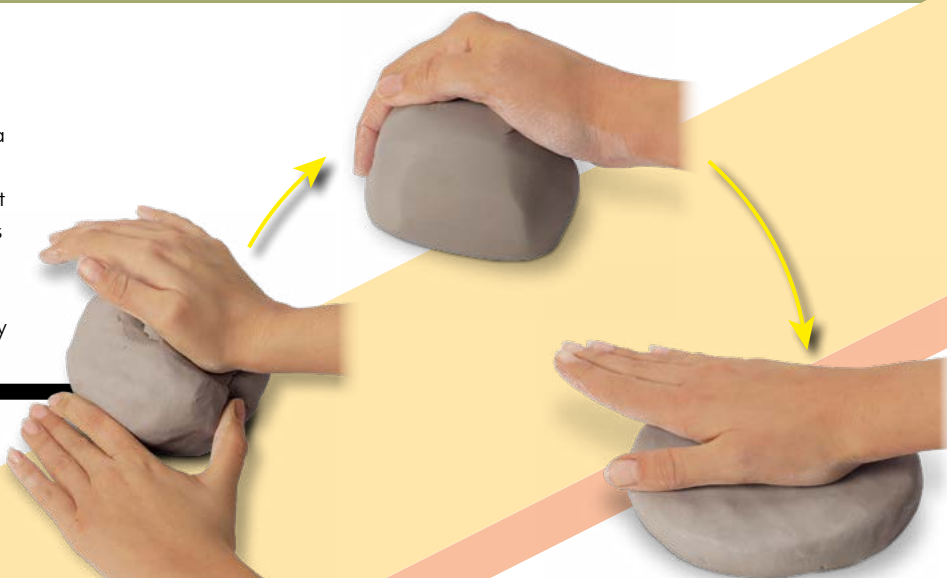
Clay

Slip

- Discuss the differences between 2-D and 3-D and how relief sculpture bridges the gap. Relief sculpture is a technique used to make things “pop” out from a flat surface.
- Show samples of finished Talavera pottery. Discuss glazed (which goes in the kiln) vs. unglazed (which is just painted with paints).

# INSTRUCTIONS

First, make sure the clay has been wedged, which means to work it for a few minutes on a mat to release all the air bubbles. Next, make a perfect ball of clay. Evenly press the clay flat onto a small board or cardboard (don't press clay on the table because clay is hard to lift). No cutting required. It will form a round circle if pressed as evenly as possible. Make the clay about ½" to 1" thick.



Find tops to yogurt cups or other small containers. Press down in the middle of the clay, but not too hard — if you press down too hard, you will cut the clay out. This makes the “body” or center of the sun.



Using clay tools, remove clay to give the design depth (optional).



Using a pencil or clay tools, draw/etch a sun design into the clay.



Show students how to attach eyes, mouths, and noses using slip and a toothbrush. Slip is a small amount of watered-down clay. It acts as glue and “sticks” pieces together. Explain that if slip is not used, the eyes, etc., will fall off.





Have each student write their name with a pencil on the back.

6

Use watercolor to paint. Several coats need to be applied, then seal with a sealer/glaze (such as Mod Podge®) or puzzle glue.

8



When finished, either air-dry the clay or put in a kiln.

7



## TIP

- If you work with clay often or have a large class, invest in a container to store your clay and keep it moist (9711407: Rubbermaid 10-gal. container with lid).



## MATERIALS LIST

- Clay (must be gray or white):  
 Nasco White Earthenware Clay, 50-lb. carton — 8300160  
 PRANG® DAS® Air-Hardening Modeling Clay, 1-lb. pkg. — 9725715  
 PRANG® DAS® Air-Hardening Modeling Clay, 11-lb. tub — 9727497
- Watercolor Paint:  
 PRANG® 8-color Oval Pan Watercolor Set — 9700449  
 PRANG® Watercolor Oval 8 Master Pack — 9724069
- Sealer/Glaze:  
 Mod Podge®, gloss, 1 qt. — 1100503  
 Mod Podge®, sparkle, 8 oz. — 9742136(C)
- Nasco No. 2 Pencils, box of 144 — 9727070
- Board or Cardboard
- Toothbrush
- Water
- Watercolor Brush

*Nasco*  
education

1.800.558.9595  
NascoEducation.com

*Lesson Plans are developed with teachers with no claim of original authorship.*

U27825