

LESSON PLAN

WHIMSICAL WHIPPLE BIRDS

Suggested Levels: Grades 4th-advanced

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Students will create a whimsical ceramic bird inspired by Judy Whipple and her “Whipple bird” concept, focusing on form, texture, and creativity. This lesson will introduce basic hand-building techniques, encouraging students to explore unique and playful designs for their birds.

Unleash your students’ creativity as they embark on a journey to design and sculpt their very own whimsical ceramic bird! Inspired by the imaginative world of Judy Whipple and her “Whipple birds,” this lesson encourages students to push the boundaries of traditional art forms and embrace the playful side of clay. Through a blend of artistic expression and technical hand-building skills, students will craft birds with exaggerated beaks, quirky wings, and lively textures, all while learning essential ceramic techniques. This hands-on project allows for endless creativity as each student’s bird comes to life in unexpected, fantastical ways.

From sketching imaginative designs to refining their creations with clay, students will explore the magic of abstraction and whimsy. The final touch—glazing their sculptures with Mayco Jungle Gems™ Crystal Glazes and Stroke & Coat®—gives them the opportunity to bring vibrant color and personality to their birds, culminating in a delightful, one-of-a-kind artwork. Each Whipple Bird will reflect its creator’s unique vision, resulting in a classroom “flock” that’s as diverse and enchanting as the artists themselves.

OBJECTIVES

I CAN... demonstrate an understanding of hand-building techniques such as pinch pot, coiling, and slab-building to create a hollow, 3D ceramic sculpture.

I CAN... create a unique, whimsical bird sculpture by applying creative design principles, including exaggeration, abstraction, and playful forms.

I CAN... incorporate texture and pattern into ceramic work, using sculpting tools and techniques to add visual interest and enhance the bird’s surface.

NATIONAL VISUAL ART STANDARDS

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

- Students will brainstorm and sketch ideas for their whimsical bird sculptures, exploring how to turn abstract ideas into physical form through clay.

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

- Students will refine their birds during the glazing process, learning how colors and textures enhance the final presentation of their piece.

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

- Students will draw on their own interests and experiences to create whimsical, personalized bird sculptures that express individual creativity.

MEET THE MASTER



Judith Whipple,

also known as Judy Whipple, is a talented and accomplished artist from Iowa. She has gained recognition for her unique and whimsical bird sculptures, which she crafts under the banner of JW STUDIOS. These charming creations, affectionately known as “Whipple birds”, are carefully constructed using wire and papier-mâché. Each

figurine radiates a sense of playfulness and imagination, with her designs often evoking a sense of joy and wonder.

Judith’s work has become a favorite at numerous festivals, art fairs, and art events, where her distinctive bird sculptures draw the admiration of collectors and art enthusiasts alike. Her ability to bring personality and life to her whimsical creations has set her apart in the art world, making her work instantly recognizable. Through her passion for art and her dedication to creating pieces that inspire delight, Judith Whipple continues to leave a lasting impression on those who encounter her imaginative sculptures.



SUPPLY LIST



CLAY

- Low fire clay body of choice

BRUSHES AND TOOLS

- Fan brush
- Liner brushes
- Toothpick
- Knife
- Water bowl
- Two thin dowel rods
- Copper wire
- Superglue
- Loop tool or plastic spoon



COLORS BY MAYCO

- SC076 Cara-bein Blue
- SC018 Rosey Posey
- SC042 Butter Me Up
- SC009 Jaded
- SC016 Cotton Tail
- SC015 Tuxedo
- S2729 Citrus Splash
- CG974 Bloomin' Blue
- OS559 Azalea

This project features colors from the Stroke & Coat[®] and Jungle Gems[™] product lines. Stroke & Coat[®] is a heavily pigmented and highly versatile glaze. Jungle Gems[™] glazes transform in the kiln when small pieces of glass frit burst into color and intricate patterns during the firing process.

In this lesson plan, the two are layered to add depth and dimension to the Whippie bird. Different Mayco glaze product lines are compatible and expand the creative possibilities of your students' ceramic works.

ACTIVITY

Steps to Create a Whimsical Ceramic Whipple Bird

1. Shape the Body

- Create two pinch pots for the bird's body by pressing your thumb into clay balls and hollowing them out. Apply slip to the rims of the hollow shapes and join them to form a hollow sphere. Then, begin shaping the clay to form the bird's head and body.

2. Add Features

- Sculpt a beak, wings, and tail. Use the slip and score method to attach these pieces securely.

3. Texture and Details

- Use tools to add textures (feathers, patterns) and smooth out rough areas with water.

4. Dry

- Let the bird dry completely before firing.

5. Bisque Firing

- Fire the bird in the kiln to harden the clay.

6. Glazing

- Apply glaze for color and texture, then fire again for the final finish.

7. Details

- Add final details to the bird by incorporating feathers and other decorative elements.

8. Display

- Enjoy your finished whimsical bird!

CLAY BUILDING DIRECTIONS

1. Begin with 1lb of lowfire clay. Roll clay into a ball to begin creating the body.



2. Manipulate one side of the ball into a wide, flat, curved point to represent the tail feathers by squeezing your hand around one half of the clay ball. Using your fingers, slowly pinch out a smaller point on the opposite side to create the beak. On the underside of the bird body, use your fingers to pinch two similarly sized "hills" to create the points where the legs will attach.



3. Using the knife, cut the bird body in half. Hollow out the two halves with a loop tool, plastic spoon, or your fingers. Use a toothpick to scratch and attach the two halves back together. Make a hole slightly larger than the dowel rods for the

legs in the two hills on the underside of the bird. Using a toothpick, poke holes in the top of the head to add a place to glue accent objects after firing. Allow the clay to dry and bisque fire to cone 04.



GLAZING DIRECTIONS

1. Apply three coats of SC042 Butter Me Up to the whole piece using the fan brush, allowing the coats to dry between applications.
2. Apply three coats of SC009 Jaded to the underbelly of the birds and large ovals where the eyes will be using the script liner brush.
3. Apply three coats of SC018 Rosey Posey to the wings, tail feathers, and small feathers above the teal eye spots.
4. Using the detail liner, apply one coat of SC076 Cara-Bein Blue in accent lines on the pink feathers, linework on the belly, and beak outline
5. Using the back end of a brush, apply a dot of SC015 Tuxedo where you'd like the eyes to be. Apply two tiny dots of SC016 Cotton tail to the top of the black dots after they've dried with the point of the toothpick.
6. Using the script liner brush, apply two coats of CG974 Bloomin Blue over any of the sections with SC009 Jaded. Apply two coats of S2729 Citrus splach over any of the sections that have SC042 Butter Me Up.
7. Stilt and fire to cone 06.
8. Paint the dowel rods with OS559 Azalea and glue into the leg holes after the paint has dried. Coil copper wire around a dowel rod to create springs. Attach the copper wire springs into the holes at the top of the bird's head



TEACHER TIP:

- Use one of the dowel rods in the leg hole to help hold the piece as you glaze.

EXTEND THE LEARNING *using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory*

LINGUISTIC (Word Smart)

Story Prompt: Ask students to write a short story or a poem about their Whipple bird. Who is the bird? What adventures does it have? Where does it live? What makes it special? Encourage them to incorporate whimsical elements that match the style of the sculpture.

Whimsical Descriptions: Focus on the use of adjectives to describe their bird sculptures. Encourage students to use imaginative and vivid language—like “sparkling,” “feathered,” “quirky,” or “colorful”—to bring their Whipple birds to life on paper. Then, they can use these words to create a descriptive collage or word art project.

SPATIAL (Picture Smart)

Placement and Composition: Discuss the importance of composition in their bird designs. Have students sketch their birds in different poses or settings, considering how positioning affects the overall visual impact.

Birdhouse Design: Introduce the concept of birdhouses and have students design and draw a whimsical birdhouse for their Whipple birds. They can consider dimensions, materials, and how the house interacts with its environment.

INTERPERSONAL (People Smart)

Art Critique Sessions: Organize peer review sessions where students present their Whipple birds to classmates. They can provide constructive feedback on each other's work, focusing on what they love and suggesting improvements. This practice enhances both communication and critical thinking skills.

Collaborative Journals: Provide students with shared reflection journals where they can write about their experiences creating the Whipple birds. They can pass the journal around, adding their thoughts and comments, fostering a sense of community.

BODY KINESTHETIC (Body Smart)

Sculpting Workshops: Organize workshops where students practice different clay techniques such as coiling, pinching, and slab building. Allow them to create smaller practice pieces before starting their Whipple birds, focusing on how different techniques impact form and texture.

Bird Movement Exploration: Students can mimic bird movements (like hopping, flapping, and soaring) to understand the physicality of birds. They can discuss how these movements can be expressed in their bird designs and incorporate movement into their sculptures.

NATURALIST (Nature Smart)

Field Trip or Outdoor Observation: Take students outside to observe real birds in their natural habitat. Provide binoculars and encourage them to take notes and drawings on the different species, colors, and behaviors they see. This can inspire their Whipple bird designs.

Bird Watching Journal: Have students maintain a journal where they record their observations of birds, including sketches, descriptions, and behaviors. They can reflect on how these observations influence their art.

LOGICAL/ MATHEMATICAL (Word Smart)

Surveying Preferences: Conduct a class survey on favorite bird species or colors. Students can collect and analyze the data, creating graphs or charts to visualize their findings, which can inform their bird designs.

Balancing Act: Challenge students to create a balanced Whipple bird regardless of the position the bird is in, discussing how weight distribution affects stability. They can test their designs and make adjustments based on their observations of balance.

INTRAPERSONAL (Self Smart)

Mindful Creation: Incorporate mindfulness techniques into the sculpting process. Encourage students to focus on the textures, colors, and forms as they work, promoting a deeper connection to their creative expression.

Experimentation Time: Allow students time to experiment with different techniques or materials before starting their final piece. They can reflect on what works best for them and how these choices relate to their personal style.

MUSIC (Music Smart)

Bird-Themed Songwriting: Encourage students to write lyrics for a song about their Whipple birds, focusing on themes like freedom, flight, or the whimsical nature of their creations. They can then set their lyrics to music or share them with the class.

Bird-Inspired Instruments: Introduce students to instruments that mimic bird sounds or are inspired by nature (e.g., flutes, whistles, or wooden instruments). Students can experiment with these instruments and discuss how they relate to their sculptures.

RUBRIC

	4 - EXEMPLARY	3 - PROFICIENT	2 - DEVELOPING	1 - NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
CREATIVITY & IMAGINATION	The bird design is highly creative, exceptionally whimsical, and demonstrates a strong personal style.	The bird design is creative and includes whimsical elements, showing some originality.	The bird design has some original features, but many aspects are conventional.	The bird design shows little to no originality; lacks a whimsical element.
CRAFTSMANSHIP	The sculpture is expertly crafted, demonstrating advanced technical skills and mastery of techniques.	The sculpture shows good technical skills; most techniques are applied effectively.	The sculpture demonstrates limited technical skills; several areas need improvement.	The sculpture is poorly constructed; lacks basic techniques.
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	The sculpture is highly detailed, with thoughtful embellishments that significantly enhance its appeal.	The sculpture shows good attention to detail, enhancing the overall appearance.	Some details are present, but many areas lack refinement and attention.	Little to no attention is given to details; the sculpture appears incomplete.
FUNCTIONALITY & BALANCE	The sculpture is perfectly balanced and functional, demonstrating excellent structural integrity.	The sculpture is generally stable and functional, with minor issues.	The sculpture has some stability issues, making it less functional.	The sculpture is unstable or unable to stand; functionality is compromised.
USE OF MATERIALS	Materials are thoughtfully chosen and used innovatively, greatly enhancing the overall design.	Materials are appropriately selected and used effectively to enhance the sculpture.	Materials are used but lack creativity; some choices do not enhance the sculpture.	Materials are poorly selected or used; little effort to enhance the sculpture.
PRESENTATION	The final piece is beautifully presented, demonstrating a high level of care and professionalism.	The final piece is presented well, showing care and attention to detail.	The presentation shows some effort, but it is not polished.	The final piece is poorly presented; lacks care and attention.
REFLECTION & GROWTH	Excellent reflection on the process, demonstrating significant growth and understanding of artistic principles.	Good reflection on the process with some evidence of growth and understanding.	Minimal reflection on the process; little evidence of growth or learning.	No reflection on the process or learning; no evidence of growth.

Total Score: _____/28

RUBRIC

GRADING SCALE

25-28 POINTS: EXCEPTIONAL WORK THAT EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS.

20-24 POINTS: GOOD WORK THAT MEETS EXPECTATIONS.

15-19 POINTS: FAIR WORK THAT SHOWS POTENTIAL BUT REQUIRES MORE EFFORT.

14 POINTS: WORK DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS; SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT NEEDED.

This rubric focuses on various aspects of the students' artistic process and final product, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of their work. Each criterion can be rated on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being "Unsatisfactory" and 4 being "Exemplary."