

Clay Cottages Of Hope

Melody Weintraub

Maya Angelou once said, "Nothing can dim the light that shines from within." Teaching students that their art can shine a light for others in need can be a valuable lesson that goes beyond technique, skill, and curriculum. Teaching students to make art with visual impact can change their world, but teaching students to care can change the way they see their world.

As president-elect of the Tennessee Art Education Association (TAEA), I learned at an NAEA

Southeastern Region leaders meeting that there were art teachers in North Carolina who had lost everything due to the devastating hurricanes that swept through their region. Southeastern Region vice-president Meg Skow asked us to look for ways to show support. I looked around at my classroom with all of my neatly sorted supplies, shiny floors, and student artwork, and thought about how that was lost in one day for so many of my colleagues in the Carolinas. I began to think of ways my students could get

involved in raising support for art classes in North Carolina.

Envisioning Luminaries

Remembering the theme for our upcoming TAEA Fall Conference, Celebrating Community through Art, I envisioned luminaries in the shape of clay cottages adorning the tables at our TAEA awards dinner. I approached my school and shared my vision, and they graciously donated the materials. After creating the mockup of a cottage, I designed a template and asked my

Students cut holes in their luminaries to place candles inside.

Students' Clay Cottages of Hope collection.



seventh-grade artists if they were interested in creating and donating these luminaries to raise money for the hurricane relief effort in North Carolina, specifically for art-rooms. They were very receptive.

Sharing the Light

With the conference just three weeks away, we had to work fast so there would be time to dry, fire, and glaze

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the cottages. The results were amazing! We sold all of our *Clay Cottages of Hope* at \$20 each and raised \$540.

I opened an Instagram account to share the template in case others

wanted to do the same. I asked those who bought a cottage at our conference to post and tag it #claycottagesofhope, so that later I could show students how the money raised helped North Carolina art teachers rebuild. If you have a cause in mind, feel free to steal this idea to help your students see the difference they can make through art. Shine on! 🙏

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural, and historical content to deepen understanding.

WEB LINK

Art at Briarcrest: www.briarcrest.com/arts/visual-arts

Assembling a Cottage

1. Prepare 3/8" clay slabs and wrap them individually in plastic. Each student will need 2 lbs. of clay.
2. Distribute the cottage template handout and clay slabs. Demonstrate how to assemble the cottage. Students cut out the template and lay out the pattern onto the clay slab. Each piece can be texturized using rubber stamps.
3. Students cut out the pattern using a needle tool. Once the pieces are cut out, students assemble their houses by scoring and slipping the taller sides of the cottage to the base. (A small empty milk carton may be used to give the structure support while the clay is moist.) Students score and slip the remaining sides of the cottage to the base and to the other sides and seal the seams.
4. Students score and slip the roof onto the structure, overlapping the two sections of the roof. (These pieces are slightly oversized to create an overhang, which may need to be trimmed.)

Detailing, Glazing, and Firing

- After the structure is assembled, students use a craft knife to cut out windows and a back arch where a candle will later be inserted. The sections that are removed can be added back onto the structure as shutters or a front door.
- If it takes more than one class period to assemble the structure, it must be covered with plastic wrap to keep it moist and pliable. Once finished, it needs to dry for at least five days before firing.
- Each cottage should be dusted using a slightly damp sponge. Then it must dry before applying glaze. Students should apply three coats of each color of glaze, allowing them to dry between coats. An overglaze may be applied once the final glaze is dry. Once that is dry, fire the cottages one last time.

