

Ceramics II
Mr. Faltinoski

Personal Totem Poles

Totem poles are monumental sculptures carved from large trees, mostly Western Red Cedar, by cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America. The word totem is derived from the Algonquian word “odoodem”, "his kinship group".

The meanings of the designs on totem poles are as varied as the cultures that make them. Totem poles may recount familiar legends, clan lineages, or notable events.

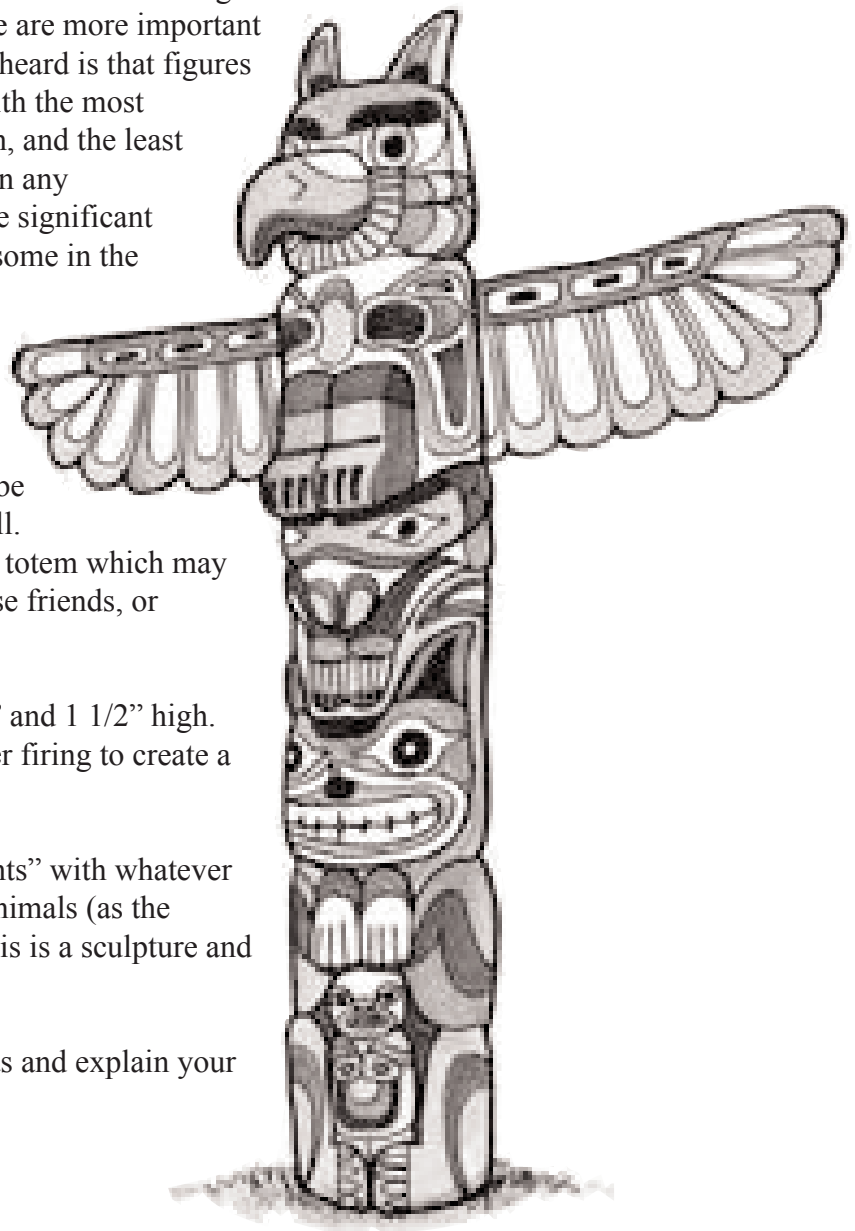
The vertical order of images is widely believed to be a significant representation of importance. This idea is so pervasive that it has entered into common slang with the phrase "low man on the totem pole". This phrase is indicative of the most common belief of ordering importance, that the higher figures on the pole are more important or prestigious. A counterargument frequently heard is that figures are arranged in a "reverse hierarchy" style, with the most important representations being on the bottom, and the least important being on top. There have never been any restrictions on vertical order; many poles have significant figures on the top, others on the bottom, and some in the middle. Other poles have no vertical arrangement at all, consisting of a lone figure atop an undecorated column.

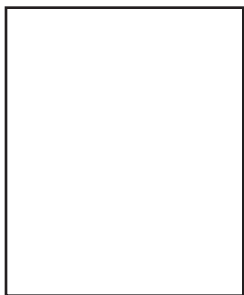
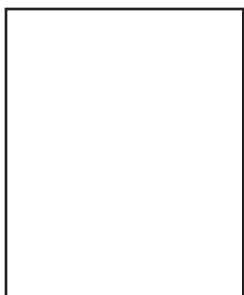
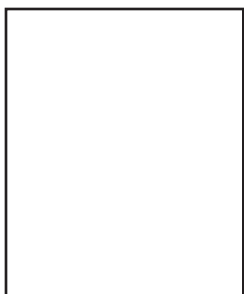
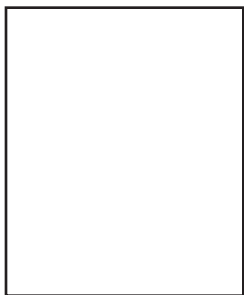
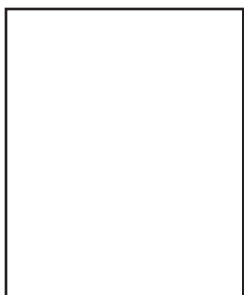
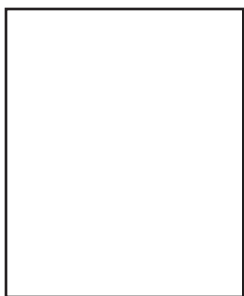
In your project, you are going to create a totem with six segments. Each segment will be a cylinder that is 3” wide (diameter) by 4” tall. The segments will relate to the theme of your totem which may include family members (including pets), close friends, or significant moments in your life.

You will also create a slab base that is 6” x 6” and 1 1/2” high. You will attach the totem pole to the base after firing to create a more stable sculpture.

You are encouraged to interpret your “segments” with whatever symbols you want. You can use features of animals (as the native Americans often did), but remember this is a sculpture and is meant to be viewed for all side.

Use the attached sheet to sketch out your ideas and explain your concepts.





4" wall for segment

