

LESSON PLAN



Image: Work in progress for *Dripping Earth: Cannupa Hanska Luger*. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025

KEY TERMS

Vessel	Craftsmanship
Sculpture	Community
Texture	

MATERIALS

Clay (any clay body)	Images of Luger's ceramic works
Wooden stylus	Optional Materials:
Popsicle sticks	Mod Podge®
Forks	Small lace pieces, beads, or natural textures to press into the clay
Water cups	
Sponges	

HANDS THAT HOLD: CLAY VESSELS OF CARE

Inspired by: *Dripping Earth: Cannupa Hanska Luger* (Nov 15, 2025—Mar 8, 2026)

Created by: Sarah Carter, School Programs Coordinator

Created for: Elementary

Focus: Ceramic art making, collaboration, care, and community

Themes: Hands, vessels, function, empathy, and craftsmanship

Big Ideas: Students will learn to...

- ... use clay to express care and connection.
- ... see hands as important tools for making, helping, and holding.
- ... understand that cultures can convey ideas about community, giving, or protection.

Learning Goals: Students will be able to...

- ... observe and discuss how an artist uses their hands and clay to create both objects and meaning.
- ... explore how clay can be shaped to hold or contain something (a bowl and/or an idea).
- ... create their own clay vessel inspired by the Luger and idea of “hands that hold.”
- ... develop craftsmanship skills such as learning to handle and join clay using scoring and welding.
- ... present their artwork with others, describing what their vessel could “hold” or represent.

Lesson Outline

Introduction & Looking

Show students images of Cannupa Hanska Luger's ceramic vessel artworks.

Ask open-ended questions:

What do the hands seem to be doing?

How does this sculpture make you feel?

Share: “The artist, Cannupa Hanska Luger, works with clay to create large sculptures that show care and community. Some of his vessels are made of hands, showing how our hands can hold and protect what's important to us.”

Brainstorming & Sketching

Have students think: What do my hands care for or protect? It could be something real (a plant, a pet, a toy) or an idea (friendship, kindness, home).

Students make a quick sketch of what their vessel might look like.



Image: Luger in his studio with metal and ceramic components for *A Nation*, 2025, in progress for *Dripping Earth: Cannupa Hanska Luger*. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025

Art making

Demonstrate basic clay techniques (pinch pots and coil rolling).

Guide students to create a small vessel that shows “hands” or “holding” in some way—hands could be drawn, pressed into the clay, or shaped into the vessel itself.

Encourage creativity: As students think outside the box, some might make a bowl shaped like cupped hands, others a small pot with handprints around it.

Remind them: We are thinking about what we care for and how our hands show that care through art.

Important note for students: This lesson draws inspiration from Luger’s ideas, but we are not copying Indigenous practices or symbols, known as cultural appropriation. Instead, we are learning from his approach—connecting to our own places, stories, and responsibilities.

Finishing Touches & Reflection

Once complete, students can gently smooth edges or add textures.

Optional: When fired or dry, artworks can be painted with acrylic or tempera paint.

Simple share circle: What did you make your vessel to hold? What do your hands care for?

Extension Options

Collaborative Class Project: Combine several student vessels into a larger display called “Hands That Hold Our Community.”

Cross-Curricular Tie: Connect with science (how clay comes from the earth) or social-emotional learning (acts of care and empathy).

Cultural Note

The legacy of colonialism, including the myth that Europeans discovered America, perpetuates the erasure of Indigenous peoples. It is thus important to remind students that there are over 2,000 tribal groups living across the Americas today, each with their own unique and dynamic culture. It is also important to discuss cultural appropriation with students so they understand how to celebrate, not use, a group’s culture. For further resources regarding Native American cultures, see Native Knowledge 360°: Essential Understanding about American Indians published by the National Museum of the American Indian: americanindian.si.edu/nk360

Keep in mind AIR (Ask, Invite, Reflect) Framework when teaching another person’s culture. Introduced by Dr. Browning M. Neddeau at National Art Education Association’s professional learning webinar Cultural [Mis] Appropriation: Permissions for Honoring Cultural Ownership in Art Education on January 15, 2020.

A - Ask elders; be aware of tokenism; engage in conversation

I - Invite and honor cultural traditions; collaborate with guest artists; connect to first hand knowledge

R - Reflect and research the culture; assess stories being told; determine the project’s intent



Image: Installation view of *Dripping Earth: Cannupa Hanska Luger* in The Joslyn's Temporary Exhibition Galleries. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025



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ABOUT THE ARTIST



Image: Cannupa Hanska Luger with *Nuxbaagaʔihdia: To Go Forth*, 2024-25, from the series *Future Ancestral Technologies*, made from repurposed afghan blanket, industrial wool remnants, and yarn. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025

Cannupa Hanska Luger's work combines creativity, storytelling, and community. Born on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, he is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold and is Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Lakota. This exhibition takes its title from Luger's Hidatsa clan, the Awa xee (Dripping Dirt), who over-saw the repair of earth lodge dwellings. A trained ceramicist, Luger cites his application of clay as a natural extension of his lodge-building forebears' labor and care for their communities.

Luger uses many materials and methods—including sculpture, video, performance, and public art—to explore how we care for one another, the land, and our shared future. His art sometimes invites community members to collaborate, helping them imagine new ways to connect to one another. The artist's work is included in several major museum collections across the United States and around the world. Luger lives and works from his studio in Glorieta, New Mexico, where he develops projects that celebrate Indigenous knowledge, collaboration, and creativity.



Image: Luger in his studio with ceramic head for *A Nation*, 2025, in progress for *Dripping Earth: Cannupa Hanska Luger*. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025