

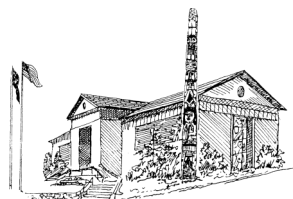
# TOTEM POLE

ORAL NARRATIVE IN ART FORM

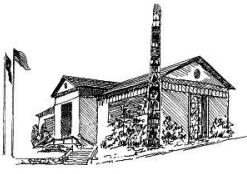


A JUNEAU-DOUGLAS CITY MUSEUM  
PLACE-BASED HISTORY KIT

GRADE 1-3



DEVELOPMENT OF THIS EDUCATION KIT FOR THE JUNEAU-DOUGLAS CITY  
MUSEUM WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE ALASKA STATE MUSEUM GRANT-IN-AID PROGRAM.



## Juneau-Douglas City Museum

# Totem Pole

## Oral Narrative in Art Form

**GRADE: 1-3**



### KIT INCLUDES:

- Lesson Guide
- Photographs
- Adze
- Model Totem Pole
- Oral Narrative of Gonokadeit
- Background info for teacher
- Books: *Heroes & Heroines Tlingit-Haida Legends*; *The Woman Carried Away by Killer Whales*; *Tlingit Wood Carving: How to Carve a Tlingit Tray* by Richard Beasley.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Scissors
- Red, blue, black and brown colored pencils or crayons
- Glue Sticks

### KIT DESCRIPTION:

Students will be introduced to the creation of totem poles and the significance behind the art.

Students will hear an oral narrative and link it to a totem pole that re-tells the story through art.

Students will create their own totem pole on paper that tells a story.

### VOCABULARY:

- Totem Pole
- Kooteeyaa
- Oral Narrative
- Form Line

### STANDARDS:

### CONTENT CONNECTIONS:

Social Studies  
History  
Tlingit Culture  
Language Arts

### OBJECTIVES: Students will...

- Listen to oral narratives,
- Identify images on a totem pole that retell the oral narrative,
- Create their own totem pole that tells their own story,
- Take a walking tour to observe the actual totem pole that retells the story they heard.

### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA: Students will be able to answer:

- Did you learn something new? What?
- Did this experience change how you think about the topic?
- Is this something you can use in the future?

### PREPARE: For Lesson One:

1 Tlingit Oral Narrative Review Sheet per student  
1 Gonakadeit Pole Coloring Sheet per student  
Red, blue, black & brown colored pencils or crayons  
Have ready model totem pole & totem pole photos  
Gonakadeit oral narrative for teacher  
Laminated Gonokadeit Totem Pole Drawing

### PREPARE: For Lesson Three:

1 Personal Totem Pole Sheet per student  
1 Formline Animals Sheet per student

### PREPARE: For Lesson Two:

Watch online videos and have ready to show  
Have ready photo of carver  
Have ready model adze  
Have ready pictures of form line shapes

## LESSON ONE: Introduction to Totem Poles (60 minutes split into two 30 minute sessions)

### Day 1) ENCOUNTER: (10 minutes)

1) **Access Student Prior Knowledge:** Ask students the following questions and discuss:

- Have you ever seen Tlingit art? What was it like?
- Have you ever seen a totem pole? What was it like?
- What do you think a totem pole is?

2) **Ask, Discuss, Explain:**

**Ask:** *Do you know the Tlingit word for totem pole?*

**Explain:** The Tlingit people call totem poles **kooteeyaa**. (Have students say kooteeyaa.). If you saw a Tlingit village a long time ago, the first thing you would see are tall totem poles, or kooteeyaa, perched along the shore. Long ago, all permanent villages had several kooteeyaa at the beach. Today we see totem poles as beautiful artwork. But to the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian tribes of Southeast, Alaska, totem poles mean many different things:

**Ask:** *What do you think a totem pole means?* Let children share their ideas and then explain:

Totem poles tell clan stories so they are not forgotten.

Totem poles can tell about things that happened a very long time ago.

Some totem poles are the final resting place of clan leaders.

**Ask:** *What might you see on a totem pole?* Let children share their ideas and then explain:

You might see humans, animals or supernatural forms.

You might see clan crests like raven, eagle, wolf, frog, brown bear, killer whale, thunderbird and salmon. Discuss clan crests.

3) **Pass around the photos of totem poles. Students silently observe.**

**Ask:** What types of images do you **see** in the photos? (Animal crests)

**Ask:** What do you **think** these images represent? (People, animals, spirits, a story)

### ENGAGE: (20 minutes)

**Read or tell the story of Gonakadeit** (For a longer version see “Heroes and Heroines Tlingit and Haida Legends” by Mary Beck)

1) **Before Reading Explain:** Some totem poles tell stories and now you will get to hear a story of one totem pole. Pay close attention to the characters in the story, what happens, and how it ends. When we are done hearing this story, we will look at a drawing of the totem pole and try to identify the parts of the story.

2) **Read or tell the story of Gonakadeit**

3) **After Reading Hand out the Tlingit Oral Narrative Review Sheet.**

Discuss the story with students (What happened? Who are the characters?)

Read each question on the review sheet out loud one at a time.

Have students write down answers as you go.

### ENGAGE Part 2: (20 minutes): Show the long laminated Gonokadeit Pole, Wrangell

**Ask:** *What images do you see?*

**Starting at the top:** point to each part of the totem pole drawing and ask: *What part of the story do you think that represents?*

**Have students color the Gonokadeit totem pole using traditional colors**

**Explain:** Now you get a chance to color the totem pole. We are only going to be able to use four different colors; brown, black, red and blue/green. **Ask:** Why do you think we should only use these colors? (they are the traditional colors made from salmon eggs, charcoal, inner bark or lime stone)

## **REFLECT:** (10 minutes)

Have students look at the totem poles they colored and discuss the following:

- What are totem poles made from?
- What types of images are usually carved on totem poles?
- What do these images represent?
- What does a totem pole do?

Have student respond to the following question in writing journals:

What is one thing you learned about totem poles today?

## **EXTEND:**

**Make and use traditional paints:** If you have access to salmon eggs, charcoal, inner bark or lime stone, you can recreate the traditional paints used by the southeast tribes to paint totem poles and other carvings. The instructions to do so are in the book titled, *Tlingit Wood Carving: How to Carve a Tlingit Tray* by Richard Beasley.

## **LESSON TWO: How Totem Poles are Made (30 Minutes)**

### **ENCOUNTER:** (10 minutes)

**Pass around the model totem pole. Remind students to handle gently**

**2) Access Student Prior Knowledge:** Ask students the following questions and discuss:

- Have you ever seen a totem pole being made?
- How do you think totem poles are made?

**3) Explain the steps involved with making a totem pole:**

- A carver finds the right sized red Cedar tree
- There is a ceremony to show respect and give appreciation to the tree and the tree spirits.
- The tree is then cut down and moved to a carving place
- The carver starts chipping away at the wood to start creating images.
- It takes a very long time to remove the excess wood, one chip at a time.
- The carver uses a tool called an **adze**.
- Once the totem pole is completely carved it is painted. Traditional colors used were black, red and turquoise.

**4) Show the picture of a carver using an adze:**

**Explain:** One of the most important tools a carver uses is called an adze. An adze is a cutting tool similar to an axe and is used for smoothing or carving wood. Adzes are used to make many things (bowls, canoes, masks, totem poles).

**Pass around the adze** so students can make observations about the tool. Explain that this adze is not sharp so it is safe to pass around. A real adze would be very sharp.

**Show images of clan crests & formline shapes** and discuss how the crests/animals are created with **formline** design elements (Ovoids, U shapes, S shapes, T shapes).

### **ENGAGE:** (10 minutes)

**Show students online videos:** These short videos show totem pole carving as well as the significance behind totem poles and the raising and celebration that follows. Links to the videos:

**Klawock Pole Raising Documentary**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dh2YPig1KZo>

**National Geographic Kids. Canada: Totem Poles | Are We There Yet?**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP-eV\\_-yWuo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP-eV_-yWuo)

**REFLECT: (10 minutes)** Have student respond to the following question in writing journals:

- What is one other thing you learned about totem poles today?

## LESSON THREE: Oral Narrative in Art Form Part One (45 Minutes)

### ENCOUNTER (15 minutes)

**Read Aloud:** *The Woman Carried Away by Killer Whales*

**1) Before Reading Explain:** We are going to hear another story about a totem pole. This one comes from the Haida people. (Haida are called Kaigani. Their culture is related to the cultures of the neighboring Tlingit and Tsimshian. The Haida people live at the southern end of Southeast Alaska and in British Columbia).

**2) During Reading:** Point out the totem poles in the story

**3) After Reading:** Show the photo of the Haida Totem Pole located at the City Museum. **Explain:** Now let's look at a Haida style totem pole. This one is called Sa'wan and the First Halibut Hook. It is located outside of the Juneau Douglas City Museum downtown. This totem pole was carved by John Wallace in the 1940's. This totem pole tells the story of a Tlingit shaman named Sa'wan who created and developed the Lingit style halibut hook.

### ENGAGE: (20 minutes)

Hand out the Personal Totem Pole sheet and the formline animals sheet. Read the instructions to students and help them complete the activity. Encourage students to pick 5 formline animals to tell their own story. Have each student color the 5 formline designs, cut them out, and glue them to the tree trunk on their Personal Totem Pole sheet. To complete the Personal Totem Pole sheet, students will write the (lingit) name of each animal they chose and why they chose that animal.

When all the students have completed their personal totem pole, allow time to share with the group. Have them tell the story of their totem pole or they can name the animals they chose and why.

**REFLECT: (10 minutes)** Have student respond to the following question:

- What do totem poles do? (tell stories, identify clan lineage and ownership)

## LESSON FOUR: Oral Narrative in Art Form Part Two (45 Minutes)

### Extension

Retell the story of Gonokadeit. After the story show a picture of the actual totem pole and ask students if they can identify images from the story.

Ask students what the image might represent or how it might tell a part of the story.

Hearing the stories again may seem repetitive, but traditionally oral narratives were told many times so that the learner could be able to retell the story for future generations.

### Extension

Have the students complete a Lingit Oral Narrative Review Worksheet. If necessary, have an open discussion to help facilitate.

Take a walking tour to the State office Building, main Lobby and the Juneau Douglas City Museum to see the totem poles in person.

Ask students if they can identify the images or recall parts of the totem.

Have them complete the Totem Pole Observation Log for each totem pole visited.

## For the Teacher: Information about Totem Poles

The Lingit people called totem poles *kooteeyaa*. If you were approaching a traditional Lingit village, the first thing you would notice are the tall standing totem poles perched along the shore. All permanent villages had several totem poles at the beach. Today we see them as beautiful artwork, but to the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian tribes of Southeast, they hold deep meaning. They can document clan stories, describe historical events and some are even the final resting place of clan leaders.

A totem pole typically features symbolic and stylized human, animal, and supernatural forms. Common crests include the raven, eagle, wolf, frog, brown bear, killerwhale, thunderbird and salmon. It's important to know that the names of clans do not translate as the name of the animal. Just like each State in the US has their own flag to represent their area and boundaries. The lingit clan's have images of animals that represent their clans and the areas they occupy. (Show images of clan crests). The lingit artistic interpretation of animals are created with formline. They use ovoids, U shapes, S shapes, and T shapes to recreate an image in this style format.

Totem poles are made from Red Cedar and Yellow Cedar trees. The size of a totem can range from 9 feet to about 55 feet in height. A master carver would find the right size tree for the totem he wanted to create. The Tlingit believe everything had a spirit, including the trees. Before they would cut down a tree, there would be a ceremony to show respect and give appreciation to the tree and the spirits.

Once he has cut it down and moved it to it's carving place, they must start planning the particular size of the crest and space of the tree they'll use. The carvers would then have to start chipping away at the log of wood to start creating these images through their vision. This process would take a very long time to remove the excess wood, one chip at a time. The tool used was called an adze.

One of the most important tools a carvers uses is called an adze. An adze is a cutting tool similar to an axe but with the cutting edge perpendicular to the handle rather than parallel. They have been used since the stone age. Adzes are used for smoothing or carving wood in hand woodworking. Two basic forms of an adze are the hand adze—a short handled tool swung with one hand—and the foot adze—a long handled tool capable of powerful swings using both hands, the cutting edge usually striking at foot or shin level.

Many northwest coast tribes traditionally used adzes for both functional construction (from bowls to canoes) and art (from masks to totem poles). Northwest coast adzes take two forms: hafted and D-handle. The hafted form is constructed from a natural crooked branch which approximately forms a 60% angle. The thin end is used as the handle and the thick end is flattened and notched such that an adze iron can be lashed to it. The smaller sizes are typically much lighter such that they can be used for the detailed smoothing, shaping and surface texturing required for figure carving.

To get a visual of totem pole carving. The following two links can be used to show students the process of carving a totem pole, the significance behind the pole, the raising and celebration that follows.

### **Klawock Pole Raising Documentary**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dh2YPig1KZo>

### **National Geographic Kids. Canada: Totem Poles | Are We There Yet?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP-eV-yWuo>