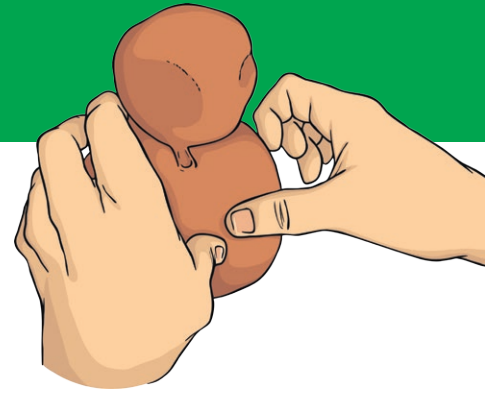




Take it Outside: Summer

Tree Spirits



Introduction

In the story of Green Willow, Tomotada loved the wild world around him. The ancient Japanese folk religion, Shinto, believes in respect for the world and believes in 'kami' or spirits. Kami are better thought of as elements of nature. How do you feel when you are outside in the fresh air? What does it feel like to touch a leaf or a tree? Listen - what do hear? This activity will help you get closer to nature and create your very own tree spirit.

You will need:

- a tree or piece of bark (a flat surface would do);
- clay or mud (salt dough works well too);
- a selection of natural items to create a tree spirit 'face'.

Key Questions

- How will you mould you clay or mud? Can you change the consistency to make it more malleable?
- How will you tree spirit look? Kind? Camouflaged? Fierce?
- Awaken your senses - how does it feel/smell/sound?
- Will you hide your tree spirit or make it obvious to passers-by?

What to do:

1. Take a walk outside to find the perfect tree for your tree spirit.
2. Where will you create the 'face'? At head height? At the foot of the tree?
3. Use a mud mixture or some clay and add this to the tree trunk. Mould it into the shape you want for your tree spirit's face.
4. Collect grass, feathers, sticks, stones, moss, leaves and any other fallen treasure from the ground. And them to the face of your tree spirit. What features will you add? Eyes, hair, horns, teeth, a wart?!
5. Once finished, look at the other tree spirits that have been created. Talk about similarities and differences. Encourage children to ask questions about their friends' designs.



6. As you have used natural materials, the tree spirits can stay as guardians of your outdoor space for you to revisit.

Ways to Support

Get children talking! Share ideas, ask for help, give advice and talk your way through the activity.

Ways to Extend

Create a story behind the expression you give your tree spirit. Explain your design to a friend. If your tree spirit could speak, what would it say?

Curriculum Links

Art: Improve mastery of art and design techniques such as sculpture.