

# Pottery

## Materials:

Self-hardening clay, such as Marbled	
Pottery tools	Newspaper
Wire	Water jars
Paint, Tempera or Acrylic	Paintbrushes
Pallets or paper plates	Paper towels

## Vocabulary:

Kiln	Glaze	Pinch
Firing	Scoring	Slab
Palette	Texture	Coil
Pattern	Rhythm\repetition	Potter's Wheel

## Set up:

- Divide the clay in to approximately 1.5 pound chunks by pulling a wire through the clay. A 25 pound hunk of clay divides nicely into sixteen 1.56 pound pieces.
- If time and resources allow, create a small example of three of the vessel making procedures - **pinch**, **slab**, **coil** and thrown on a **potter's wheel**.
- Research the society or culture that you would like to relate this project to. Be prepared to lead a discussion in pottery shapes, uses and surface details.

## Session one:

- Discuss the history of pottery and how it relates to the culture being studied. Discuss uses, shapes and surface details.
- Discuss various ways to create a vessel - pinch, slab, coil and on a wheel. If possible show an example of each.
- Demonstrate how to prepare the clay. Stand on the corners of two sheets of newspaper. Throw a 1.5 pound piece of clay onto the newspaper. Repeat this move twenty times. It should land on a different side each time so as to keep its general shape. Discourage making it into a pancake because it is easy to fold air bubbles back into the clay when reshaping it into a ball. The purpose is to soften the clay and to remove and air bubbles from the clay. Explain that if this clay was to be **fired** in a **kiln**, an air bubble left in the clay would cause the piece to crack during firing, or worse, explode. Most potters knead

the clay on a hard steady surface to remove the air bubbles. Not all children have this upper body strength, so this technique is employed.

- Distribute clay and newspaper to the students. Remind them, only if necessary, that the clay is to be thrown only onto the newspaper. When the clay is ready, have the students form the clay into a ball. Have them press it with the strength of their arms not their hands.
- Demonstrate the basic technique of pinching the clay.
  - Push your thumb into the ball up to the bases of your thumb. With your fingers on the outside of the ball, pinch and pull the clay upward. Proceed with this movement around the ball until the ball starts to resemble a small cup. Continue to pinch and pull the clay into the desired shape. Make sure all cracks and crevices are smoothed over.
  - Water can be used to smooth the surface of the vessel and to mend cracks. Too much water will "water log" the piece and make the clay difficult to work with. If this happens, blot out the excess water and let the piece dry for a few minutes.
  - Handles can be attached by **scoring** the surface of the pot and the handle, lightly dab both surfaces with water then press together. Handles will be decorative and not strong enough to hold the weight of the vessel.
  - Pottery tools, forks, butter knives, screening or other items can be used to decorate the surface with different **textures**.
- Have the students create a vessel of their choice.
- When the vessel is complete, have the students sign the bottom. Let the clay dry for 48 hours in a well ventilated area out of direct sunlight and heat. Do not let the pots dry too quickly, as it will cause the clay to crack.
- Have the students help clean up.

### **Session two:**

The pots can be painted when they are completely dry.

- Review the previous lesson and discuss surface designs. How are these images similar or different from images used on pottery from other cultures? Discuss the possible meanings and significance of the **symbols, designs** and **images**. Discuss **rhythm, repetition** and **pattern**. Show a finished piece of pottery and have them examine the **glaze**. Discuss glazes and the process glazing. Glazing is a glass bases paint with different minerals that change colors when fired in the kiln.

- Distribute paintbrushes, palettes/paper plates and pots. Have each student choose a “palette” of two or three colors only for their pot.

Tip: to create a straight line around the pot, use a rubber band around the pot as a guideline.

Tip: Paint the outside of the pot first, so you can place your hand inside to hold it up. Then paint the interior.

- Let the pots dry completely. The pots can not be used for holding water or food. Tempera paint is not permanent and will smear or run if it is wet.
- Have the students help clean up.

### **Illinois State Standards**

25.A.2d - Identify and describe the elements of 2- and 3-dimensional space, figure ground, value and form; the principles of rhythm, size, proportion and composition; and the expressive qualities of symbols and story.

26.A.2e - Describe the relationships among media, tools/technology and processes.

26.A.2f - Understand the artistic processes of printmaking, weaving, photography and sculpture.

26.B.2d - Demonstrate knowledge and skills to create works of visual art using problem solving, observing, designing, sketching and construction.

27.B.2 - Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.