

Clay > Issaquah Schools Foundation

 isfdn.org/clay-reference-page



Clay is a material made from small particles of weathered rock that can be manipulated when it is soft and wet then permanently hardens under extreme heat.

Clay is one of the oldest building materials used by man. Many cultures have hundreds, even thousands of years of practice in creating works of clay. People often find ways of making even common things beautiful. Works can be made by hand shaping methods, using molds, compressed through an extruder or on a wheel.

Since it is found everywhere, almost all ancient cultures used clay to make storage pots, housing, or utensils. Clay is very small particles of weathered rock. When wet, it can be sculpted, molded, carved and thrown. Clay changes its chemical makeup when it is fired and becomes like stone. It lasts for thousands of years, which provides us with a record of civilizations and human existence.

No other earth material has so wide an importance or such extended uses as do clays. They are used in a wide variety of industries.

- In the soil, clay provides porosity, aeration, and water retention and are a reservoir of potassium oxide, calcium oxide, and even nitrogen.
- As building materials, bricks (baked and as adobe) have been used in construction since earliest time.
- Clay materials have a wide variety of uses in engineering.
- Earth dams are made impermeable to water by adding clay materials to porous soil; water loss in canals may be reduced by adding clay.

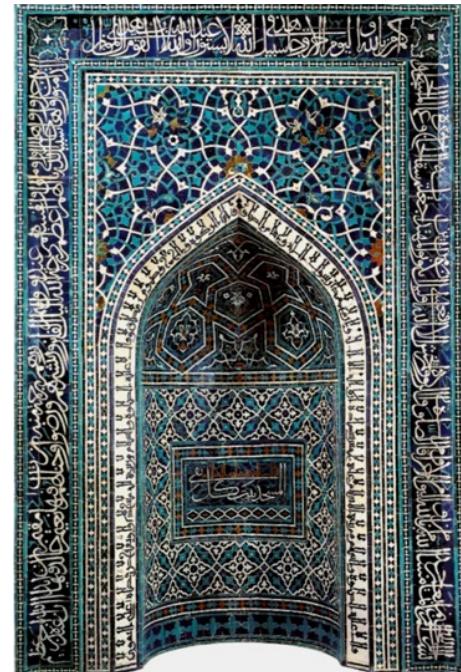
Glazes, which are like liquid glass that is melted onto the clay as it is fired, can enhance the beauty, add decoration to the design and seal the surface so that water stays in or out. Some Asian cultures have long histories creating this art form, therefore a lot of the examples below are Asian. Show these images to students and have them guess the creation date to show how amazing even early cultures were at using clay.

Sample Projects:

- View [ALL K-5 CLAY LESSONS](#) from Issaquah Schools Foundation.

- [Sunflower Bowls](#) (Kindergarten) art lesson.
- [Color Wheel Magic](#) (1st Grade) art lesson using air-dry clay.
- [Textures in Clay](#) (1st Grade) art lesson.
- [Ceramic Beetles](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Clay Leaf Bowls](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Clay Owls](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Hoffman Taco Dragon](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Rooster Wall Pocket](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Art Nouveau Ceramic Tile](#) (3rd Grade) art lesson.
- [Kimmy Cantrell Inspired Clay Portraits](#) (3rd Grade) art lesson.
- [Ceramic Pinch Pot Mugs](#) (4th Grade) art lesson.
- [Clay Pinch Pot Monsters](#) (5th Grade) art lesson.
- [Reclining Clay Figures Henry Moore Inspired](#) (5th Grade) art lesson.
- [Haida Inspired Animal Masks](#) (5th Grade) art lesson.
- Make a pinch pot (Hopi style).
- Decorate a tile or plate either by drawing into a wet slab or by painting a dry tile with glaze and firing it.
- Have a Japanese person explain or demonstrate a tea ceremony and the significance of the cups and teapot. (Or arrange to see it at the Seattle Art Museum.)

Mihrab (Iran), 1354, (ceramic mosaic tile).



Migration Pot, Fanny Nampeyo Poloacca (Hopi), 1952.

Cizhou stoneware with Tethered Bear (China), 12th c.

Devil Bank, Billy Ray Hussey (American), 1986.

Horse, Tang Dynasty (China), 8th c. earthenware.

Detail Zhaanzi Warriors (China), 210bc. Life size Terra cotta.

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