

5th Grade - Monster Pinch Pot

(two-part lesson)

Part I

Lesson Objectives

Students will solidify their skills with the hand building and the pinch and pull method with clay. They will manipulate the clay using fine motor skills which helps develop hand and finger strength and dexterity, and they will develop a deeper understanding of how applied pressure affects the behavior of the clay. Students will learn how to attach small pieces of clay together, and how to add texture and fine detail to their clay piece.

Vocabulary

- *Pottery*: Vessels like bowls, jugs and other objects made from clay.
- *Hand building*: Using hands, fingers and simple tools to shape clay.
- *Pinch pot*: A clay bowl created by pinching and manipulating clay into the desired shape.
- *Greenware or Boneware*: Unfired clay projects.
- *Bone Dry*: Completely air-dried clay.
- *Bisqueware*: Clay projects that have been fired once, without glaze.
- *Kiln*: An oven used for firing clay.
- *Fire*: To heat clay in a kiln.
- *Glaze*: Paint used to color clay; glaze turns to glass when fired in a kiln.

Project Supplies – 1st class

All supplies should be in the supply room on the clay shelves.

- Canvas table cloths (for white clay; one for each table)
- Wire cutter (to cut the clay block)
- White clay – one half of ½” slice from clay block per student
- Bamboo skewers (one per student)
- Rolling pins (one per student)
- Plastic containers with water
- Plastic forks – one per student
- Plastic knives – one per student
- Metal scrapers – one per student



Lesson Summary:

Step 1: Make a pinch pot.

Step 2: Make body parts (eyeballs, tongue, etc.).

Step 3: Attach body parts (score, slip, press, compress).

Step 4: Add texture (e.g. add dots on body using end of skewer).

Step 5: Add details (e.g. dots for taste buds, add pupils in eyes).

Instructions – 1st class

Play this step-by-step lesson video below during your class to assist you with the steps.

[Step-by-step lesson video](#)

(This video is also available to access via the Art Docent page on the PTSA site)

1. Instruct students to tear off about 1/3rd of their clay slice and set this piece aside.
2. Instruct students to use their palms to pound the rest of the clay into a ball about 3 inches in diameter. The clay ball should fit comfortably in the child's hand.
3. Have students hold the ball of clay in one hand and use the thumb of their other hand to push into the center of the clay ball.
4. Instruct students to push straight down through the ball until their thumb is about one inch away from the palm of their hand.
5. Have students start from the bottom, pinching the clay between their thumb and fingers, while slowly turning the pinch pot with the other hand.
6. They should continue to pinch and turn while gradually moving to the top. They can smooth and shape the pinch pot as desired, but they should be made aware to keep about a pencil thickness throughout the pinch pot, especially around the top.
7. Instruct students to lay the pinch pot on its side. This forms the monster's head/body. The opening of the pinch pot is its mouth.
8. Students should use the clay that was set aside to create shapes to attach to the monster's head/body. Ideas include: eyeballs, horns, teeth, tongue, tail, spikes, arms, etc. Instruct students that pieces should not be smaller than a nickel, or they risk having them break off when drying and firing in the kiln.
9. Instruct students to attach pieces by *scoring, slipping, pressing* then *compressing*. They can use a skewer to score the surface of the head/body, and of the piece they are attaching. They can then use a finger to add slip (water) to the scored surfaces. They should press the pieces together and then compress along the edges/seams using a plastic knife, a metal scraper, or a finger, to pull clay from the part they are attaching down to the part they are attaching to. This ensures pieces are attached well.
10. Instruct students to test the strength of the attached pieces by gently turning their monster over to make sure the parts do not fall off the head/body. If a piece does fall off they should score and slip and re-attach the pieces.
11. Students can add texture to their monsters
12. Instruct them to gently brush off any clay crumbs.
13. Students should use a bamboo skewer to clearly write their FIRST name and LAST initial on the bottom of their monster.
14. Have students place finished monsters into a class cardboard box that you have labelled using a clay log sheet. They will dry out on the kiln shelves for about 3 weeks before being fired in the kiln.

Clean-up Instructions

1. **Make sure to securely tie leftover clay.** To avoid hardening of the clay, ensure to tie the clay blocks or any leftover clay properly. Remove as much air as possible from the bag first.
2. **Remove cloth tablecloths** - Carefully remove excess clay bits from the cloth canvas table cloths and put this in the trash, then fold the cloth canvas tablecloths in on themselves to avoid letting clay dust into the air or on the floor. Store them back in the correct plastic tub just inside the supply room (red clay tub or white clay tub).
3. **Wipe off the table with a wet rag** - if you cannot find a rag please ask the janitor.
4. **Do not allow students to wash their hands in the sink directly**- Keep a bucket of water near the sink and have each child wash in the bucket first and then in the sink. If the clay settles at the bottom of the sink, it will clog the drain.
5. **Clean all the tools used in the bucket**- Make sure to clean all the tools used for the project in the bucket first and then in the sink.
6. **Leave the bucket of clay water overnight to settle** - After the clay settles in the bucket, discard the water carefully in the sink without disturbing the settled clay at the bottom of the bucket. This clay can be either used as a slip or be discarded in the trash. This does not have to happen the next day, but should be done ASAP.
7. *****DON'T FORGET TO LOCK UP THE KILN CAGE AND RETURN THE KEY TO THE FRONT OFFICE!!*****

TIPS

Docents are welcome to practice making a clay monster prior to teaching. Save your creation in case there are any absent children the day of the class.

Have students feel the width of their thumb; this is about how thick the walls of a fully formed pinch pot should be.

Students can use the *Score, Slip, Press, Compress* technique to join two pieces of clay together. Score the two clay pieces using a skewer or other sharp tool. Add slip to both clay pieces (water, or a pre-made clay/water mixture), press the pieces together, then use a finger or a tool to compress along the seams or edges of the clay.

If the monster body begins to crack or become brittle, the clay has been overworked. Molding should stop at the first sign of cracking. Use a little spray of water to moisten overworked clay in order to smooth it out.

Avoid small, thin shapes when creating monster parts (e.g. skinny arms, tail or antennae, or tiny teeth). Attachments should be no smaller than a nickel.

Students will have a follow-up class to glaze their clay monsters at least one month after this class is completed. Ensure this class is scheduled with your teacher and ensure that your teacher has booked the STEAM lab in advance.

Clay log sheets to attach to class cardboard boxes can be found in the front of the blue Clay Lesson Plans folder on the clay shelves in the supply room.

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Part II

Once the monsters have been fired in the kiln, they are ready to be glazed.

Glaze Supplies – 2nd class

- Paper towels
- Fired projects
- Bright glaze colors (one for each table)
- Cups or trays for glaze
- BLUE glaze brushes
- Samples of glazed projects (in the supply room)

Instructions – 2nd class

1. Set out paper towels, blue glaze brushes and a few cups of ONE color per table. Start with about $\frac{1}{4}$ " of glaze per cup. If you can find some scraps of paper in the supply room, a similar color to how the glaze will look after being fired, place those scraps of paper on the tables so that students understand which color is at each table.
2. Show examples of glazed monsters if possible and/or show some online photos. Samples may be found in the supply room.
3. Instruct students to place their monster on a paper towel and to not lift it from the towel when glazing.
4. They should rotate the towel as needed to glaze all sides of the monster.
5. Instruct students that there is one color at each table, and that there are dedicated brushes for each glaze color. **THEY SHOULD NOT MIX GLAZES.** Explain that this is so that any leftover glaze can be reused instead of thrown away. **BRUSHES SHOULD NOT GO FROM TABLE TO TABLE.**
6. Instruct students that they should walk to a different table, holding their project on a paper towel, if they want to apply a different color.
7. Let students know that if they want a deeper/brighter color, they need to apply multiple layers of the same color. They should let each application dry before applying another layer. Three thin layers of a glaze color is better than one thick layer.
8. Once a glaze color is dry, other colors can be layered on top. Remember that dark colors will prevail. Use black color sparingly.
9. Explain to students that they **SHOULD NOT GLAZE THE BOTTOM**, or $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the bottom, of their monster, because the glaze can stick to the kiln shelves when it is fired.
10. Have students leave their monsters at their places. Art docents should follow important clean-up steps below.

Clean-up Instructions

1. Check the bottom of each monster for glaze. If found, carefully wipe it off with a damp, warm sponge.
2. Place monsters into cardboard boxes (throw away paper towel). Do not stack glazed monsters on top of each other.
3. Fill out a log sheet and attach it to the cardboard box containing the monsters. You may need more than one log sheet if there are multiple boxes. Log sheets can be found in the blue Clay Lesson Plans folder on the clay shelves in the supply room.
4. Place the cardboard box(es) onto the kiln shelves in the kiln cage. monsters will be fired by the kiln team in 3-5 days once they are dry. They will be available for pickup in the supply room after being fired.
5. Return any unused glaze to the correct jar.
6. When replacing the lid on a glaze jar, make sure the rim is clean; wipe it with a damp paper towel or sponge. Otherwise the jar may glue shut. If you come across a stuck jar, run the lid under hot water to loosen it.
7. *****DON'T FORGET TO LOCK UP THE KILN CAGE AND RETURN THE KEY TO THE FRONT OFFICE!!*****