

# "The Empty Pot" Ceramic Flower Pot

Author: Karen Stubblefield

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## Basic Information

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Title         | "The Empty Pot" Floral Pinch Pots   |
| Summary       | In this lesson, students will explore the history of pottery and experiment with clay by creating a pinch pot inspired by the book <i>The Empty Pot</i> by Demi. Students will consider traditional Chinese motifs and colors during the creation of their pinch pot. |
| Grade/Level   | Grade 2   |
| Time Frame    | This lesson will take 2 full class periods, 50 minutes each.  |
| Subject(s)    | Art   |
| Modifications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Substitute with air dry clay and acrylic paints with a ModPodge "glaze."</li><li>• For younger students, a relief style vase would also suffice.</li></ul>  |

## Standards and Key Concepts

### MA- Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

Subject: Visual Arts

Strand: The Arts Disciplines

**Standard 1:** Methods, Materials, and Techniques Students will demonstrate knowledge of the methods, materials, and techniques unique to the visual arts.

**Grade PreK-4:**

**Learning Standard 1.2:**

Create artwork in a variety of two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) media, for example: 2D – drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, weaving; 3D – plastic (malleable) materials such as clay and paper, wood, or found objects for assemblage and construction

**Standard 2:** Elements and Principles of Design Students will demonstrate knowledge of the elements and principles of design.

**Grade PreK-4:**

**Learning Standard 2.2:**

For line, explore the use of line in 2D and 3D works Identify a wide variety of types of lines in the environment and in artwork  
For example, students take a walk around the school and note jagged, straight, curved, thick, and thin lines.

Strand: Connections

**Standard: 8:** Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change Students will demonstrate their understanding of the concepts of style, stylistic influence, and stylistic change by identifying when and where art works were created and by analyzing characteristic features of art works from various historical periods, cultures, and genres.

**Grade: PreK-4**

**Learning Standard:**

8.2: Identify characteristic features of the visual arts of world civilizations such as styles of ancient Egypt and Africa, China, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and the Medieval period in Europe

### Standards

### USA- NAEA National Visual Arts Standards (2012)

Grade: K – 4

**Content Standard:**

1. Content Standard: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

**Achievement Standard:**

a. know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes

**Content Standard:**

2. Content Standard: Using knowledge of structures and functions

**Achievement Standard:**

a. know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas

**Content Standard:**

4. Content Standard: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

**Achievement Standard:**

a. know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures

**Overarching Goal** The main goal is for students to experiment with clay by creating a pinch-pot vessel.

- Understandings and Lesson Objectives**
- SWBAT create a basic pinch pot.
  - SWBAT use tools for clay in a responsible manner.
  - SWBAT engrave designs inspired by traditional Chinese motifs onto their pinch pot.

- Essential Questions**
- How do artists learn from trial and error?

- Unit (Guiding) Questions**
- What is clay?
- Where does it come from?
- How can you make it harden and dry?

- Knowledge and Skills**
- Demonstrates ability to perform the pinch pot technique.
  - Designs a preliminary sketch of their intended final design.
  - Uses clay in responsible and respectful manner.
  - Recalls the basic history and origins of clay for ceramics.

## Performance Tasks and Assessment

- Performance Task/Activity**
- Students are tasked with creating their own small vessel, inspired by the book *The Empty Pot*, using the basic pinch pot method. Since this was the first time most students in this grade have used real clay, they were encouraged to first experiment with designs using white plasticine clay before finalizing their product.

- Motivation**
- Start off reading *The Empty Pot* by Demi, discuss the main themes.
  - Explain to students that they will be creating their own "empty pot" using the pinch pot method
  - Show YouTube video *How to Make a Pinch Pot*.
  - Have students experiment with pinch pot method with plasticine clay.

### Assessment/Rubrics

## Learning Experiences and Resources

- Routines**
- Meet and greet on rug
  - Introduce lesson
  - Show Powerpoint/other resources if needed
  - Ask students to share expectations and objectives before going to seats
  - Always have students write their names on their paper before continuing, check this step since there are so many kids (500 in a week), artwork will get lost if unnamed.
  - Review material usage
  - Clean up 5 minutes before class end unless:
    - If there is a story, have students clean up 15 minutes prior to accommodate the book.
  - Walk students out, give verbal reminder of next week's goals.

- Instructional Approaches**
- Multicultural-** Integrates traditional Chinese motifs and an adaptation of a Chinese fable.
- Craft-** Explores basic clay/ceramic techniques, namely the pinch pot method.
- Constructivist-** Students are encouraged to experiment with different designs to make a pinch pot that would be able to hold dirt and a seed, much like the protagonists' from *The Empty Pot*.

### Day 1

- Read *The Empty Pot* by Demi.
- Ask guiding questions:
  - What was the lesson of the story?
  - Why was the main character made emperor?
  - What if you had an empty pot to show, how would you feel?
- Tell students they will be making their own “empty pot” like the main character’s.
- Segue into *How to Make a Pinch Pot* YouTube video in Resources.
- Give brief history on clay and how it has been used for thousands of years, ask:
  - Does anyone know where clay comes from?
  - What are ways you can harden clay?
- Explain to students they will practice the pinch pot method using plasticine clay, which does not dry up, but they will use clay that does dry for their final pot.
  - Pass out a 2” x 2” clump of white plasticine clay for each student.
  - Have students practice kneading and shaping the clay using the pinch pot method.
  - Encourage students to play with the shape and height of their pots.
  - Walk around to facilitate—make sure students are on task.
- **If there is extra time, play additional videos on different pinch pots on YouTube.**
- Follow Routines for dismissal.

## Day 2

- **Before class**, have Chinese Motif handouts at each table.
- **Review** *The Empty Pot* book and what activity will be based on the story.
- Present Chinese Motifs PowerPoint
- Inform students they will be creating a design sketch of their pinch pot, integrating Chinese design motifs.
  - Perform a quick demonstration at the front table for students.
  - Draw out a rough sketch of the desired pinch pot shape (remind students that they can try to make a square shaped pot by starting off with a cube rather than sphere shaped clay) make a **front and back** sketch.
  - After drawing the pot shapes, sketch possible designs for the front/back of the “pot”
- Call up students by table to retrieve sketch paper. **Remind all students to put their names on their sketches.**
- Encourage students to make sketches on both sides of their paper. Early finishers may color in their designs with crayon in preparation for their final design.
- Follow Routines for dismissal.

## Day 3

- **Before class**, provide Chinese Motifs handout to each table.
- **Review** last week’s objectives.
- Replay *How to Make a Pinch Pot* YouTube video.
  - Reinforce pinch pot technique
  - Emphasize putting the thumb straight into the ball of the clay, then pinching outwards (Demo for students).
- **Inform students:**
  - They will practice carving their sketched designs onto the plasticine clay after they have shaped the clay into a pinch pot form using a wooden tool.
- Pass out sketches; have students retrieve a piece of white plasticine clay and wooden tool as they pick up their sketches.
- Follow Routines for dismissal.

## Day 4

- **Make sure firing clay has been divided up for 25 students.**
- **Review** with students the pinch pot technique and their actions from last week.
- Return student’s sketches; have them retrieve a piece of firing clay and a chipboard mat to roll the clay upon.
- Reiterate to students that they must finish their final designs today.
- Have students write their initials on the bottom of their pinch pots right before clean up.
- Follow Routines for dismissal.
- Teacher will fire up the pinch pots for students by next week.

## Day 5

(tempera paint wash? or glaze?)

## Sequence of Activities

## Differentiated Instruction and Adaptations

- Adaptive handtools for clay carving implements.
- Students with tactile defensiveness: allow use of gloves or switch out firing clay for Model Magic clay which does not have a residue.
- Model expectations for ELLs; check at greater frequency to ensure following of expectations.
- Provide checklist of procedures.

- Materials and resources:  
YouTube  
The Empty Pot by Demi  
Chinese Motif PowerPoint and handouts
- The number of computers required is 1.

## Resources

### Attachments:

1. **Chinese Motifs Handout.docx**
2. **Chinese Motifs.pptx**

### Links:

1. [How to Make a Pinch Pot](#)

## Materials

- white plasticine clay, 2 1/lb packs per class.
- firing clay, 50 lb
- clay carving tools, at least 30
- multicolor crayons
- black tempera paint
- gloss medium
- pencil
- paper

## Key Words / Vocabulary

- **Pinch Pot-** a simple form of hand-made pottery produced from ancient times to the present. The **pinching** method is to create pottery that can be ornamental or functional, and has been widely employed across cultures and times.
- **Kiln-** a furnace or oven for burning, baking, or drying, especially one for firing pottery.

Demi. (1990). *The Empty Pot*. New York, NY: Square Fish.

### Links:

## Appendices

1. [Chinese Clouds](#)
2. [Chinese Florals](#)
3. [Paper Cut Chinese Florals](#)
4. [Traditional Chinese Paper Motifs](#)