

## Educator Guide

### Clay Slab Animal Sculptures

#### RELATED WORK OF ART



#### [Llama Effigy](#)

Unidentified artist, Chancay culture

Peru, 1000–1470

Earthenware, slip paint

Gift of John Bourne, 2009, acc. no. 2009.20.49

#### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource includes instructions to make a slab animal sculpture inspired by the *Llama Effigy*, 2009.20.49. This resource is recommended for Elementary School students and Visual Arts subjects. Students will use traditional or air-dry clay to create sculptures inspired by animals that are important to them. This lesson connects to the creating and responding aspects of the artistic process, including organizing and developing artistic ideas and describing feelings and ideas experienced through the artmaking process. These suggestions were informed by the Maryland State Department of Education 2024 standards.

This resource contains both instructions for the educator (pp. 1–10) and instructions for the student (pp. 11–18).

## INTRODUCTION

This activity can be completed with either traditional clay or air-dry clay. If you are using either traditional or air-dry clay, steps 1–5 and 11 are the same. Please note that there are specific instructions for air-dry and traditional clay in steps 6–10.

Educator instructions are on pages 1–11. Student instructions are on pages 11–18.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

*For traditional clay:*

- Approximately a baseball-sized amount of clay for each student (approx. 1 lb)
- Glaze (note: make sure the glaze you use is compatible with the type of clay selected and the recommended firing temperature)
- Paintbrushes
- Kiln
- Slip or water

*For air-dry clay:*

- Each student will need approximately a baseball-sized amount of air-dry clay. This can be all one color, or it could be made up of many colors of air-dry clay.
  - If you are using multiple colors of air-dry clay, please note that students will need more of one color to use as the base for their artwork. This color will be the main color of the animal they pick.
- Acrylic paint, paintbrushes, and cups for rinsing brushes in between colors (optional; use if you have a single color of air-dry clay)

*Additional materials:*

- Image of *Llama Effigy* (note: you may choose to print p. 1 of this resource or project an image of the artwork, which can be [downloaded here](#))
- Scrap paper that is at least 8.5x11 inches
- Pencil or pen
- Clay tools
  - Rolling pin
  - Clay smoothing tools, such as wooden, metal, or plastic ribs
  - Clay cutting tools, such as wooden knives, fettling knives, needle tools, plastic knives, or other tools that can be used to cut clay
  - Sculpting tools
  - Dried out pen (if you do not have access to blunt tipped sculpting tools). (Pencils may be used for air-dry clay as well.)

## MATERIALS NEEDED FOR CLEAN-UP

- Water
- Soap
- Paper towels
- Sponge

## EDUCATOR LESSON STEPS

1. Tell students they will be making clay sculptures of animals that are important to them. Invite students to share different reasons why animals may be important to people (e.g., pets, sources of food, transportation, recreation, characters in stories).

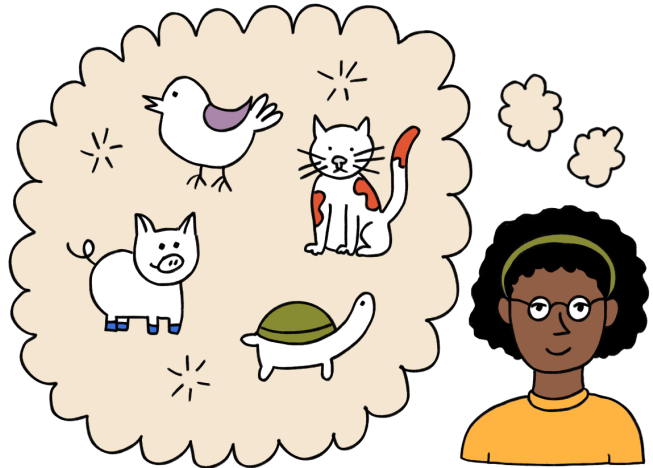
Show students an image of the Llama **Effigy**. Inform students that llamas were very important to the ancient **Chancay** people of Peru, both in their everyday life and spiritually. The Chancay people used llamas to help them carry goods up and down mountains, and they kept llamas as animal companions. Llamas showed up in their **mythology** and the fabrics they made. The Chancay people also made vessels like this one, which were buried in **tombs** to assist ancestors in the afterlife.



2. Invite students to pick an animal that is most important to them for their artworks. Have them answer the questions below:

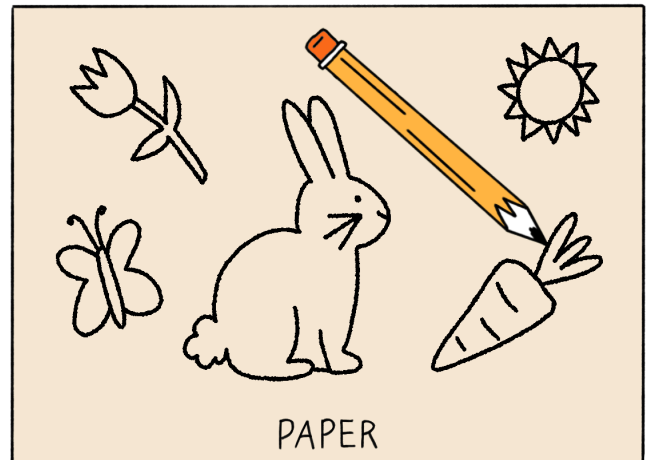
- What animals do you see most often?
- What animals do you or your family spend time with?
- What animal would you like to have as a friend or could help you in your everyday life?
- What animals are in your favorite books or shows?

Once students have selected their animal, have each student create a simple sketch of their animal using outlines only. For a baseball-sized amount of clay, the sketch should be about the size of a student's hand.



3. After students select their animal, invite them to consider one or two details they will add to make their animal sculptures unique. To help students brainstorm, have them respond to the questions below and sketch their ideas on their piece of paper:

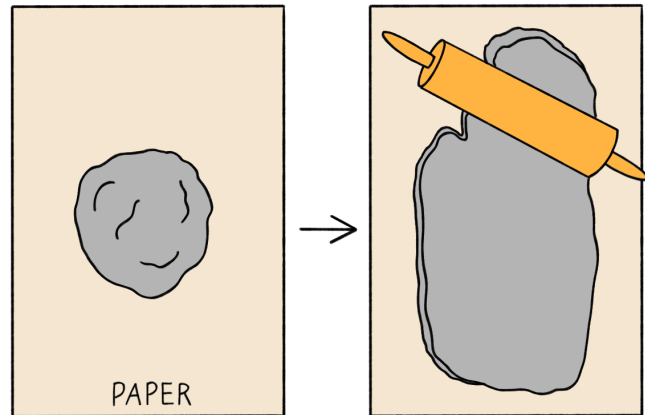
- If the animal lives with or near you, what do you like to do with it? If the animal is a character, what does it like to do? Think of games, toys, or activities.
- What foods does this animal like? If you could make a treat for this animal what would you make for it?
- What does this animal's home look like? For example, does this animal live in the jungle around trees, vines, and flowers; on a mountain surrounded by rocks and snow; or in your home?



4. Each student will receive a piece of traditional or air-dry clay. If your class is using air-dry clay that comes in multiple colors, ask each student what color they want most of their animal sculpture to be. For example, if a student wants to make a tiger, distribute orange clay for this first step. Details like black stripes or a pink nose will be added later.

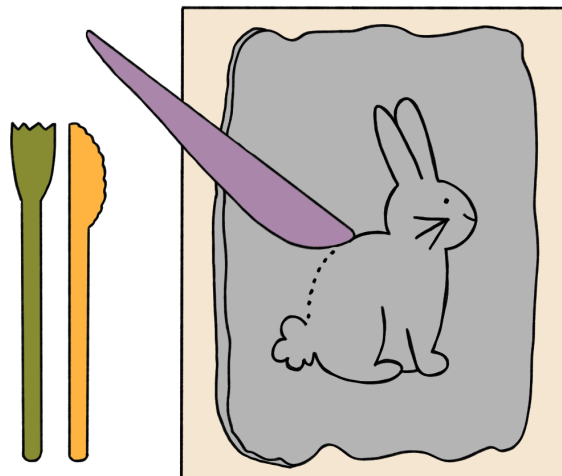
Give each student a piece of clay about the size of a baseball and lay it in the center of a piece of paper that is at least 8.5 x 11 inches. Note: The paper keeps the clay from sticking to the table and acts as a support when the clay is ready to be picked up and moved to another surface to dry.

Using either their hands or a rolling pin, have students flatten the ball of clay until it is a little thicker than their finger or about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch thick throughout, making sure the slab is large enough that the students' sketch fits on it, without any part hanging over the edge.



5. Have students use their paper sketch as a reference to recreate their sketch onto their rolled out clay using a clay tool (e.g. a wooden knife, blunt tipped sculpting tool, or dried out pen). Students can use their clay tool like a pencil, making sure not to cut all the way through the clay. If they need to redraw any lines, the lines can be “erased” by taking a smooth clay tool and swiping it across the surface of the clay, going side to side and pinching the cracks back together, similar to how one might smooth out cracks in pie dough.

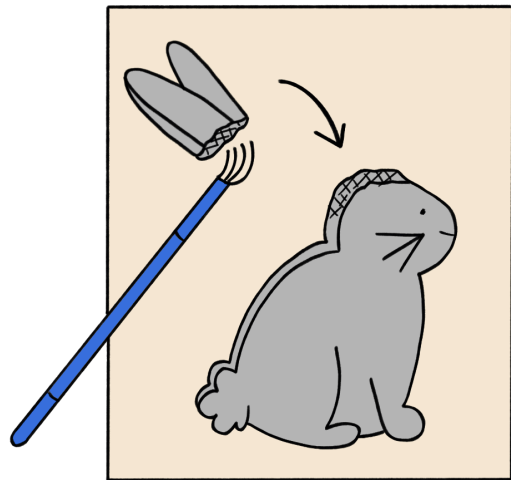
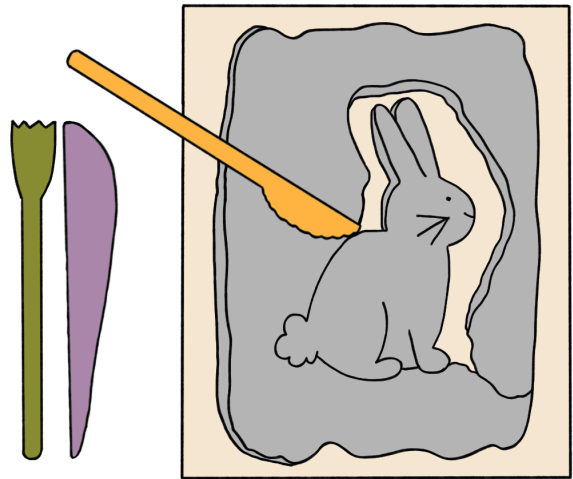
Note: If students are struggling to re-draw the animal outlines on the clay, have students lay their sketch on top of the clay, making sure the drawing doesn't extend over the edge of the slab. If needed, tell students to roll out their clay until the drawing fits on top of the piece of clay. Then using a clay tool (e.g., a wooden knife, blunt tipped sculpting tool, or dried out pen), they will trace over the drawing on the paper. Press firmly enough that the tool being used leaves an indent in the clay, but not so much that you cut through the paper. Once the entire drawing has been traced over, students will remove the paper to reveal the drawing on the clay. If students pressed too lightly and they are having trouble seeing their drawing, they can trace over it again with a clay tool, pressing deeper to reinforce the lines.



If students feel that they have messed up and want to redraw lines, the lines can be “erased” by taking a smooth clay tool and swiping it across the surface of the clay, going side to side and pinching the cracks back together, similar to how you might smooth out cracks in pie dough.

6. Once students have drawn the design of their animal onto their clay, using a clay tool meant for cutting (e.g., wooden knife, fettling knife, needle tool, plastic knife, or other tool that can be used to cut clay), have them remove the extra clay around their animal while keeping the clay animal cutout on the paper.

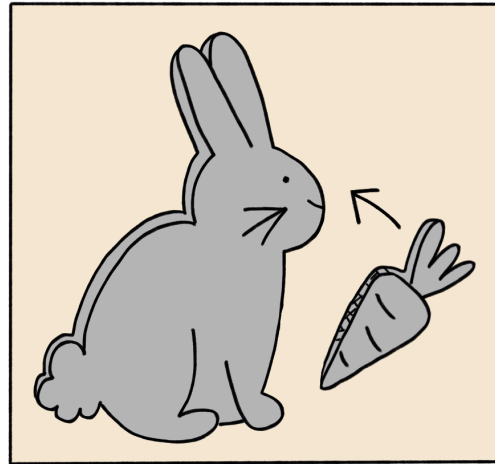
Note: If a student accidentally cuts off a piece of air-dry clay, you can reattach the piece by gently squishing it back into place, making sure to smooth away any cracks. If you are using traditional clay, **slip and score** the pieces back together before smoothing out any cracks. Slipping and scoring involves scratching the surface of the two pieces of clay you plan to attach together, where they will be attached, then adding a small amount of slip (a mixture of clay and water) over the scratched areas before pressing the two pieces of clay together. Slipping and scoring will act like glue in holding the two pieces together while it dries and is **fired** in the kiln.



7. Invite students to add one or two additional details by sculpting shapes using their hands or sculpting tools or by cutting out more flat shapes, similar to the process in steps 5 and 6.

When you are attaching two pieces of traditional clay together, make sure to press the two pieces together firmly and if needed, slip and score.

If you are using multiple colors of air-dry clay, this would be the time to add details in different colors. For example, if making a tiger, students could sculpt a pink nose or use black clay to create stripes.



8. Once students have completed sculpting their animals, have them set the paper with the clay on top aside to dry completely.

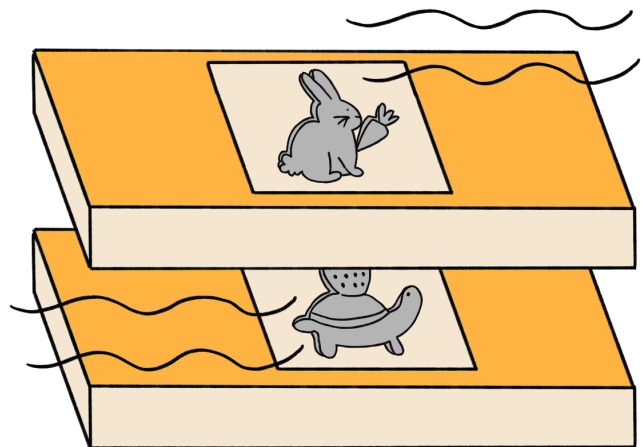
**Traditional clay:**

Once students' artwork made of traditional clay has dried completely, it is time for the bisque firing.

**Air-dry clay:**

Once the air-dry clay has dried completely, it can be painted with acrylic paint, or left as is. Once complete, skip to step 11.

A good way to test if any kind of clay has dried completely is to see if it feels cool to the touch. If it feels cool it means there is moisture left and you should let it keep drying. Depending on the type of clay, and the humidity and temperature of where you are, this can take several days.



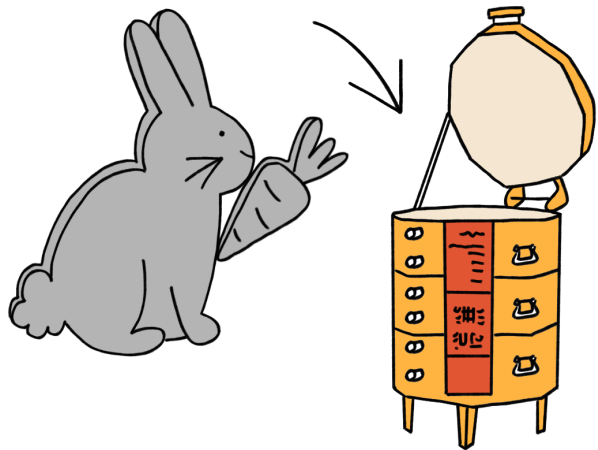


9. Steps 9 and 10 are for traditional clay only. If you used air-dry clay, skip to step 11.

**Bisque firing:**

Once your clay is dry, carefully slide the paper out from underneath the artwork before loading it into your kiln. Then please follow the firing instructions for your kiln and clay.

**Bisque firing** a clay artwork before it dries dramatically increases the chance the artwork will crack or break during the firing. This is because the heat of the kiln causes any remaining moisture in the clay to become steam. If any steam is trapped in the clay, it will rise out of the clay, which can cause the artwork to crack or even explode.



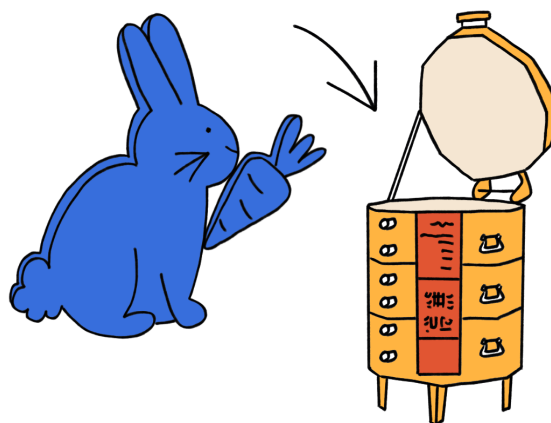
10. Once students' work has come out of the kiln, it's time for their artwork to be **glazed**. Before you begin glazing artwork, make sure that the glaze you have is compatible with the clay you have, meaning they can both be fired at the same temperature, and that your kiln can be fired to that temperature.

Make sure to follow the application instructions for your glaze, including how to apply the glaze and how many coats to apply.

Once students have finished glazing their artwork, have them set it aside for you to load it back in the kiln for the **glaze firing**.



When glazing, instruct students not to apply glaze to anywhere that touches the table when they set their project down. If glaze is applied to the bottom of an artwork, remove the glaze by wiping it off with a damp sponge before placing it in the kiln to be fired. If there is glaze anywhere the ceramic item touches the kiln shelf, the glaze will act like a glue and will attach the artwork to the kiln shelf.

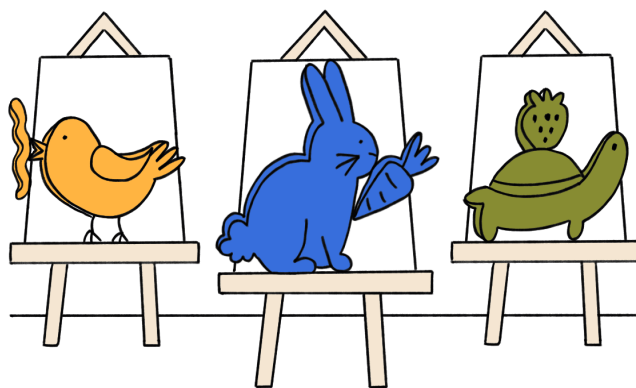


## 11. Gallery Walk

When all projects are done, take some time for a gallery walk! In this exercise, have all students place their artwork on display somewhere in the room. Then give students a few minutes to walk around the room to appreciate and experience each other's artwork.

Direct students to respond to the questions below, either as a group or individually:

- Why did you choose your animal?
- What did you notice about the animals others chose?
- What did you notice about the details others added to their animal?
- What did you wonder about while looking at others' artwork?
- What part of your animal are you most proud of? Why?
- What do you want to name your animal?



## Student Guide

### Clay Slab Animal Sculptures

#### RELATED WORK OF ART



#### OVERVIEW

This resource includes instructions to make a ceramic slab sculpture of an animal that is important to you. This project is inspired by *Llama Effigy*, a sculpture made in Peru in 1000–1470.

#### [Llama Effigy](#)

Unidentified artist, Chancay culture

Peru, 1000–1470

Earthenware, slip paint

Gift of John Bourne, 2009, acc. no. 2009.20.49

## STUDENT LESSON STEPS

1. In this project, you will make a sculpture of an animal that is important to you. Certain animals are meaningful to a particular culture for a variety of reasons. For example, llamas were very important to the ancient **Chancay** people of Peru.

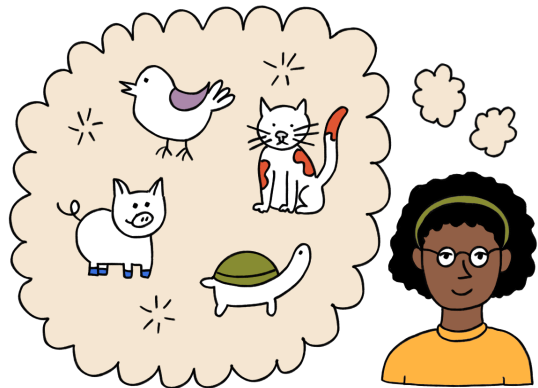
The Chancay people used llamas to help them carry goods up and down mountains, and they kept llamas as animal companions. Llamas showed up in their **mythology** and the fabrics they made. The Chancay people also made vessels like this one, which were buried in **tombs** to assist ancestors in the afterlife.



2. Consider which animals are most important to you. To figure out what animal you would like to make, answer the questions below:

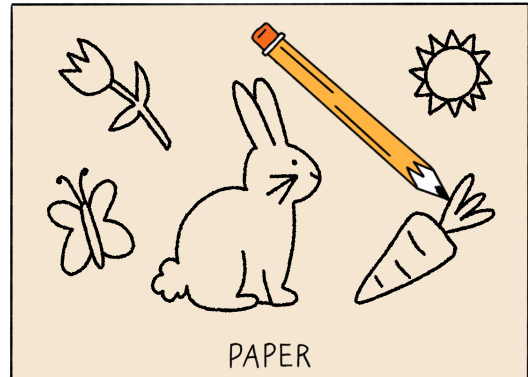
- What animals do you see most often?
- What animals do you or your family spend time with?
- What animal would you like to have as a friend or could help you in your everyday life?
- What animals are in your favorite books or shows?

Once you have selected your animal, create a simple sketch of your animal using outlines only. It should be about the size of your hand.



3. Now it's time to figure out which details to add to make your sculpture unique. To help you brainstorm, answer the following questions:

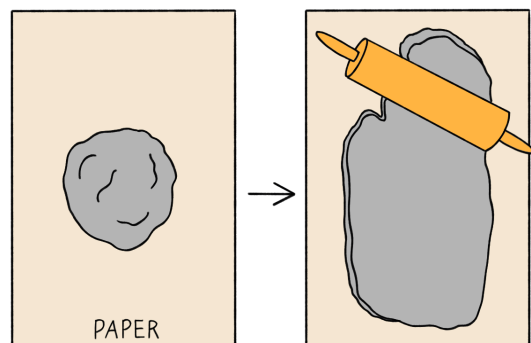
- If the animal lives with or near you, what do you like to do with it? If the animal is a character, what does it like to do? Think of games, toys, or activities.
- What foods does this animal like? If you could make a treat for this animal what would you make for it?
- What does this animal's home look like? For example, does this animal live in the jungle around trees, vines, and flowers; on a mountain surrounded by rocks and snow; or in your home?



Once you have decided what details you want to add, draw these details on your piece of paper.

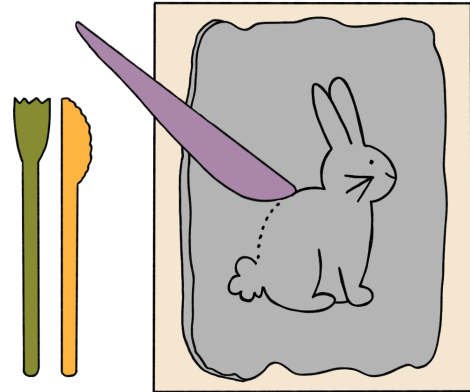
4. Take a piece of clay a little bit smaller than the size of a baseball and lay it in the center of a new piece of paper that is at least 8.5x11 inches.

Using either your hands or a rolling pin, flatten the ball of clay until it is a little bit thicker than your finger or about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch thick.

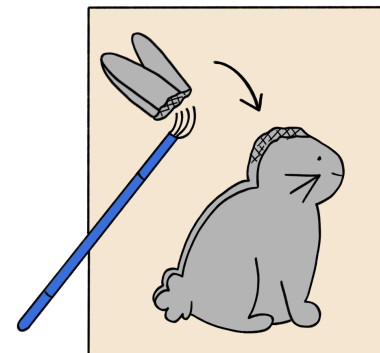
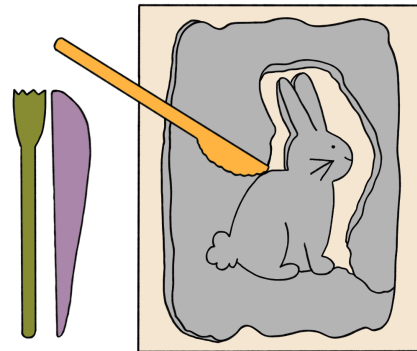


5. Using your paper sketch as a reference, take a clay tool (e.g. a wooden knife, blunt tipped sculpting tool, or dried out pen) to recreate your animal outline drawing on the clay. You can use your clay tool like a pencil, making sure not to cut all the way through the clay. If you need to redraw any lines, the lines can be “erased” by taking a smooth clay tool and swiping it across the surface of the clay, going side to side and pinching the cracks back together, similar to how you might smooth out cracks in pie dough.

If you need to redraw any lines, the lines can be “erased” by taking a smooth clay tool and swiping it across the surface of the clay, going side to side and pinching the cracks back together, similar to how you might smooth out cracks in pie dough.



6. Once you have drawn your animal onto your clay, use a clay cutting tool given to you by your teacher to cut or chop off the extra clay around your animal while keeping the clay animal cutout on the paper.

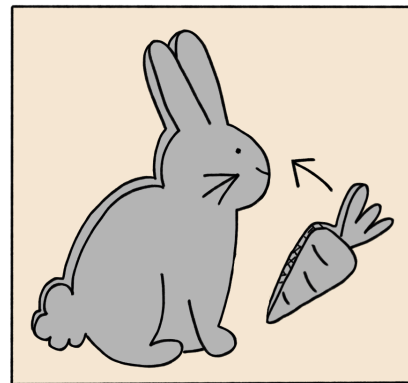


If you accidentally cut off a piece of air-dry clay, you can reattach the piece by gently squishing it back into place, making sure to smooth away any cracks. If you are using traditional clay, **slip and score** the pieces back together before smoothing out any cracks. Slipping and scoring will act like glue and will hold the two pieces together

7. Add one or two of the additional details you drew in step 3 by sculpting shapes using your hands or sculpting tools or by cutting out more flat shapes, similar to step 6.

When you are attaching two pieces of traditional clay together, make sure to press the two pieces together firmly and if needed, slip and score.

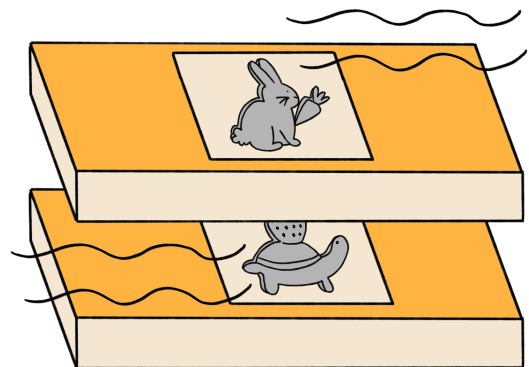
If you are using multiple colors of air-dry clay, this would be the time to add details in different colors. For example, if making a tiger you could sculpt a pink nose or use black clay to create stripes.



8. Once you've completed sculpting your animal, keep it on the paper and set it aside to dry.

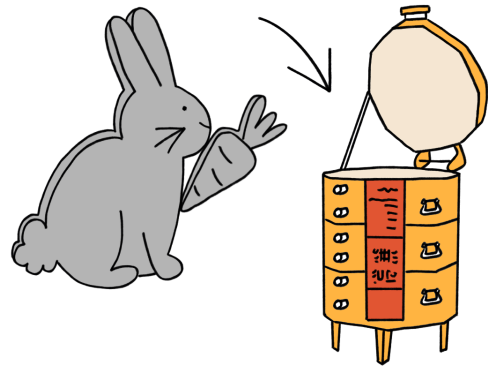
The next step in finishing your sculpture cannot be done until your project has dried completely.

A good way to test if your clay has dried completely is to see if it feels cool to the touch. If it feels cool it means there is moisture left and you should let it keep drying. Depending on the humidity and temperature of where you are, this can take several days.



9. Steps 9 and 10 are for traditional clay only. If you used air-dry clay, skip to step 11.

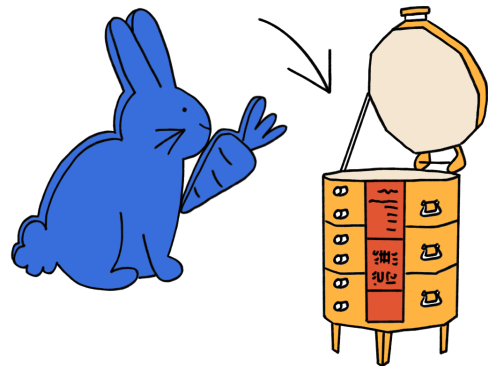
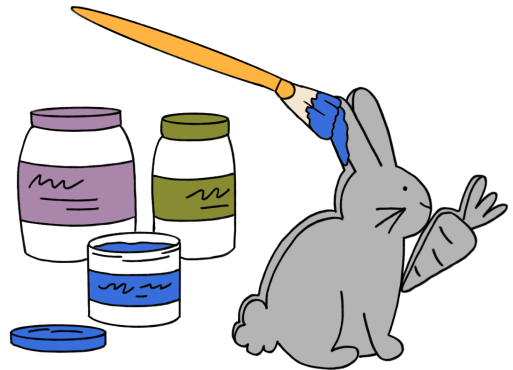
If you are using traditional clay, the next step after your sculpture has dried is for it to go into a machine called a **kiln** that works like a super hot oven for a process called **bisque firing**.



10. Once your sculpture has come out of the kiln, it's time for your artwork to be glazed. To glaze your artwork, follow the instructions given to you by your teacher.

Be sure not to apply glaze to the bottom of your artwork. If there is glaze anywhere the ceramic item touches the kiln shelf, the glaze will act like a glue and will attach the artwork to the kiln shelf.

Once you have finished glazing your artwork, set it aside to be loaded back into the kiln for the glaze firing.



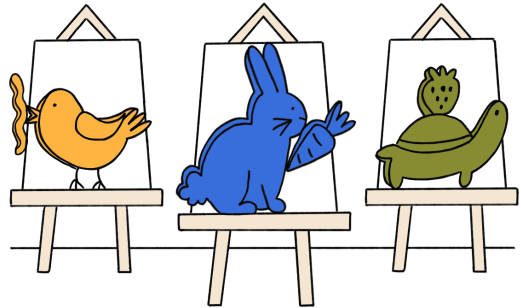


## 11. Gallery Walk

When everyone's projects are done, take some time for a gallery walk! Place your artwork on display somewhere in the room. Then take a few minutes to walk around the room to appreciate and see everyone's artworks.

Following the gallery walk, discuss the work. Think about the following questions:

- Why did you choose your animal?
- What did you notice about the animals others chose?
- What did you notice about the details others added to their animal?
- What did you wonder about while looking at others' artwork?
- What part of your animal are you most proud of? Why?
- What do you want to name your animal?



## GLOSSARY

**bisque firing:** The first firing of clay in a kiln, where clay is altered. After this firing the clay cannot be mixed with water and is more solid, like a rock. This firing is to both make the clay strong enough to be glazed and remove all moisture before the glaze is applied. When glaze is heated it creates a barrier-like seal that prevents any moisture and steam from escaping. If clay is fired before it dries completely, the moisture in the clay could cause the clay to crack or, in extreme circumstances, explode in the kiln.

**Chancay:** The Chancay culture was a civilization that lived along the central coast of Peru, just north of present-day Lima from approximately 1000 to 1470.

**effigy:** A sculpture or other artwork of a person, animal or thing, that may also represent an idea or experience.

**firing:** The process of clay and glaze heating up inside a kiln to create various effects with ceramics. Different types of firings change the way ceramics look and feel in a variety of ways, including hardening clay.

**glaze firing:** The second firing of clay in a kiln, which is done after glaze has been applied to the artwork.

**glaze:** a combination of natural and human-made chemicals and water that is applied to clay that, when melted, becomes a hard and protective glassy layer.

**kiln:** The oven-like tool that is used to heat clay or glaze (see **firing**).

**mythology:** The ideas, beliefs, and stories that are tied to a specific place, time, religion, and/or culture.

**slip and score:** a way of attaching two pieces of clay together by scratching the surface of the two pieces of clay where they will be attached, then adding a small amount of slip (a mixture of clay and water) over the scratched areas before pressing the two pieces of clay together.

**tombs:** spaces built or dug into the ground to bury and honor someone who has passed away.