

# *Egyptian Pottery*

The Egyptians were one of the first cultures in the world to create pottery. They developed an excellent farming-based civilization and it is thought that they made pottery as a way to store grains and food items. They also needed pottery to hold water as well as for cooking foods. Since Egyptians took a lot of pride in their art, they used pottery to reflect their creativity and imagination.





Egyptian pottery, like many pottery types, was made with clay. Their location close to the Nile river gave them the ability to have an abundance of clay. The original pottery designs were rather simple, and they took coiled strands of clay and wound it around in circles to make the walls of the clay pot and then smoothed out the walls. Since it's incredibly hot in Egypt, they could set their

finished pottery out in the Egyptian sun to bake and seal the pottery. Later discoveries have shown that they had a pottery wheel, which was slow turning, and gave them the ability to use their hands to make a variety of different shapes and sizes. Egyptians loved color and they would often dip the finished pottery into vats of color dye. When it was dry they would use combs or spatulas to scratch designs and patterns into the clay. To give the pottery a different dark black look, they would also expose it to smoke.





Early pre-dynasty period (before the pharaohs), pottery was fairly simple, but useful for their needs. They experimented with different designs and some have been discovered in the shape of the heads of their gods.

Pottery became such a popular need in ancient Egyptian life that they had people that specialized in creating large quantities of pottery. They made items for daily use and special pottery designs were made to be included in the tombs for those that had passed away. By 3500 BC, the artists that made pottery began to add images that showed animals and activities that they were involved in. They included boats, people and all of the animals that they saw every day.





As they continued to develop their pottery techniques they began making their pottery in many shapes and sizes. Sometimes they would have a jug with two tops and others would put feet at the bottom in the shape of human feet. The Egyptians would also make clay forms that they used to decorate the outside of the pottery. They were particularly fond of ibex and flamingo birds.

One of the types of pottery that they made were covered in a substance called red ocre. This an iron oxide coloring known as a pigment that was naturally found in Egypt. They would crush the red ocre to a powder form and use it as a coloring for the pottery. Sometimes it covered the entire item and sometimes they used it for decorations. They also used other crushed minerals, mixed together to get different artistic results.







Egyptians found that without any kind of glaze, their pottery was 'porous' and allowed liquids to seep out as well as not being able to seal food well. They developed a number of glaze methods and began using 'firing' techniques in high temperature ovens. The glazes also brought out more of the colors that they used. During what is known as the 'New Kingdom' era, they decorated their pottery after they fired it and their favorite colors were blue (called Egyptian blue), red (made with red ochre) and black (made with carbon or a combination of oxide/manganese minerals)





Egyptian pottery of high design and quality was often created for the pharaoh and his court. The poor and working class used pottery for children's toys including dolls, toy ships and even board games with clay pieces. Because the poor could not afford the expensive burials, pottery was sometimes used as burial coffins.

To finish off our year in Art, you are going to be exploring the ceramic ware of different cultures and historical periods. Some of these you will be familiar with from our time in Year 4, some of them you will be less familiar with!

**Your task: Research Egyptian ceramic ware in greater detail the following questions:**

What was it made from?

How was it made?

Who used it?

What made it special?

Can you describe its typical shape and design?

Once you have done this, save your work, you will add to it next week when we explore another type of ceramic wear from another culture.

Task 2: Can you make it? Have a go at making your chosen type of Egyptian ceramic ware using salt dough. As ever, the recipe for salt dough is on the next slide! Good Luck!



## Ingredients

1 cupful of plain flour (about 250g)  
half a cupful of table salt (about 125g)  
half a cupful of water (about 125ml)

## Method

1. Preheat the oven to its lowest setting and line a baking sheet with baking parchment.
2. Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl. Add the water and stir until it comes together into a ball.
3. Transfer the dough to a floured work surface and shape into your chosen model. You can roll it out and cut out shapes, numbers or letters using biscuit cutters, or make any kind of model you can think of. We made some fruit and veg shapes plus cupcakes for a teddy bear's picnic.
4. Put your finished items on the lined baking sheet and bake until solid. Your dough could be done after just 30 minutes on a heat of 180 degrees C.

I would love to see the finished results!