



Dragon Bones

Dragon Bone Medicine

The 19th century traditional Chinese medicine included the use of 'dragon bones', which were ground up and used in tonics and creams to treat illnesses and soothe wounds.

These 'dragon bones' had been dug up and re-buried by Chinese farmers for thousands of years before their supposed medicinal benefits were exploited.



Wang Yirong's Story

In 1889, a collector of Chinese bronzes called Wang Yirong bought a number of these 'dragon bones' from an antiques dealer.

It was Wang who first realised that the 'dragon bones' might not actually be from dragons after all.

It is reported that when Wang was sick with malaria, he and his friend Liu E studied the dragon bones before they were ground into powder. They noticed that they had writing on them, which matched the writing on Wang's bronzes.





Your task: Use a form of modelling clay (Playdough, clay or salt dough) to make a model of an oracle bone or dragon bone and carefully inscribe some oracle bone script onto it. This could be as simple as series of lines and patterns, you could inscribe some Chinese writing or use the actual bone script- its up to you! If you don't have any form of modelling clay, you can make this using salt doe.

There is a recipe for salt dough on the next page to get you started!



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. Mr Spencer found that your dough could be done after just 30 minutes on a heat of 180 degrees C.