

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_



# Ceramic Vocabulary and Techniques



**Ceramics** - the art of making things using clay and treating them with fire. The word ceramics comes from the ancient Greek word "keramos" which refers to potter's clay and the objects that are created from it.

## THE STAGES OF CLAY

**Plastic** - clay that is very soft, wet and is very workable. Clay can be rolled, shaped and molded at this stage.

**Leather hard** - clay that has dried slightly from the plastic stage. At the leather hard stage, clay can be joined using slipping and coring but has become a bit too fragile to bend and shape at lot. Clay at this stage can also be incised, stamped and texturized.

**Bone Dry** - Clay that has completely dried out, but has not been fired yet. At this stage, the clay is extremely fragile and little or nothing can be done to the clay. At this stage clay is ready to be fired in the kiln.

**Clay in the plastic, leather hard and bone dry stages are known as Greenware. Greenware refers to any clay that is unfired. The stages below are after clay has been fired.**

**Bisqueware** - Clay objects that have been fired one time, turning the clay into glass. At this stage, clay is ready to be stained, painted or glazed.

**Glazeware** - Clay that has been applied with glaze or underglazes and then fired a second time.

## HANDBUILDING TECHNIQUES

**Handbuilding** - a term that refers to one of several techniques used to build pottery using only the hands and simple tools, rather than using the potter's wheel.

**Pinch** - a handbuilding technique used to construct pottery. This technique is a method of shaping clay by inserting the thumb of one hand into a ball of clay and lightly pinching between the thumb and the fingers, while slowly rotating the ball of clay in the palm of the other hand.

**Coil** - a handbuilding technique used to construct ceramic forms by rolling out coils or ropes of clay and joining them together with the fingers and various smoothing tools.

**Slab** - a variety of handbuilding of techniques used to construct ceramic forms by rolling out a slab or flat "pancake-like" piece of clay which can then be cut into shapes and draped over a form, wrapped around a form or built into a box.

**Cut and Scoop** - a handbuilding technique in which a ball of clay is formed into a desired shape, which is then hollowed out using loop tools, much like when carving a pumpkin.

## WHEEL THROWING

**Wheel Throwing** - a technique which involves the use of a mechanical and various tools to construct ceramic forms. Wheel throwing gives you much more symmetrically shaped ceramic forms.



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### OTHER IMPORTANT CERAMIC TECHNIQUES AND VOCABULARY

**Wedging/Kneading** - the process of mixing and turning clay to remove air pockets and create uniform consistency in the clay.

**Slip and Score** - a technique used to connect two pieces of clay by scratching into the surfaces of each piece of clay and then applying watered down clay to each piece before pressing the pieces together.

**Score** - to draw or scratch lines into the clay surface, to either connect two pieces of clay or add texture.

**Slip** - watered down clay used as the "glue" to connect pieces of clay. Slip can also be applied to clay to give it a smooth finish.

**Incising** - a decoration technique in which lines are carefully drawn into a clay surface.

**Stamping** - a decorative technique in which forms or stamps are pressed into the clay to create patterns and textures. Stamping can be done with found objects or stamps designed for clay.

**Firing** - a process in which clay is heated to high temperatures in a kiln, which melts the silica sand in the clay and when it cools turns to glass, making the form permanent.

**Kiln** - a furnace of refractory clay bricks used to heat pottery or fuse glass. Kilns are heated either by electric coils, gas, or wood.

**Pyrometric Cones** - a triangular piece of material that indicates the temperature by bending or melting when the kiln reaches a certain temperature.

**Stilts** - a small piece of clay and wire, used to keep a pot away from the kiln floor. Stilts are most often used in a glaze firing to keep the clay pieces from sticking to the shelf or kiln.

**Glaze** - glass-forming chemicals, usually with coloring compounds added, that is applied in a liquid form to bisqueware clay and fired in a kiln, forming a pleasing coating around the surface of the clay. When glazes are applied, they are usually not the color they will turn out to be. When fired, glazes go through chemical reactions, causing them to change color and turn to glass, fusing to the clay.

**Gloss Glaze** - a type of glaze which creates a shiny coating on a clay surface..

**Matte Glaze** - a type of glaze which creates a flat coating on a clay surface.

**Underglaze** - colored slip, which is painted onto either bone dry clay or clay which has been bisque fired. After applied, a clear glaze is applied to the surface, which seals in the color and gives a glassy finish. Unlike glazes, underglaze remains the color it is when you apply it to the clay surface.

**Decorative Pottery** - Pottery or sculptural forms which are used for decoration or as an art object.

**Functional Pottery** - Pottery which can not only serve as an art object but can also be used for a purpose, such as bowls, plates, cups.

### PARTS OF A POT

**Mouth** - the opening near the top of a pot or vase.

**Neck** - the usually narrower part that leads from the body of a pot or vase to the mouth.

**Body** - this is the main part of the pot or vase. It usually the largest part of the pot or vase.

**Foot** - this is the part of the pot or vase that meets or rests on the floor or table.