



Clay figures from the Han Dynasty (China)

(Target Audience: 9 to 12)

Make figures out of modelling clay or play dough using tomb figurines from the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) as inspiration.

The Han Dynasty was one of the greatest early Imperial Chinese Dynasties. It was a period of huge cultural/scientific development. Buddhism from India entered China. Silk was woven for trade. Lacquerware was created. Music, poetry and writing flourished. Inventions included clocks, calendars and one of its greatest inventions, implements made from iron, especially farm implements. Paper was improved. While separated from much of the world by the Great Wall, Han China was connected to ancient Rome and countries of the Middle East by the Silk Road.

For more background information, try these resources:

<http://www.answers.com/topic/han-dynasty-1>

The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology

http://www.nga.gov/education/chinatp_splash.htm

This site is from the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Background information is excellent.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

<http://www.nelson-atkins.org/art/CollectionDatabase.cfm?id=10842&theme=china>

Site gives information about the individual pieces such as this model of a house with watchtower at the top and farmyard at the bottom.

For a list of image links try the Virtual Reference Library.

<http://www.virtualreferencelibrary.ca/>

Choose “Arts and Crafts”, and then click “Art Image Databases on the Internet”

For more information on the technology of Han Dynasty Tomb Artifacts, try this site:

http://www.svam.org/Exhibits/han_artifacts/han_html/hdta_notes.html

Clay figurines excavated from Chinese tombs give us a lot of information about how people lived. There are models of farm life, pigs, goats, watchtowers, and dancing girls from royal courts. Models of camels accompanied by their groomers from the Middle East travelled along the Silk Road.

These models were heated in a kiln at a low temperature and are called earthenware. If you were to examine one of these figurines you would see a hole at the bottom or the side and that they are hollow inside. You might be able to see a seam along some of the sides. None of the models is made from a single clump of clay because heat inside clay will expand and the model would explode.

Use the pictures of Han Dynasty tomb models found by following the links to the websites to help you with this presentation. Check your library for books on clay modeling and Chinese Art.

Han Dynasty Funerary Figures

Dancer

<http://www.metmuseum.org/special/YearOne/11.R.htm>

Han Horse

<http://content.answers.com/main/content/wp/en/thumb/4/40/250px-HanHorse.JPG>

Saddled Horse

<http://www.nga.gov.au/TTTsui/Details/Horse1.htm>

Dog

<http://www.glasgowmuseums.com/onemilliondaysinchina/exhibition/index.cfm?action=artefact&artefact=6&category=7>

Cavalryman

www.daytonartinstitute.org/eternalchina/20.html

Squatting performer with a drum

monod.nyu.edu/~jingh/album/art/china.html

Lady Attendant Tomb Figure

<http://www.marymount.k12.ny.us/marynet/stwbwk05/05vm/figures/html/kcanalysis.html>

Horse and Rider

<http://www.brooksmuseum.org/public/exhibitions/default.asp?id=10000218>

Court Lady

http://asianspiritgallery.com/china_han.html

Court Lady

<http://www.albertomanuelcheung.com/Han%20long%20sleeve%20lady%20.jpg>

Terracotta Horse.

http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/x-Schede/METs/METs_Sala01_01_02_012.html

Female Dancer

<http://www.metmuseum.org/special/YearOne/11.R.htm>

Pig

http://www.portlandartmuseum.org/asp/collections/collection_listing/asian/china/catalog/44.9%20pig.html

Notes on the pictures:

Look at the picture of the dancer and the Lady Attendant and the court Lady. Their kimono-like gowns were the predecessors of the Japanese kimono. Silk was a popular trade item that travelled west from China to the Ancient Rome and Greece. It is a light cool fabric perfect for hot weather. It remained a popular trade item for hundreds of years until the Italians set up their factories.

Look at the images of horses. The strong, large horses were imported from the Fergana Valley in Afghanistan. Chinese Militia liked them for their large size and strength

Can you find a drummer or a storyteller?

Find a Court Lady. What does her gown remind you of? Describe her fancy hairdo. Unusual hairdos came from Persia and became popular with Chinese Women in the upper classes. Some of the ladies are wearing their hair in traditional Chinese style, pulled back and tied.

Are there any farm animals in the models?

What you need:

- Modeling clay or play dough
- Tools for making designs and impressions on the clay – Popsicle sticks, small branches from shrubs, etc.,
- Rolling pin or plastic piping similar length and thickness.
- Old pencil or other pointed instrument
- Objects with textures such as combs, sieves

Recipe for Play dough:

1 cup salt
1/2 cup cornstarch
2/3 cup water

Cook this over low heat stirring all the while until you have a thick doughy mass. Cool and knead a little to be sure that the consistency is uniform. Keep in plastic wrap in the refrigerator when not in use.

This site gives several recipes:

<http://www.homeschoolzone.com/pp/crafts/play-dough.htm>

Instructions:

1. With the clay on a clean surface, roll the dough with both hands to make “ropes” or “strings”.
2. Roll the clay into flat pieces then cut them into shapes, such as rectangles, squares, triangles, stars, and crescents.
3. Roll a small piece of clay between both hands to make a small ball. These are great for making a decoration of beads or eyes or a small clay head.
4. If you are planning to “fire” or bake the clay, make sure the thickness is not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, or, hollow out some of the clay.
5. To make a figurine in several parts, use water to glue the pieces together. Toothpicks will also hold parts together if you are not heating the clay or dough.

To make a model house, make a template of the roof and sides of the buildings. Then cut out the shapes and put them together as you would a gingerbread house. To decorate, roll coils of clay and add them to the house. Press a comb against the clay to create a lined texture.

To make a dancing lady, roll out a large $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slab of clay. Using a pointed instrument draw the figure of a dancer, peel away the clay around the figure. Draw the same figure on another slab, then put the two figures together and seal them by pressing with your fingers. Stand your figurine up. If you plan to fire your clay models, make sure the two slabs of clay have lots of air between them.