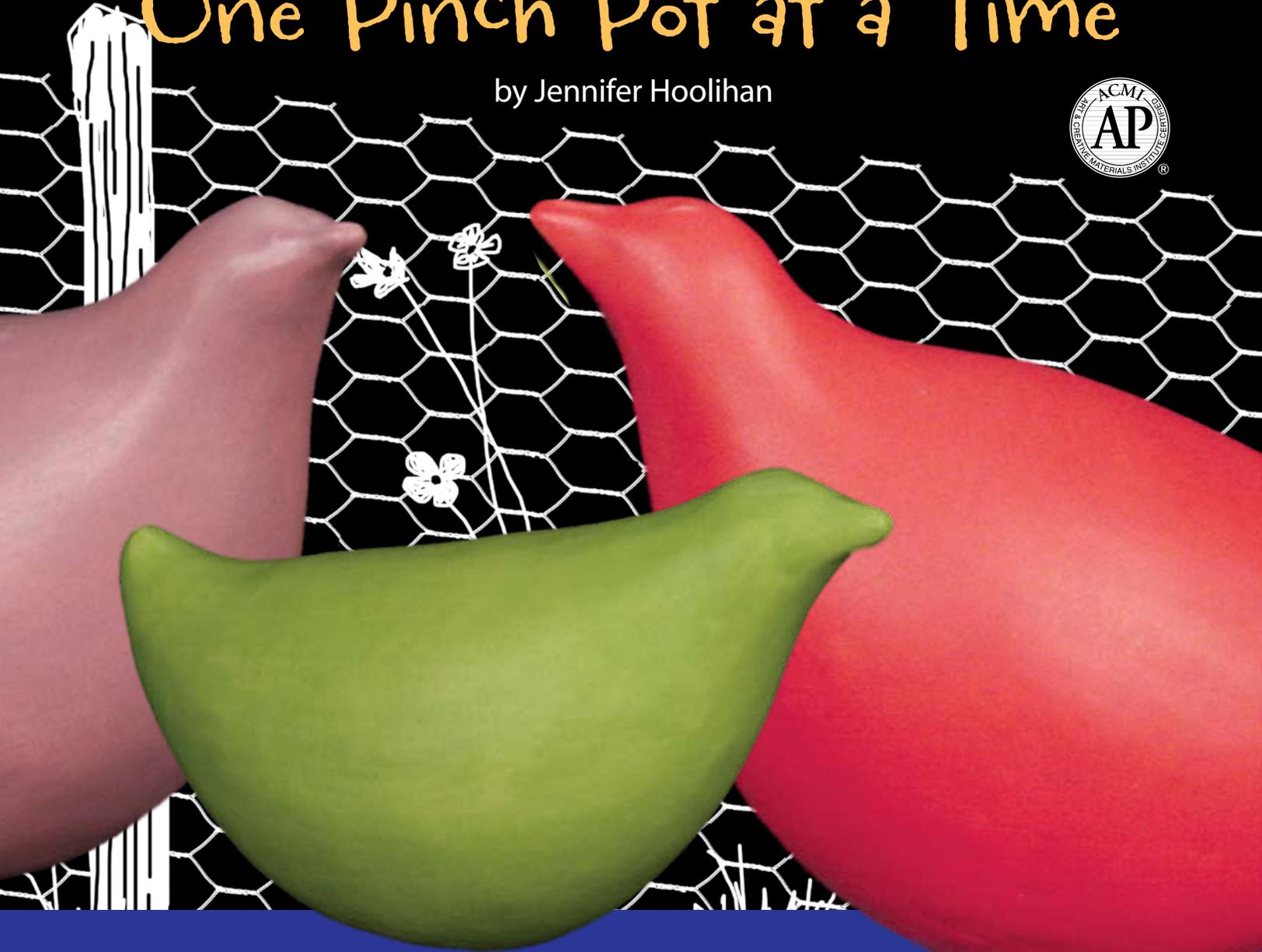




## Lesson Plan #42

# Create a Flock of Birds One Pinch Pot at a Time

by Jennifer Hoolihan



As we go about our day-to-day activities, birds are the most common form of wildlife we encounter on a regular basis. They live secret and fascinating lives that have long piqued our imaginations. This has rendered them as important symbols and subject matter utilized throughout art history.

From chickens to warblers, birds come in all shapes and sizes. Create a multi-species flock from pinched bowls and a few simple tools with firing or self-hardening clay over a couple of class periods. Start by looking at pictures of different types of birds and discuss their shapes and sizes. Birds can be sleek and minimal, like the Cat Bird, or have lots of visual texture, such as the Starling. The starting shape of the pinched bowl will influence the bird form. The birds can also be used to create functional items like salt and pepper shakers, bud vases, and rattles.

## Tools & Materials

- AMACO® Low Fire Clay (White #25 or Red #67)  
Optional: AMACO® air dry clays—  
Mexican Pottery Clay™ (Red), Marbled™ (Gray) or Stonex™ (White)
- Scoring Tools or Forks
- Flexible Serrated Ribs
- Sureform or Clay Shredder
- Flexible Rubber Ribs
- Small Drill Bit or Needle Tool
- Small Paddles or Wooden Spoons
- Sponges
- Newspaper for Glazing
- AMACO® LM Low Fire Matt Glazes
- Soft Natural-Hair Brushes
- Water to Clean Bisque

## Technique

Each student gets a half-pound ball of clay



1. Form ball into an oblong shape, like a kiwi.



2. Push thumb into one end of the form leaving about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " at the end. Start pinching and using a pull motion with fore-fingers while rotating the ball. Leave a bit of thickness at the bottom. Concentrate on making the pinch pot taller than wide like a small cup, for a robust bird. Keep pinching and pulling until the wall thickness is about  $\frac{3}{8}$ ". The rim doesn't have to be perfectly even.

## Lesson Plan Goals and Objectives

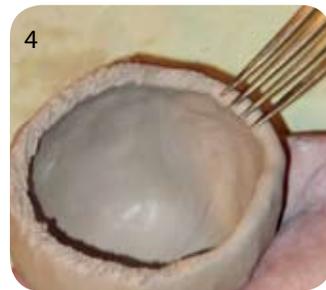
- Students will create a hollow bird using pinch and coil methods, refine the surface, and then personalize with texture and glazes.
  - Students will learn to translate perceived 2-D volume to a 3-dimensional form.
  - The lesson integrates natural history with art.
- This lesson is suitable for all ages.

## National Visual Arts Standards

- Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes.
- Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.
- Using knowledge of structures and functions.
- Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics of artwork.
- Choosing a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.



3. Turn the pot over and let the form stiffen up some. Then, cradling the pinch pot in the palm, use the index and middle fingers to belly out the form while keeping the rim from expanding. Use your thumb to push the rim back in if it starts to widen.



4. Once the shaping is finished, score the rim of the pinch pot with a fork or similar tool. Put small balls of clay wrapped individually in toilet tissue or newspaper into the pot if making a rattle.



5. Using thumb and forefinger on both hands, push in the rim until it meets. Be careful not to squish in the sides of the pinch pot.



6. Roll out a coil about the thickness of a pencil and long enough to cover the seam. Slip and score the coil and use it to fill in and strengthen the seam. Use a serrated rib or fork to work the coil into the pinch pot. Smooth out the coil with fingers or a flexible rib.



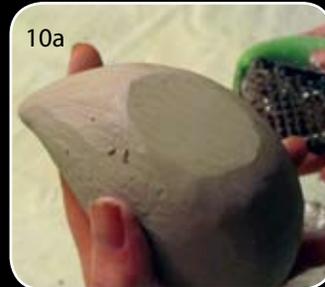
7. Decide which end will be the tail, then smooth and pull the tail from one end of the closed pinch pot. It may be necessary to pinch a little clay off the tail to keep it from getting too large. This clay can be added to the other end for the head. Work the tail into a point and pat the rump to round it up.



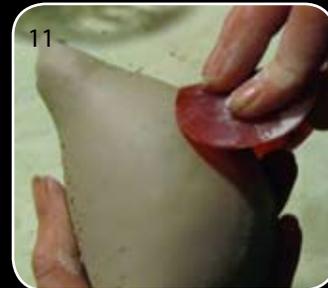
8. Smooth and pull the other end into the head. Add small bits of clay to the neck and beak area to get the desired proportions. Round the beak at the end so it will be resistant to chipping.



9. Gently paddle the body of the bird to compress the lumps left from pinching. Tap the base of the bird on a flat surface to create a resting point.



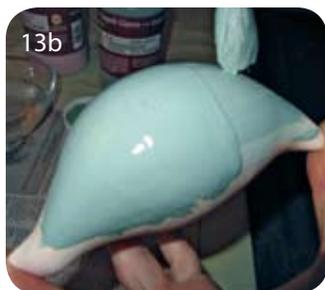
10. Allow the bird to harden slightly before refining the surface. Use a Sureform or clay shredder to scrape out any lumpiness. Be sure to define the base so the bird will sit without rocking. Follow up with a finely serrated rib to cut down the marks left from the shredder.



11. Once the bird has been roughed out with the serrated rib, use a damp sponge and flexible rib smooth out the scratch marks. This will leave a clean surface ready for carving in detail or leave the bird smooth for a flawless glaze finish.



12. Use a needle tool to make an air hole near the base of the bird. Cover the bird loosely with plastic to allow it to dry slowly and evenly. If using firing clay, bisque fire when dry to cone 04. If using air-dry clay, allow to dry at room temperature and away from heat until hard. During drying, rotate object occasionally so all surfaces are exposed to air. Drying time depends on size and thickness of the object.



13. After bisque firing, moisten the bird with a damp sponge prior to glazing. Use a soft natural-hair brush and AMACO® Matt (LM) glazes. Hold the bird at the beak and tail or set it on the table to apply glaze. Use 3 good coats of glaze and cross hatch the brush strokes for a smooth even finish. Be careful not to allow glaze to fill the air hole. Glaze fire to cone 05.

## Glossary

**Bisque:** Unglazed ceramic after the first firing.

**Fire:** To heat the clay in a kiln at a very high temperature until it is hard and it becomes ceramic.

**Glaze:** A special clear or colored liquid mixture applied to ceramic surfaces that become hard and glass-like when fired to the right temperature in a kiln.

**Scoring:** Carving tiny slits into the moist clay with a fork or scoring tool before adding slip and joining.

**Sculpture:** A three-dimensional work of art which is intended to be viewed from all sides. It can be made out of materials such as plaster, stone, wood, metal, and clay.



## Salt and Pepper Shakers (Optional) Technique



1. To make salt and pepper shakers, use a dowel rod to impress a circle into the base of the bird before bisque firing. Within the impressed circle, use a hole cutter to cut out a hole for the stopper.



2. Following the line of the impressed circle, carve out the ledge for the stopper to rest on. Clean up rough edges with a sponge.



3. For the salt and pepper holes, use a drill bit under the beak in the neck area. Use 2 holes for pepper and 3 for salt so the shakers are easy to tell apart. When glazing, insert chopsticks or toothpicks into the holes to keep them from getting clogged with glaze.

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