



## LESSON 24

### LEVEL A

### CLAY

## CLAY BEADS

### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

forming, imprinting and painting small clay objects

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Terra cotta or similar low-fire clay; soda straw; objects to press into clay for texture; tempera paint; brush; liquid floor wax; a throw-away container for the wax; small sponge; string, yarn, or a long shoelace; rough plastic work surface (back side of a placemat or vinyl fabric.)

**Note:** The beads require a week to dry thoroughly. If this is the first time with modeling clay, allow time for playing, experimenting and manipulating the clay.

**A NOTE TO PARENTS:** These lessons work best with terra cotta clay, but other clays will work also. Terra cotta or similar low-fire clay can be obtained at most ceramic supply stores and many hobby shops. Ceramic clay keeps indefinitely if stored in an airtight container (a plastic bag will do). It can be softened, even if dry, by soaking it in water. "Self-hardening" clay that bakes in your own oven is more expensive, but will also work in this lesson. We do not recommend plasticene because of its oily texture.



Two Strings of Beads

**GETTING STARTED:** Who wears jewelry? What kinds of beads and necklaces have you seen on people? Bead jewelry is made and used by many people all over the world. Clay is a basic material for creating attractive beads, pendants, and other kinds of ornaments. You can learn how to roll clay into little balls for beads. You can decorate them with texture and designs. Then you can poke holes through the beads. You bake them to make them hard. Then you paint them and put them on a string to make your own jewelry. They make wonderful, original gifts, too.

1. Cover your work space with an old plastic place mat or a piece of vinyl. Turn the cloth side up because the clay will stick to the shiny side.



2. Pinch off a piece of clay as big as a walnut. Roll it between your palms into a ball. This is a practice piece, so play with it. Flatten it to make a circle. Press different things into it to make designs. Roll it into a ball again. Poke a drinking straw into it to make a hole. Don't get it too close to the edge or the thinner side may break. Gently add some pressed in designs all around it. When the clay gets too dry to play with, put it aside. Get ready to make a whole set of beautiful beads with fresh clay.

3. Make at least five different beads, some large, some smaller. Some can be cubes or cylinders. Make them one at a time.



Don't hurry.  
Make each one  
a little different



Bonita Age 5



Beads made by children

from the others. Form, decorate, and poke a hole in each one. Put your beads in a cool, dry place where they can dry slowly for about a week.

4. Put the rest of your clay into a plastic bag. Tie it so that air cannot get inside. (You can put a few drops of water in with the clay to make sure it will stay moist for the next time.) Go to the pink CLEAN UP section and follow the directions.

5. When your beads are completely dry, they will be ready to fire. If you used

terra cotta clay, your beads may be baked or fired in a special oven called a kiln. The temperature will go up much higher than a kitchen oven's heat. When the kiln cools, your beads will have turned into little stones.

6. Now you can add some color to the beads. Paint each one with a different color of tempera paint. Be sure the paint goes into every nook and cranny, hole and hollow.

7. The paint will dry fast. You can stop here, or you can make the color

more interesting by removing some of the surface paint with a moist sponge. This will give the beads an “antique” or old look.

8. Pour a little liquid floor wax into a throw-away container. Roll each bead in the wax and set it on a piece of foil or waxed paper to dry. Then polish your beads with a soft cloth or tissue.

9. Thread your beads onto a piece of colored string or yarn long enough to tie the ends behind your neck. Admire yourself in a mirror!

**CLEAN UP:** Take any leftover clay and make it into a ball. Use the ball to pick up all the scraps of clay you can see. Then take a DRY paper towel or cloth and sweep the dry powder left into a small pile and into your hand. Take it outside and put it in the dirt. Brush your hands together to get the last bits off. Now wash your hands with soap and water. Brush off the mat you used for a work surface out of doors. Now go back to step 5.

**MORE CLEAN UP:**

Ask a grown-up to throw away the leftover wax. Wash your brush. Put it away with the paints. Check and see if the work area is as clean as it should be.

**TALK ABOUT IT:** What part of the bead-making was the most fun? What would you do differently another time?

**MORE IDEAS:** A pendant is usually a single “jewel” that you can hang on a string around your neck. Make a pendant by rolling a large bead of clay. Then flatten it into a circle. Punch a hole near the top for the string to go through. Decorate the pendant by pressing an object, like a nail or button, into it to make a design. Fire it and finish it like the beads.

**CONNECTIONS:** Look at pictures in magazines of different kinds of jewelry. Find out what materials they are made from. . .diamonds? gold? plastic? Are the designs the same on each side (symmetrical) or different (free-form)? Choose your favorite.

