

## Clay Lesson with 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes

### 'Gone Fishing'

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**Curriculum Strand:** Clay (Visual Arts Curriculum p.36)

**Objective:** *Explore and discover the possibilities of clay as a medium for imaginative expression (p.36)*  
*Experiment with and develop line, shape, texture and pattern in clay (p.36)*

**Linkage:** **Paint and Colour** > *Explore colour with a variety of materials and media (p.32)*  
**Drawing** > *Experiment with the lines, shapes, textures, patterns and tones that can be made with different drawing instruments on a range of surfaces (p.30)*

**Integration Possibilities:**

*Oral Language: Talk about and reflect on past and present experiences, and plan, predict, anticipate and speculate about future and imaginary experiences (p.27)*

*Science: Observe, identify and explore a variety of living things in local habitats and environments (p.42)*  
*Develop some awareness of plants and animals from wider environments (p.42)*

*Gaeilge: Focail cháilitheacha a úsáid (p.43)*

#### Developing this Activity in Class:

**Getting Started:** Before I start an art lesson I find it very helpful to do a little exercise with the children to unlock their imaginations and to create a safe environment in the classroom for them to show and discuss their work without fear of ridicule. "When I was a child it took up to six weeks to send a photograph to my cousins in Australia. We can send photographs in minutes now with our mobile phones! This is because people used their imaginations and made this happen. Anything can happen in our imagination if we only let it! Close your eyes and imagine a big door. It can be any colour you like. Written across the door in big capital letters is the word IMAGINATION. Now reach out and slowly open the door, let your imagination out! Open your eyes and let me see the sparkle! Now we can do anything, our imaginations are at work and we are all different!"

**Materials Needed:** Potter's clay  
 Wooden boards or strong card (to work on)  
 Clay tools or lollipop sticks  
 Rolling pins (Can be made by cutting broom handles into sections)  
 Plastic bucket with tight fitting lid, or plastic bags for storing the clay.  
 Pictures of various types of fish, big, small, from rivers and seas

**Stimulus:**

I Went Fishing  
 I went fishing,  
 Took some bait.  
 Didn't go early,  
 Didn't go late.

Caught eight fishes  
 To put in my pail  
 Seven were mackerel,  
 But the eighth was a whale.

The seven were easy  
 To put in the tin,

But that whale caused me trouble  
Before I packed him in!

Took my catch home.  
What did Mother say?  
"Get those eight fish out of here-  
We're having steak today!"  
*Anon*

"Have you ever been fishing? Did you see any fish in the water? Did you catch any fish? Do you know the names of any fish? What shapes, sizes, colours are they? Did you ever feel a fish? What did it feel like? What did you think it would feel like? Look at some pictures of fish and describe the differences between them. Let's make some fish ourselves!"

**Activity:**

By now the children will be familiar with clay and how to manipulate it. The children can make slabs by pressing out the clay, by pounding the clay or by rolling it out using a rolling pin. They can cut out fish shapes using the clay tools and add texture using fingers, clay tools and by pressing items into the clay. They can cut out scale shapes and add them to the slab, smoothing them on and/or by using slip. (Slip is made by adding water to clay and mixing it to a gravy-like consistency. This can be put on the slab using a brush). Encourage them to experiment with the textures and shapes and to describe what is happening as they work. The finished pieces can be left to dry and painted later, if the children wish.

**Evaluation/Looking and Responding:**

This will be happening as the children work. The children can then take turns describing what they have done and question each other about their fish. Encourage the children to look at and respond to Picasso's ceramics, how he painted on plates and slabs of clay. Show the children decorative tiles, with incised and relief patterns where possible. Visit the Clay section on the website and look at the [Clay slideshow](#). Encourage them to discuss the *Phaestos Disc*, how it was decorated and what the symbols might mean.

**Extension Activities:**

The children can roll out tiles of clay and decorate them by adding to them, drawing onto them, pressing items into them to create various textures. These could be done as part of a theme, or seasonally.

**ICT Possibilities:**

[http://www.handsoncrafts.org/studio\\_frame.htm](http://www.handsoncrafts.org/studio_frame.htm)  
This site has an interactive game which shows children how to create a slab self-portrait.

**Using the I Am An Artist DVD:**

The *Clay* programmes on the DVD offer opportunities to see and hear the children using clay as a medium for imaginative expression. You can see the children rolling out slabs and decorating them in various ways.

**Note:**

I found that using a plant spray was best for keeping the clay moist as the children were working. Keep your slip in an airtight container for future use.

**Relevant Artists:**

Pablo Picasso  
Other artists you think relevant

**Relevant Websites:**

Images of Picasso's ceramics

<http://www.artnet.com/Galleries/Exhibitions.asp?gid=498&cid=101562&currpage=2&currpage2=1&rta=http://www.artnet.com&source=2&type=2>

Trail 2 at Laganside, Belfast, one of three art trails where there is amazing art work, ranging from cast iron figures to tiled and fabric and fibre wall murals. See *Bigfish* by John Kindness and *Trawl 2000* by Michael Baker.

<http://www.laganside.com/siteFiles/resources/pdf/Trail2.pdf>

Scoilnet, which is a portal to lots of sites useful in the classroom

<http://www.scoilnet.ie>