Using clay to make new things and express emotion

Your students will:
• Play with and explore clay
• Learn to make a pinch pot
• Learn to use art as a creative outlet that can help work through emotions

Visit The Clay Studio with Freddie
As a class, co-view the clip from from the episode “Clay & A Piece of Home,” in which Freddie visits the Clay Studio. Freddie’s feeling sad because her friend Sable is moving away and wants to make her something out of clay as a going away gift. Prompt a discussion about Freddie’s experience at the Clay Studio and her feelings about Sable’s big move. Conversation starters might include:

1. Naimah talks about how working with clay takes a lot of trial and error. What do you think she means by that? Talk about trial and error as you make your own clay art.

2. What does Freddie come to understand about her feelings around Sable moving away? What does she decide to do to help her cope with her difficult feelings?

3. Freddie’s bowl doesn’t come out of the kiln quite as expected. Can you think of a time when an artwork or project you worked hard on came out differently from how you planned? How did that feel, and what did you do?

Materials
• A fist-sized ball of air-dry clay for each student
• Toothpicks
• Tools to use while exploring your clay like forks, rolling pins, cookie cutters and objects with interesting textures
• Optional: Paint (tempera or acrylic)
Lesson Activity

Teacher Prep:
1. Portion out the clay so that each student receives about the size of a fist or tennis ball. Save some for yourself so that you can demonstrate the steps.
2. Remind your students that Freddie learns how to throw clay on a wheel to make a ceramic bowl. Instead of using a wheel, students will be making clay bowls using just their fingers. Prompt them to think about how the process of making their pinch pots is similar and different to how Freddie and Naimah make their bowls.

Instructions
1. Give students some time for open-ended play with their clay. Like Naimah did, try different ways to push and pull the clay. Offer tools or small objects to cut the clay or make impressions and texture prints in the clay.
2. Use both hands to roll the clay into a ball.
3. Press your thumb into the center of the ball to create a hole. Don’t go too deep! Make sure you stop pushing your thumb in before it goes all the way through.
4. Use your thumb and fingers to gently pinch all the way around the hole, opening it up to form a bowl shape. Be careful not to make the sides too thin.
5. Use a toothpick to gently draw patterns or designs on the outside of the bowl.
6. Allow the bowls to air dry for 48 hours.
7. Once the bowls are dry students can paint them.

The Clay Studio’s Clay Dough Recipe
(Yields enough for about 4 students so adjust accordingly!)
• 2 cups flour
• 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
• 1 cup salt
• 3/4 to 1 cup water

Instructions:
1. Mix flour and salt in a large bowl.
2. Add the oil, then slowly add water and stir until it’s a clay consistency.
3. Knead the dough for several minutes before getting to work on your art.
Tips and Extensions

- Turn your pinch pots into clay creatures. Turn the pot over to use as a creature's head, or use the opening of the pot as its mouth. Add eyes, ears and other embellishments.
- Explore the free tutorials on The Clay Studio’s website for more ways to play with and experiment with clay.

School-to-Home Connection

- Look for things made from clay in your own home. Start by looking around your kitchen.
- Think about the decisions the artists or designers might have made in creating the bowls and other dishware in your home. What shapes, colors and patterns do you observe? Compare them to your own pinch pots.

Vocabulary

- **Pinch pot:** A simple way to make a bowl shape from clay by pinching with your fingers
- **Ceramic:** Made of hardened clay
- **Potter's wheel:** A machine used to turn clay into rounded forms
- **Kiln:** An oven used to fire or bake clay
- **Glaze:** A special coating applied to clay before it goes into the kiln to create a shiny surface
- **Air-dry clay:** Clay that is intended to dry in the air instead of being fired in a kiln
Related Resources

More about The Clay Studio
The Clay Studio is a non-profit community space and ceramic workshop and studio in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. First established in 1974 by artists in need of an affordable studio space, The Clay Studio has expanded to offer classes, community events, studios, exhibitions and more. Visit The Clay Studio’s website at TheClayStudio.org to discover free tutorials where you can learn to make bowls, trays, coasters and more.

More Classroom Activities
Visit PBS LearningMedia for more lesson plans like this inspired by The Infinite Art Hunt.

Children’s Books with Related Themes
Check out these children’s books online or at your local library to continue exploring the concepts in this episode.

Claymates by Dev Petty
When the ceramicist leaves the room, two very silly lumps of clay reinvent themselves into new creatures and creations.

Many Shapes of Clay: A Story of Healing by Kenesha Sneed
A girl and her mother make clay sculptures together. When the girl’s sculpture breaks, her mom helps her make the pieces into something new. This book uses clay as a metaphor for processing grief and loss.