

# SPRING PEEPERS

**Stephani Thomas**

If you have been teaching young students for a while like I have, you crave a new twist on the old tried and true, and nothing is more tried, and tried, and tried than the ceramic, hand-built pinch pot. True, it does provide a valuable experience in the hands of first-grade artists, but it can become a boring form and function without much fun.

While playing with the simple bowl shape one day, I turned it on its side and there it was. Instantly I saw the whimsical potential: the gaping open mouth of a frog. All of a sudden, the hand-built pinch pot took on a whole new life for my students and for me. But be warned: once you start this ceramic project you'll have to continue it for years to come as everyone will want to make one. You may even find yourself creating them for faculty and friends.

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## Prepping for Peepers

The key to the success of this project is the teacher preparation. I use moist, low-fire terra-cotta red clay. Moist clay eliminates the extra step of scoring and slipping the clay with water. Pieces can be smoothed together with fingers, a clay tool, or a pencil.

## Clay Day One

Give students two balls of clay and guide them through the steps of making a frog. Have them first make a pinch pot from one ball and then split the other ball in half. Split one

of these halves in half again and roll both of these pieces into two short, fat, hotdog-shaped pieces. Bend these into "L" shapes for the back legs and attach them to the back of the pinch pot. Split the remaining ball in half, and with one half, make two small balls and flatten for the front feet. Split the remaining half into three equal parts to make two balls for eyes and a long coil for a tongue. Attach all the pieces to the body.

Complete by adding texture with old markers, pencils, and other clay tools. Large markers work well for pressing in spots or warts; the back of a smaller marker will give you a great center of an eye, and a pencil will work well for adding details to the feet. Let the pieces dry and then fire them.

## Materials

- two baseball-sized balls of terra-cotta low-fire clay per student
- Manila paper or construction paper (to use as a work surface)
- old pencils or small, pointed wood dowels
- old markers with lids
- low-fire glazes in any shade of green
- glaze brushes

## Clay Day Two

I make the day of glazing as painless as possible by placing on each table as many different colors of low-fire green glaze as I can get my hands on in ice cube trays. The best part about the green glazes on the terra-cotta is that it doesn't make any difference how students paint, drip, brush, or dab. The glaze settles into the texture and the results always look spectacular! 🐸

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## NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students explore and understand perspective content for works of art.*

## WEB LINK

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS7M77pDuYg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS7M77pDuYg)

