

Name: Stacy Lord

School: Worcester East Middle School

Lesson Title: Pinch, Poke and Prod – Crafting Clay Faces

Grade Level: Middle school (adaptable for younger grades)

Materials

Air dry Clay

Fingers

Pencils

Scrap paper for a place mat

Tubs with a tight lid

7th and 8th graders love this project. Then again, I don't know many middle schooler who wouldn't love to manipulate clay into fun, ghoulish, faces?

I start by passing out a small hand size lump of clay to each student showing them how to roll it into a log that is short and stout. I use only my fingers to pinch the different facial features, manipulating the clay with just my thumb and index finger. While I am doing this I am explaining to my students that the nice thing about clay, is that it is very playable. If something is not working out the way you like it, then you can easily start over (I emphasize this by rolling the clay back into a log).

Order if pinching:

- 1) Middle of the log for the nose
- 2) Thumb goes where the eye socket would be and index finger pinched down to meet it to form the eyebrows, eye sockets.
- 3) Thumb nail goes under the nose to press up to form base of the nose and nostrils
- 4) Take your pencil and open up a hole where the mouth would go, opening it wide enough to get your thumb in it and pinch down and around to form the lips
- 5) Pinch to form a chin
- 6) Pinch out on the sides, to either side of the eyes to form ears
- 7) Start molding and rounding off the top of the log to form the top of the head

At the end of this lesson you end up with 27 different clay faces that all look the same. It is at this point that I challenge my students to create a unique face, one that is unlike all the others, using the same techniques they just learned. What would you do different? How would you add texture? What could you use to add that texture? What about accessories like earrings, hat or maybe a scarf? How do faces differ from one another?

A nice extension to this project is having the students do an observational pencil drawing of their clay face. I actually get a better quality drawing than if I just gave them a random object.