

Program Name: Characters in Clay

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Artist: Myrna Minnis

## Special Requirements:

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Worktables; water source; kiln that heats to cone 5.  
 Ooglies: materials fee of \$5 per student if school fires or \$7 per student if Myrna fires.  
 Wizards: materials fee of \$7 per student if school fires or \$10 per student if Myrna fires.

## Special Points of Interest:

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When buying clay ask about the amount of grog that the clay contains. Grog is a hard element in the clay that determines the strength or weakness of the material.

This program is also available as a residency.

## Workshop Description

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During this workshop, sculptor Myrna Minnis leads students in a fun and stimulating project that combines visual and language arts. Building from clay, students create their own characters, which can be drawn from historical, whimsical, or imaginary situations. They complete their characters by writing or telling stories about them.

Myrna guides participants through the process of making their clay characters by demonstrating each step and assisting students with suggestions. Myrna makes a point of working individually with those artists who need extra attention.

The clay characters the students create are as different and

unique as the students who create them. Myrna uses these unique differences to discuss appreciation of similarities and differences between all people.

This workshop is also available as a 2-3 day residency during which students have time to develop more complex sculptures and stories.



## Educational Objectives & Standards

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Students will:

- Develop confidence in themselves as artists.
- Develop the ability to express themselves.
- Build on creative writing skills.

Language Arts:

- Knows different features that affect a viewer's perceptions of characters in visual media.

Visual Arts:

- Knows how different media, techniques, and processes are used to communicate ideas.



## Artist Bio: Myrna Minnis

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For more than 15 years, Myrna Minnis has been inspiring children through classes in clay. Myrna holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Kansas State University and a Master of Liberal Arts degree from Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas.

With the encouragement of parents, kids, and teachers, Myrna created the *Oogly* kit in 1989. These kits are used as a tool by counselors and therapists for clients to express

their emotions, poems, and stories through their *Oogly* characters.

“Using clay sculpture, I hope to reveal my mystical, spiritual, and inner feelings of fantasy and to provide other people the opportunity to access, in a worthy way, their own creative potential and uniqueness,” Myrna’s mission statement declares.

In 2000, Myrna was honored as Kansas Educator of the Year in Arts & Disabilities by Accessible Arts, Inc. and the Kansas State Board of Education.

## List of Resources:

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### **Books:**

Finding One's Way With Clay: Creating Pinched Pottery and Working With Colored Clays

by Paul S. Berensohn, True Kelly  
Biscuit Books; 25th Anniversary edition (November 1, 1997)  
ISBN: 0965777308

The Spirit of Clay: A Classic Guide to Ceramics

by Robert Piepenburg  
Pebble Pr; Rev edition (March 1, 1998)  
ISBN: 096284814X

### Exceptional Children:

Exceptional Art : Teaching Art to Special Needs

by David R. Henley  
Davis Publications; (1992)  
ASIN: 087192238X

## Vocabulary

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**Bisque:** Unglazed clay, fired at a low temperature.

**Clay:** the result of decomposition of igneous rock and granite. Primary clay is found at site of formation; secondary clays have been moved by natural forces and have acquired impurities.

**Glaze:** an enhancement applied to the clay (painted, dipped, or sprayed) for decorative purposes.

**Kiln:** the oven where the clay is fired.

**Oogly:** a character created by Myrna Minnis - each one wonderful and different just like each child.

**Sculpture:** three-dimensional art form.

**Wedging:** a method of kneading clay to make it homogenous; ridding the clay of all air pockets.



## Post-Workshop Activities

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1. Create an original character with clay.  
Write a story featuring your character. What is your character’s name? Where does it live? What personality attributes does the clay character possess?
2. Create still-life drawings of your character.
3. Re-work your character, giving it different attributes and features. Can you change your clay character to reflect the changes in the character’s story (i.e., happy, sad, or some other emotion)?

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022  
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