

**Korean Celadon**  
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Laurie Marks  
Wyoming Middle School  
[marks1@wyomingcityschools.org](mailto:marks1@wyomingcityschools.org)  
Miami University Banner ID +00262683



# Korean Celadon

## Lesson Overview

In the seventh and eighth grade Art Elective class students will be presented with a brief overview of the history of Korean ceramics focusing on the pottery produced during the Goryeo (Koryo) Dynasty. They will then build a vessel from clay and decorate it using iron oxide and glaze it with celadon glaze.

## Historical Perspectives

Ceramics has played an indispensable role in the development of man throughout the ages. Beginning with simple earthenware vessels some 10,000 years ago, the need for vessels of greater durability resulted in the development of the kiln fired process and functional stoneware vessels. The first glazes were derived from natural ash and led to experimentation with celadon and porcelain glazes. Although China was the leader in the development of porcelain ware and celadon glazes, this technique was introduced to Korea in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The period from 918-1392 C.E. was the Goryeo (Koryo) Dynasty and was called Korea's Age of Enlightenment. Buddhism had a strong influence during this period and permeated all aspects of Korean life, including ceramics. Ceramic vessels were made for use in religious rituals and also for use in the tasks of everyday life. While previously ceramics had been thought of as strictly functional, aesthetic beauty, grace and delicacy began to play a role as well. Ceramics began to be created as objects of fine art.

## Artistic Perspectives

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the early 10<sup>th</sup> centuries there was an evolution of earthenware, which was low fired to porcelain fired in kilns at very high temperatures (2300 degrees). White porcelain and celadon glazes (transparent green) were originally developed at kiln sites such as Yuezhou in Zhenjiang Province, Southern China. Potters of the Unified Silla Kingdom (668-935 C.E.) in Korea developed the technology to produce celadons and white porcelains. While producing ceramics for functional use, such as incense burners, teapots, vases, brush holders, etc., potters sought to create vessels that were also objects of fine art. They decorated these pieces using a variety of techniques that include incising (in which the design is carved into the clay body) and carving (in which the background is

carved out resulting in the design being raised), and underglaze iron painted celadon while skillfully applying a variety of floral, plant and animal motifs onto the surfaces.

## Instructional Objectives

### Students will:

- be given a brief historical overview of the development of ceramics from prehistoric times to the present
- discuss how ceramics have survived over time and are both collected and reproduced through auctions and retail businesses selling Asian collectables
- learn about the development for earthenware to stoneware in 8-9<sup>th</sup> century China and Korea and the change from function to form during the Goryeo (Koryo) period in Korea and study examples of vessels with celadon glazes that use a variety of decorative techniques
- discuss the functional use of ceramics in Korea during the Goryeo (Koryo) period as they relate to both ritual and everyday life
- discuss the role of ceramics as objects of beauty and fine art
- discuss the high regard for perfection in the production of Korean celadon
- review their previous knowledge of ceramic terms to include greenware, bisqueware, underglaze, firing, earthenware, stoneware, glaze and vitrification
- learn the characteristics of porcelain and celadon glazes
- research Korean motifs used decoratively on ceramics
- discuss what motifs might be used and others which might not be appropriate or found on Korean ceramics. Would motifs used during the Goryeo (Koryo) period vary from those used today? How do they reflect Korean philosophy and religion?
- See examples of how motifs can be depicted using the underglaze iron (deep reddish brown) painting technique
- learn to build a clay vessel using the coil method
- develop several vessel designs through the use of thumbnail sketches

- sketch ideas for decorative subject matter which will be applied using the underglaze iron painting technique
- practice painting designs on paper using bamboo brushes using a technique that is more spontaneous in nature than the incised or carved designs
- build a porcelain vessel using the coil method
- decorate the coiled vessel using the underglaze iron painting technique
- glaze using a celadon glaze and fire

***Ohio Academic Content Standards, Fine Arts, Grade 7. Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts, Benchmark A-1; Benchmark B-3; Benchmark D-5, Creative Expression and Communication, Benchmark A-2; Benchmark B-3; Benchmark C-4; Benchmark E-6; Analyzing and Responding, Benchmark A-1,2; Benchmark B-3; Valuing the Arts, Benchmark A-1; Benchmark B-3***

***Ohio Academic Content Standards, Fine Arts, Grade 8. Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts, Benchmark A-1, A-2; Benchmark D-6; Creative Expression and Communication, Benchmark A-1; Benchmark B-2; Benchmark D-4; Benchmark E-6; Analyzing and Responding, Benchmark B-3 Benchmark C-4; Valuing the Arts, Benchmark A-1,2***

## Supplies

- bibliography of sources, both Internet and books written on a middle school level
- Powerpoint presentation on history of ceramics, focusing on Korean Celadon
- books and visuals depicting Korean subjects, designs, motifs etc. as used for pottery decoration
- drawing paper for sketching
- bamboo brushes and watered-down tempera paint for practicing painting of motifs
- porcelain clay
- clay modeling tools

- iron oxide
- celadon glaze
- electric ceramic kiln

## Instructional Timeline

- Introduction and discussion of the history of ceramics and Powerpoint presentation -one 45 minute period
- Further discussion of Korean Celadon with presentation of books and reproductions of both vessels and Korean motifs - one 45 minute period
- Sketching of several possible vessel shapes and ideas for decoration – one 45 minute period
- Demonstration of the coil building method in ceramics, distribution of clay and discussion of storage procedures – one 45 minute period
- Building of clay vessels – three or four 45 minute periods
- Practicing of brush painted decorations on paper using bamboo brushes – one 45 minute period
- Demonstration of iron oxide painting on unfired porcelain vessels and painting of students' vessels – two 45 minute class periods
- Firing of clay vessels – done by teacher when pieces are dry
- Glazing of pieces – one 45 minute period

## Procedure

Introduce to students a brief history of the development of ceramics from prehistoric times to the present using a Powerpoint that shows the chronological development, but then

returns the focus to Korean Celadon in the Goryeo (Koryo) Dynasty. Discuss the function and aesthetic beauty of ceramic forms both past and present.

Show books and have visuals available to help the students come up with ideas for both their vessel form and the decoration they choose to print on their clay pieces. Discuss the quiet elegance, simplicity of form and style that are indicative of Korean ceramics.

Students sketch several ideas for their vessel forms that could be used for a variety of functions.

Students research some ideas for characteristic motifs of Korean ceramics and sketch them, while giving thought to what type of motif would appear on the type of vessel they are designing.

Demonstrate the coil building method in ceramics, including scoring, using slip and the correct way to store pieces to keep them properly moist. Discuss specifics of creating the various forms they want to achieve. Discuss specific properties of porcelain clay as it differs from the clay they have used in the past.

Students will construct their vessels using the coil building technique.

Students practice the painting of their decorative subject matter on paper using watered down tempera that will mimic the consistency of the iron oxide. This will be done at this point so that their pieces can dry sufficiently for applying the iron oxide.

Demonstrate the painting of iron oxide onto the leather hard clay including ways to correct mistakes (using a flexible metal rib to gently scrape the surface). Students will decorate their clay vessels using bamboo brushes and iron oxide.

Pieces will be fired by the teacher when they are bone dry.

Glaze will be applied by brushing, although if pieces were small enough and glaze quantity sufficient, dipping would be preferred, after waxing the bottom.

Glaze pieces will be fired by the teacher.

## Assessment

Student work will be assessed in two ways:

- class critique where they will discuss how their vessels display both functionality and design true to Korean philosophies from either the Goryeo (Koryo) period or present Korea. Discuss how these philosophies may have maintained or overlapped.

- Class discussion of individual student's choices of motifs and how their choices were based on their learning about Korea.
- student/teacher evaluation rubric, the exact questions to be formulated at the time of the lesson so that they are pertinent to the actual results.

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\*\* Image on the lesson plan was drawn by the author.