



## Beastly Bobblehead

Create a whimsical patterned bobblehead out of clay

**(art + history)**

Toys with moving, bobbing heads are believed to date back at least 150 years. The earliest known reference to a toy with a moveable head is from the 1842 short story "The Overcoat" by Nikolai Gogol, which described a character as having a neck which was "like the neck of plaster cats which wag their heads." Later, larger ceramic figures of animals, ranging in size from about 6 to 8 inches tall, were produced in Germany. These toys had spring-connected heads, and were called "nodders" or "bobbars" because of the way their heads would bob on their bodies.

By using both the slab and pinch pot method of forming, a bobble head can be made while also teaching a lesson in balance! The pinch pot head may need to have clay added or subtracted to create a perfect balance on the point of the body. Interesting pasta shapes create a decorative pattern on the slab body that is then either glazed or painted.

**GRADES 3-12** Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

### Materials (required)

Blick® Talc-Free White Clay, 50 lb (30544-1050); share two boxes across class, about 3 lbs per student

Blick® Medium Weight Cotton Canvas Roll, Unprimed, by the Yard, 7 oz, 62" wide (07309-1062); use enough to cover work tables

Rolling Pin, Wooden, 10" (30345-1010); share six across class

Boxwood Clay Tool Sets, set of 10 tools, 6" long (30304-1069); share three sets across class

Blick® Studio Acrylic Sets, set of 12 tubes, 21 ml (01637-0129); share one set across class

Blick® Scholastic Short Handle Golden Taklon Flat Wash, set of 4 (05859-0049); share six sets across class

### Optional Materials

Amaco® Stonex White Clay (33247-)

Clay Thickness Strips (30323-1009)

Amaco® LG Series Liquid Gloss Glazes (30413-)

Blick® Ceramic Glaze Detail Brush Set (05692-1009)

Pro Needle Tool (34920-1063)





**Step 1:** Make a repeating pattern on a slab of clay by pressing pasta shapes into it.



**Step 2:** After the slab has slightly stiffened, roll it into a cone shape. Score and slip to attach at the seam.

### Preparation

1. Cover tables with canvas.
2. Distribute various shapes of pasta across the class.
3. Teach a brief lesson about pattern, repetition, and rhythm: **repetition** refers to repeating one object or shape; **pattern** is a combination of elements or shapes repeated in a recurring and regular arrangement; and **rhythm** is a combination of elements repeated, but with variations.

### Process

1. Using a rolling pin and clay thickness strips or a yardstick on each side of the rolling pin, roll out a slab approximately 12" x 12" x 1/2" thick.
2. Using various pasta shapes as stamps, make impressions onto the slab. Create a repeating pattern across the slab. Experiment on a piece of scrap clay to discover what kinds of impressions various types of pasta make. Experiment with groupings of pasta pieces to make an innovative motif.
3. Allow the slab to stiffen. In the meantime, create a head for the bobblehead using the pinch pot method. Beginning with a ball of clay about the size of a small orange, press a thumb into the middle and start rotating in a circle while pinching the clay and thinning it out to make a bowl shape. The open portion on the bottom of the pinch pot will be the neck area.
4. Add a piece of clay to make a protruding nose, ears, or horns. Add facial details with clay tools. On the inside of the head, make a smooth hollow at the very top with a finger or tool. Allow the head to stiffen to a leather-hard stage. NOTE: Make sure the head will balance on a central point by balancing it onto the handle of a tool to be sure it doesn't lean too far one way or the other. If more weight is needed on one side, add or remove some clay until it balances.
5. Trim the edges of the patterned slab into a square. Stand the slab up on the table and form it into a cone shape. Trim off any clay that overlaps, and join the seams with the "score and slip" method, i.e., scratch the seams with a fork or needle tool, and apply liquid clay slip to act as "glue." The top of the cone shape should

**Step 3:** Make a pinch pot head and check the balance by placing it on the body. Add or remove clay if necessary to create balance and bobble.

6. be formed into a rounded, smooth point. Once the body is leather hard, try balancing the head on the point.
6. Once completely dry, the clay parts should be fired at a bisque temperature. Use acrylic paints to finish the bobblehead. Alternately, bisque fire, apply glaze to the finished piece, then glaze fire.
7. Place the head onto the body, and watch it bobble!

### Options

- Make an alien bobble head, or a bobble head of yourself or someone you know!
- Experiment with scale. Make a very large or very small bobblehead.



## National Standards for Visual Arts Education

**Content Standard #1** — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

**K-4** Students describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses.

**5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

**9-12** Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

**Content Standard #3** — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

**K-4** Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.

**5-8** Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.

**9-12** Students reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture.