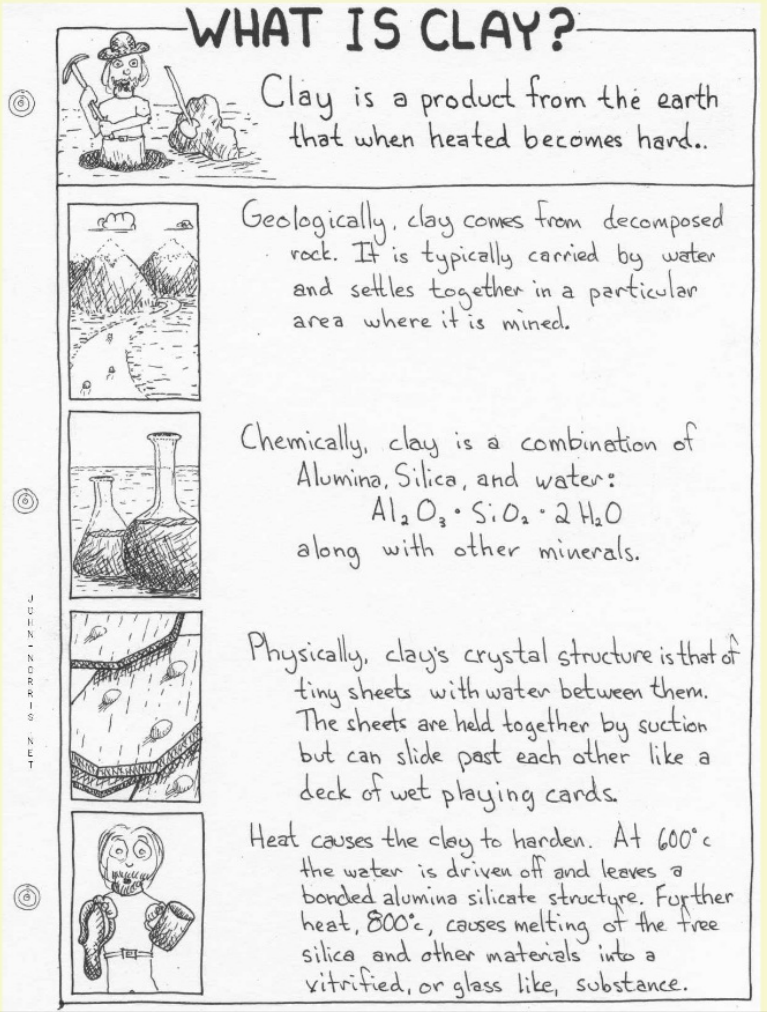
Stages of Clay

and Clay Vocabulary

Clay

Fine grained, firm, earthy material that is plastic when wet, brittle when dry and very hard when heated.



Clay

- Clay often has to be sifted to remove impurities such as rocks, pebbles, sand, twigs, branches and roots.
- Most potters today do NOT mine their own clay

Types of Clay

- Earthenware - Most common type of clay found; highly plastic and sticky. Often contain iron (making them red in color) and other impurities. Low-fire.

Stoneware - Very plastic and often gray when wet. Can be mid- or high-fire.

Ball Clay - Highly plastic and contain very few mineral impurities. High-fire.

Fire Clay - Free of impurities, often used in other clays to give extra roughness or "tooth." High-fire.

Porcelain - Not very plastic and can be difficult to work with. SUPER high-fire (3200 degrees!)

Slip

Potters glue. Slip is used to join clay to clay and as decoration. It is the consistency of toothpaste when used like glue. Slip is made of clay and water.

Plastic

Term used to describe working clay that can be bent and shaped without cracking or breaking

- To test the placticity of clay, wind a small coil of clay around your finger, if it breaks, it is not plastic enough.

Not plastic enough

Wedge

Kneading clay in order to remove all air bubbles.

Leatherhard

The condition of a clay body that has dried somewhat but can still do be joined to other pieces or carved into. There are three stages:

1. Early - Still able to move clay without cracking or damage.
2. Middle - Can no longer mover clay without cracking or damage. Good time to create texture or carve into clay.
3. Late - Clay is still cool to touch, good time to do detail carving, clean edges, fine tune, etc.

Drying

Once your piece is finished, allow it to dry.

Slow drying is best because it allows the moisture to excape more evenly from all parts at the same time.

Clay that dries to quickly may warp or crack.

Greenware

Clay that has completely dried and is ready to be fired in the kiln.

- Sometimes this stage is called bone-dry.
- Greenware is VERY fragile at this point.

Kiln

Super hot oven that is uesd to heat the clay to make it permanent. Reaches temperatures over 2000 degrees!

- Earthenware is a LOW fire clay - it fires at about 1850 degrees.

Firing

Heating clay to make it permanent.

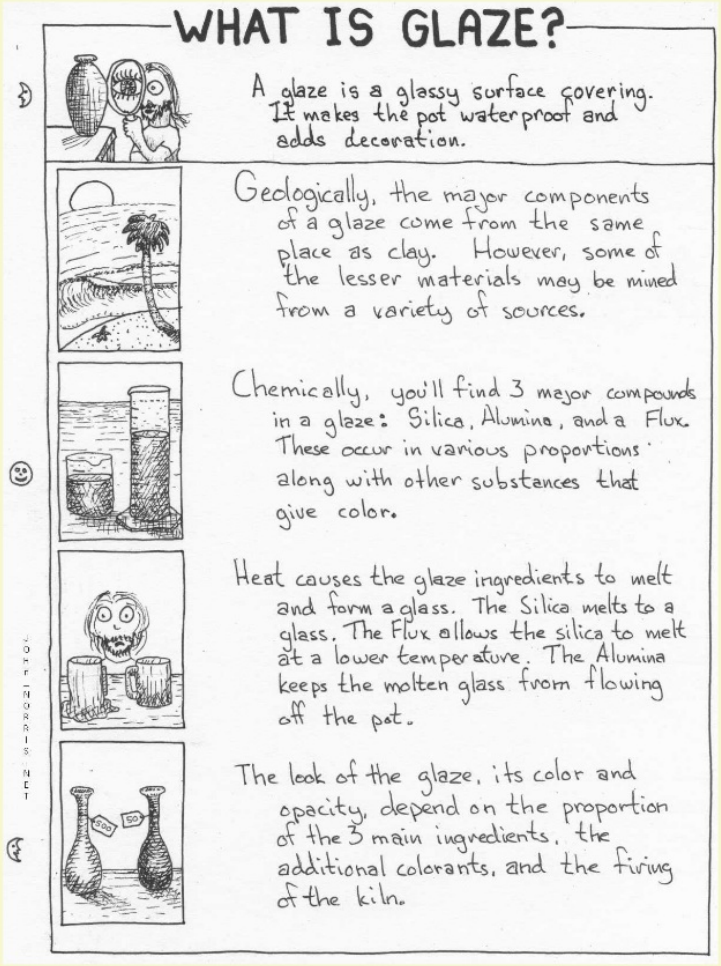
Bisque Firing

First firing of unglazed ware at low temperature. Removes all moisture and makes the clay easier to handle.

- ★ Bisqueware - the term for clay that has been fired once.

Glaze

A combination of minerals that is applied to the surface of bisque ware and forms a glassy coating when heated.



Applying Glaze

- 2 Functions of glaze
  - seal
  - decorate
- 4 Most Common methods of Glazing:
  - Brushing*
  - Pouring*
  - Dipping
  - Spraying
- For best coverage, apply 2-3 thick coats of glaze!

Pinch

Creating a piece of pottery by pinching and molding a solid piece of clay with your fingers/hands.

Slab

Type of clay construction where rolled out or flattened slabs (or squares) of clay are scored and slipped in order to attach them together.

Coil

Clay hand-building technique that uses rope-like pieces of clay to form the pot. Once the desired size has been reached, coils can either be smothed out or left showing.

Wheel Thrown

To form ceramic ware on a potters wheel.