

## Do it yourself

### From fragments to clay pots

**Objects: Fragments of a vessel (KM1400: 4a-c, 7a-b, 8a-d, 8f, 11a-b)**

The objects in the mission are pottery fragments from various parts of ancient Mesopotamia. Fragments of the pot have ended up at the National Board of Antiquities, as they have in the past been asked to take samples from Iraq from different cultural areas and eras. In this task, you make your own clay pot, using 3D pot fragments as a model. It is also intended to look for information on the cultural areas where the original pots were made. The task can be carried out, for example, as a joint project of history and visual arts.

1. Get to know the objects. Consider and deduce what the pots looked like intact.
2. Select one of the pot shards and make or draw the clay pot according to its instructions. Continue the pattern visible on the fragment throughout the pot and deduce from the fragment the size and shape of the intact pot.
3. Find out where the pottery piece you selected comes from (see item details below the 3D model). Use the Internet to find out what is known about the history of that area and era.
4. Present your finished pot to your pair / group OR write a presentation about your pot about its historical context. The school's own museum exhibition can be organized from the finished pots, where the information written by the students serves as exhibition information.

### Make a seal

**Objects: Scarab (KM14560: 885b-A), Scarab (KM14573: 2), Scarab (KM14560: 514), Scarab (KM14560: 885b-B), Cylinder Seal (VK5738: 4)**

In the ancient Middle East and Egypt, seals were an important means of identification for a long time. Get to know the 3D-modeled scarabs and the cylinder seal, and read the appendix "About the seals of the ancient Middle East and Egypt."

1. Find out
  - a. What is the difference between a scarab and a cylinder seal?
  - b. Why have so many ancient seals been found in the Middle East and Egypt?
  - c. Why should an image or text be engraved on a seal as a mirror image?
2. View the scarab scales. What are the approximate sizes of the following objects? What other observations can be made of objects?  
Scarab KM14560: 885b-B  
b Scarab KM14560: 514
3. Make your own seal! Decide whether to make a scarab or a cylinder seal, and copy the 3D-modeled objects. Consider and decide what you want your seal to say. Does it contain text, images, or both? Is it an object for personal or administrative use? What does it say about its owner, the time of its manufacture, and the culture in which it is made? Make an

object out of clay or Fimo molding compound. When your seal is ready, try printing it on soft clay, molding compound or modeling wax. What will the picture look like? The following tools are needed for this task:

- a. Clay or Fimo molding compound for sealing and sealing.
- b. A sharp stick (e.g., a toothpick or needle) to engrave the seal patterns.
- c. A film to protect unused clay or other selected design material from drying.
- d. Wet wipes to wipe your hands or work surface if necessary.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SEALS OF THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST AND EGYPT

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Seals were an important means of communication in the ancient Middle East. The image or mark surface engraved on them was typically printed in wet clay, with the seal printing acting as if it were a signature. They were used by both private individuals and national authorities. Private individuals printed their marks on treaty texts drawn up on clay tablets, for example, and royal officials printed a state seal on cereal pots collected as taxes. In addition, seals could ensure that the object or space remained intact, for example by sealing the entrance to the tomb. The drinking pots were also sealed to keep the liquid in the pot.



A cylinder seal is typically a roll made of clay or various types of stone, on the outer surface of which pictures or inscriptions were engraved. These were usually engraved on the object as a mirror image, allowing the image to be displayed correctly when the roller was rolled on wet clay. Cylinder seals were popular, especially in ancient Mesopotamia.

The Scarab is a stamp seal reminiscent of a manure beetle sacred in ancient Egypt. In the scarabs, the images and inscriptions were engraved on the flat surface of the object, i.e. on the abdominal side of the manure beetle. The smallest scarabs are only about the size of a

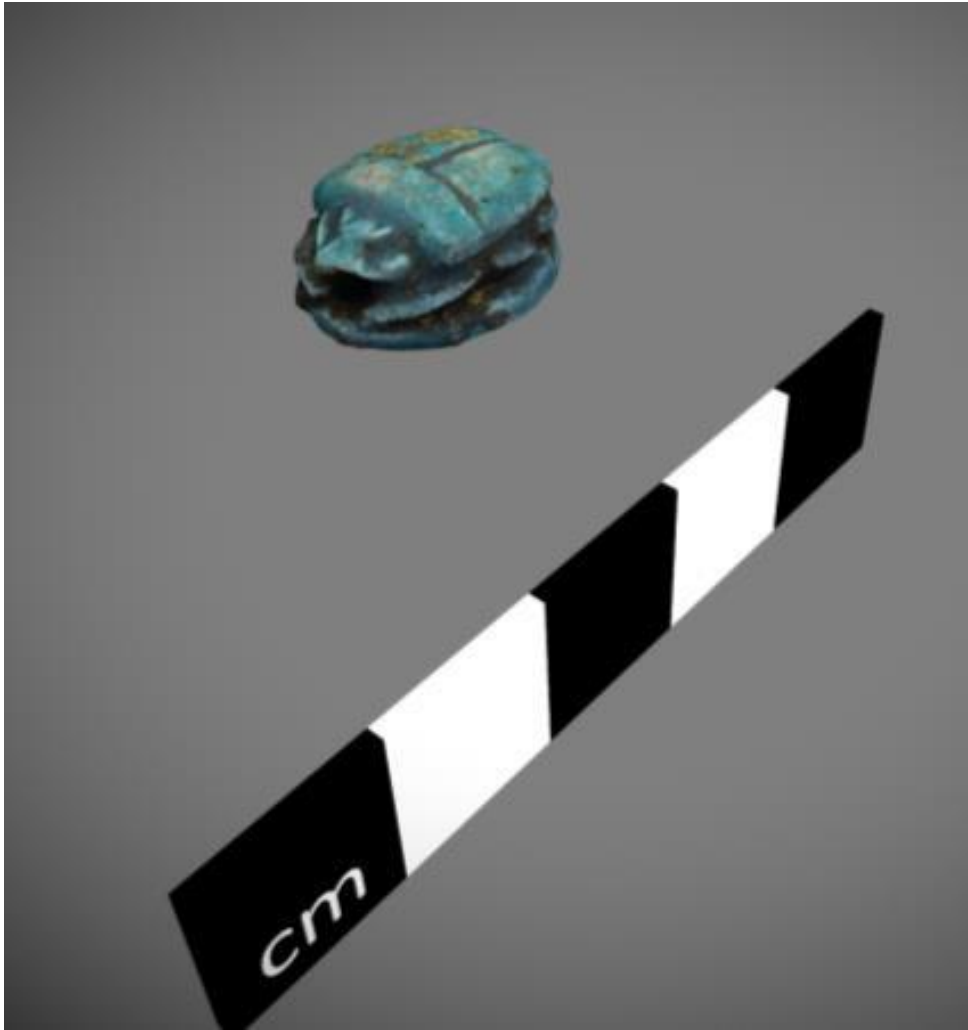
tern. Also in the scarabs, the characters were often engraved as a mirror image to make them appear properly printed on clay. Scarab is just one form of stamp seal. In addition, other insect and animal figures, human faces, and various geometric shapes were made, the flat surface of which was used for identification.



Lantakuoriainen (kuva: Wikipedia)



Kuva: Finna



Due to their small size, the seals were cheap to manufacture and easy to carry. Indeed, seals form a significant part of the finds in the ancient Middle East. Scarabs and cylinder seals often have a hole in the middle through which a string was threaded. This made it easy to carry the object around your neck or wrist, for example.

Because the seals were often small in size, it placed restrictions on the image subjects used in the objects. In state propaganda, pictorial subjects were often utilized to help the ruler convey messages. In particular, the kings of the Kingdom of Assyria took advantage of the so-called lion hunt theme in their royal propaganda, in which the king was portrayed as a powerful killer of a lion. In Assyrian palaces, the many stages of lion hunts were depicted in relief images revolving around the palace walls, but on state seals, because of their reduced size, only the actual scene of killing the lion was depicted.



Kuva: British Museum



Lähde: Egger & Keel, "Seals and Sealings" (julkaistaan 2021)

A seal print on the clay (top) and part of a palace relief (right) depicting King Assurbanipal hunting a lion. Both objects are in the possession of the British Museum.

