

## Fairies in nature

In this task, we are going to make a fairy out of home-made clay.

In old Finnish mythologies nature is very important, and forests, especially, have always been very valued places. One had to treat forests with great respect, because we believed that creatures invisible to us lived there. According to the tales, if you know how to traverse the forest with alert senses, you may notice the forest folk and receive help from them. If you behave recklessly and harm the forest, it will set hurdles along your path.

To this day, it is good to listen to the advice of the ancient folks and walk through the forest in a state of awareness. That way, you won't trip on tree roots or bruise yourself on rocks. And you also won't miss out on the experience of Spring and the early Summer in nature. Nature is full of wonders for one who is willing to seek them out!

In your opinion, what is a fairy like? What is it protecting or looking after? Does the fairy you are picturing look like a person, plant or animal, or something completely different? Think of the shape of the fairy, face and pattern on its skin. You can sketch a draft of your character on a piece of paper, or you can describe your fairy by writing down the most important features.

Make yourself some clay using the recipe in these instructions. Using the instructions, you will get a small, apple-shaped piece of clay. Try out how this clay takes shape in your hands.

Mould the fairy out of the clay. Try to get the shape that you want by squeezing and pressing the clay into the character you'd like to see. If you put together the character from separate pieces, remember to press the pieces together carefully. You can press different patterns onto the surface of the character using, for example, the tip of a pen or a wooden stick.

Leave the character to dry in peace 2-3 days. Don't touch or twist the character while it is drying, because the thin parts might break. The dry figure is hard and you can colour it with watercolours – avoid using too much water, so the clay doesn't become moist again. After the paint is dry, you can finish the surface by painting on a drop of skim milk. The casein in milk fixes the colour to the surface of the character like glue and makes the surface slightly water resistant and more durable.



Hugo Simberg: Syksy  
Picture: The National  
Gallery



Hugo Simberg: Halla  
Picture: The National  
Gallery

## What you need

To prepare the clay, you need: 2 bowls, a teaspoon and a measure you can use to measure 1 dl and 0.5 dl.

For the ingredients of the clay, you need 5 sheets of toilet paper ripped into small pieces, 1 dl wheat flour, 0.5 dl salt, 0.5 dl water and 1 tsp cooking oil

For finishing the ready character: watercolours for painting and a drop of skim milk to finish the colour.



A Guardian of the Pea made from clay.  
picture: Minttu Hyytiäinen

## Goal

In this exercise, you are learning to make home-made clay and practicing three dimensional sculpture of an imaginary creature. By reading the background information, you learn about art history.

## Background

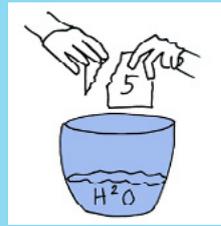
Symbolism was an artistic movement that made use of metaphors and symbols in its work. The artists did not depict the world realistically using their observable surroundings as a model, as before. Instead, they painted a world of their imagination and mental spaces. Symbolism also influenced poetry and other arts.

[Hugo Simberg](#) (1873-1917) was a Finnish artist and graphic designer whose work featured a lot of symbolism. Hugo Simberg thought about what different natural phenomena would look like if we could see them. He depicted 'halla' (Finnish for sub-zero temperatures at night), [Autumn](#) and [wind](#).

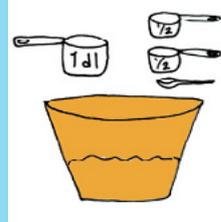
Ellen Thesleff (1869-1954) was also a Finnish artist and graphic designer. She depicted Spring as a character in her painting [Finnish Spring](#).

ADDITIONAL TASK: [Here](#) you can find a playful test to see what kind of forest fairy you would be.

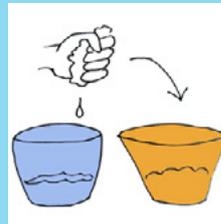
## Clay instructions:



1. Rip up the 5 pieces of toilet paper into one bowl, adding enough water to thoroughly wet the paper. You don't need to measure the water. Leave it for now.



2. Mix the 1 dl of flour and 0.5 dl of salt in another bowl. Add 0.5 dl of water to the flour and water mix. Add 1 tsp (teaspoon) of cooking oil.



3. Take the soaked pieces of toilet paper from the other bowl and squeeze them in your hands to drain most of the water. You will have a crumbly mass of paper. Add the crumbly paper to the flour mix.



4. Knead the mixture carefully by hand. If the dough feels dry and crumbly, you can add water. Add a little bit at a time and very carefully. If the dough feels wet and sticks to your hands, add a little flour. When the dough feels even, you can start to sculpt it.

If you are not using the clay right away or if you are saving it for another time, put the dough away in a sealed plastic bag so that it doesn't dry out. Apparently, the clay becomes better after a day or two.