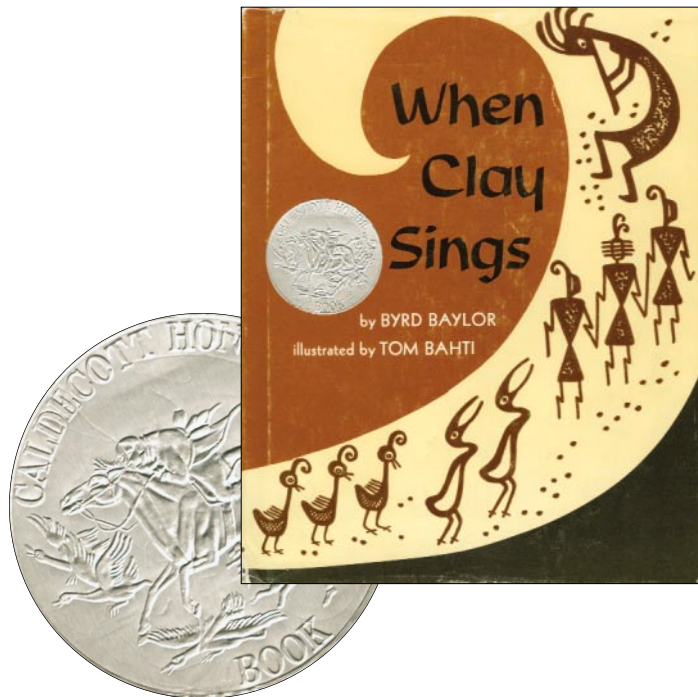


# Read **WHEN CLAY SINGS**

## Uncovering Evidence About Objects



In Native American cultures, even shards of broken pottery are filled with the spirits of the people who owned them. In *When Clay Sings*, author Byrd Baylor explores Native American history by imagining the lives of the people who created and used old broken pieces of pottery. Traditional images of bird, lizards, and hunters found on the pottery of the desert Southwest bring the story to life.

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## What Do You Think

### A Few Things to Think About

Is it possible for an object to have a spirit? To “sing in its own small voice” of other times and places?

While objects can’t really speak, studying them can help you discover when they were made and the role that they played in the lives of the people who used them. If you look at an object carefully and learn to ask it the right questions, you will begin to “hear” the story it has to tell.

Would you like to know more about Native American pottery? Visit the American Encounters exhibition at the National Museum of American History, Behring Center or a nearby history museum that has a collection of Native American objects.

The data retrieval sheet on the following page can be used while researching any type of object.

## Uncovering the Evidence

Like detectives or reporters, historians uncover stories of the past by asking who, what, when, why, where, and how. You can do the same thing when visiting a museum or any time that you would like to know more about an object or event.

As you begin your investigation, remember that knowing the name of something doesn't always mean that you understand its importance. If you keep this in mind, you will find that objects have a bigger story to tell than you could ever have imagined.

### Ask Yourself:

What is this object?

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What was it used for? How did it work?

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How old is it? How can you tell?

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How was it made? Was it made by hand or by machine? What is it made of?

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## Ask Yourself:

Who made it? How can you tell?

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Where was it made? How can you tell?

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Is it something that was used every day or only on special occasions?

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What role did it play in the life of the person who made it?

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What role did it play in the life of the person who used it?

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