

**SPRING BREAK**  
**ART EXTRAVAGANZA**

**Artwork of the Day: Ancient Nok  
Sculpture from Africa**

Kimbell Art Museum



## Ancient Nok Sculpture from Africa

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Named “Nok” after the modern village near where they were found in northern Nigeria, terracotta (red clay) sculptures like this were made by people who lived about 1,000 years ago.

**List the shapes that you see—especially on the face.** Most Nok figures have geometric-shaped features complemented by thick, arched eyebrows and a high hairline. The carefully rounded holes in this man's eyes, nose, mouth, and ears create a lively expression.

**What tells you this is an important person?** Nok figures often display elaborate hairstyles and ropes of beaded necklaces. An animal horn carried on this figure's back suggests that he may have been a healer or spiritual leader.

Scroll down for SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES inspired by this sculpture.



# Ancient Nok Sculpture from Africa

*Art-Making Connections*

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**Use your favorite homemade playdough** to create a head with coil-building techniques like ancient Nok artists used.

- Roll the clay into a long rope. Make sure it's not too thin or fragile.
- Create a small circle with one end of your coil rope and then continue winding the coil up to create a cylinder.
- Use your fingers to smooth over the outer surface of the clay cylinder. The Nok sculpture's smooth surfaces show its maker's skilled artistry.
- Use a plastic knife or other pointed tool to carve triangular eyes and other shapes to create the face!

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## Ancient Nok Sculpture from Africa

*Write, Compare, Research*

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**Imagine how this ancient sculpture looked when it was brand-new.** Create a drawing that adds his missing arms and legs. Do you think he was standing, sitting, or kneeling?

[Visit the Kimbell's website](#) to see sculptures from different cultures across the vast continent of Africa. Compare the materials used and notice how artists emphasize shapes to express power and importance.

**Read a book or visit a trusted online source** to see more examples of Nok sculptures and to discover what else we have learned about their culture—such as their early mastery of ironworking.

**Look at a map of Africa** to find the Jos Plateau region in Nigeria, where these sculptures were found!

## Art

*Male Figure*, African, Nok culture (c. 500 B.C.–A.D. 500), c. 195 B.C.–A.D. 205, terracotta. Kimbell Art Museum

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