

## Make Your Own Gorget

**Time:** 1 hour – 90 minutes

### SC Education Standards:

- Social Studies: 2-4.1 – 2-4.3; 3-2.1; 4-1.2; 6-4.4; 8-1.1; WG-4.1
- English Language Arts:
  - Grade 1: Communication: 1.1-1.5
  - Grade 2: Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 2.2
  - Grade 3: Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.4
  - Grade 4: Communication: 1.1-1.5; 2.1
  - Grade 5: Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1
  - Grade 6: Communication: 1.1-1.5
  - Grade 7: Communication: 1.1-1.5
  - Grade 8: Communication: 1.1-1.5

### Materials Needed:

- ½ lb of clay per student
- String
- Paper plates (students will build their gorget on this plate)
- Wax paper (to help prevent the gorget from sticking to the plate)
- Decorations (beads, sequins, mosaic tiles, stones, puff balls – anything decorative)
- Pencil (to poke holes in the gorget for string and for use in decoration)

This activity is designed to help the students express themselves through visual symbolism. Each student will use air-drying clay to make a clay gorget to take home that says something about them.

### Introduction:

During the Mississippian period, there were many luxury goods being made for chiefs and high-ranking people of the mound complexes that developed. One of these items was the gorget, made of shell, mica, stone, etc. These items had different religious or personal symbols carved on them and demonstrated something significant about the wearer.

### Activity Steps:

1. Tell the students about gorgets – what they were, when they were popular, etc. Show examples if possible. \*For a more in-depth study\* - have multiple examples of gorgets and allow students to discuss their interpretations in groups. Have them present their interpretations and cite their reasoning.
2. Give each student a paper plate. Have them write their names on their plates. Also give everyone a sheet of wax paper to place on top of the plates.
3. Give each student about ½ a lb of clay apiece.
4. Have them roll the clay into a ball and flatten it out into a rough circular shape.
5. A little ways down from the top, use a pencil tip to poke two holes close together. This is where the string will go through so the students can wear their gorgets. Be careful not to poke the holes too close to the edge of the gorget or place them too close together. (Note – string will not be able to be put through until gorgets have become at least leather-hard.)

6. Have students decorate their gorgets with the materials provided. They can push items into the clay or draw pictures with a pencil.

Let students pair up and try to interpret each other's gorgets. What does their design represent? What made them choose certain items/designs? Then, go around the room and talk about their gorgets. How many people interpreted correctly? Given what they have learned during this activity, do they think archaeologists/researchers are always correct in their interpretation of what prehistoric gorgets mean? Why or why not?