

Station F: Pottery (Pottery Workshop in Ceramicus)

- 1. Learn about this site.** You are at a pottery workshop at Ceramicus, an industrial area in which Athenian artisans use advanced techniques to produce beautiful pottery.
- 2. Read the information about pottery and take notes.** Carefully read and discuss the information below about Greek pottery. Then, list the key features of each of the three main historical periods in the development of Athenian pottery in the Station F section of **Student Handout 2.2A**.

Because of its beauty and utility, Greek pottery was valued throughout the Mediterranean in ancient times. Greek artists created ceramic vessels—such as storage jars, drinking cups, mixing bowls, and plates—for both functional and decorative purposes. Potters made these vessels by shaping wet clay on a potter's wheels and baking it in ovens, or *kilns*, at about 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat hardened the pots and set the painted designs permanently into the clay.

The history of pottery in ancient Greece can be divided into several distinct periods. One of the earliest periods, the *Geometric*, occurred between 900 and 700 B.C.E. Pottery created during this period was painted and carved with simple, repeating shapes. Potters created vases with designs such as circles or half-circles, triangles, right angles, and squares. Along horizontal panels around the vase, artists created stick figures in silhouette that represented animals or humans.

Around 700 B.C.E., Greek potters abandoned the stylized geometric shapes. They began creating vases with realistic black figures painted upon the red clay of the pottery. These designs were more realistic than previous depictions. They showed figures from mythical scenes, as well as scenes from daily life, such as farming and seafaring. This style of pottery is often referred to as the *Black-Figure* style.

By about 500 B.C.E., Athenian artists were using new production methods to create red figures on black backgrounds, a style that became known as the *Red-Figure* style of pottery. The human and animal figures were left in the original red color of the clay, while the background of the vessel was painted black and fired. Using this method, the artist was able to create more realistic figures, showing a variety of poses, human muscles and facial features, and precise details of clothing.