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TEACHING TUESDAY

DORODANGO

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Playing in mud is a favorite pastime of children, but dorodango (泥だんご), also known as hikaru dorodango, makes mud into a special Japanese art form. Literally meaning “mud dumpling”, dorodango are created using earth and water to create a delicate, shiny sphere.

The exact origins of hikaru dorodango are unknown, although making mud balls has been a traditional pastime amongst the children of Japan for centuries. Dorodango fell out of favor as modernization progressed, until a professor from the Kyoto University of Education took it up to study children’s play. The pastime eventually became popularized and is now practiced as an artform around the world. The TV show MythBusters even used dorodango techniques to test the myth that you “can’t polish a turd”.

The process of making a dorodango is a bit complicated, but can be broken down as follows. Starting with a lump of mud, squeeze out most of the water then slowly and gently add layers of fine, dry dirt on top, while shaping into as perfect a sphere as possible and smoothing over any rough spots. As the ball dries and you continue to refine the surface, a hard shell will form on the outside. The surface can then be buffed into a high gloss with an ordinary rag.