

A whole world in your palm!



Netsuke (pronounced net-su-kee) are miniature, carved sculptures that were invented in 17th-century Japan to serve as a kind of toggle.

Early netsuke were made from carved nuts but the ones in the Holburne collection are made from ivory or wood.

Be inspired to design your own netsuke to nestle in your hand!



Traditional Japanese garments, robes called **kimono**, had no pockets; men who wore them needed a place to store their personal belongings, such as pipes, tobacco, money, seals and medicines. Their solution was to place objects in Inro boxes or pouches hung by cords from the robes' sashes. These were held shut by sliding beads on cords.

The fastener that secured the cord at the top of the sash was a carved, button-like toggle called a *netsuke*.

Netsuke production was most popular during the Edo period in Japan, around 1615–1868.



Netsuke from the Holburne's collection. We are currently making a photographic record of all our netsuke as many are not on display.



Netsuke developed from being purely practical to highly artistic, often showing aspects of Japanese life and folklore. We see ordinary people at work, such as fishermen catching fish and real and mythological animals. These often include rats, mice, cats, monkeys and octopus!

The word is formed from the two Japanese characters *ne+tsuke*, meaning "root" and "to attach".

Netsuke and kimono inspiration board



Activity

Design a beautiful netsuke to fit your palm!



Draw around your hand

Draw your netsuke directly inside your hand outline

OR

Design it on another piece of paper, cut out and stick on

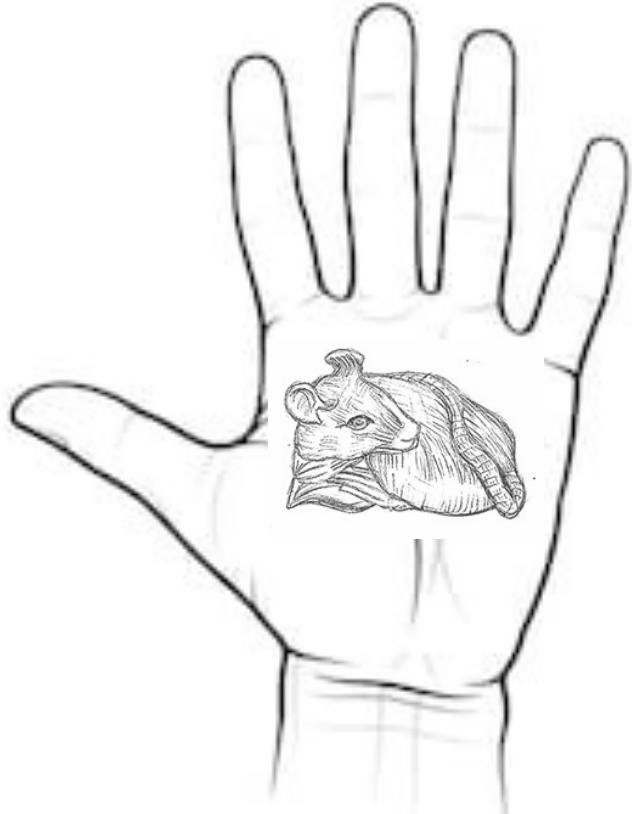
Think about the overall shape of your piece.

How will your netsuke design fit into this shape? Does it need to curve?

Imagine you are carving it— which parts will you carve away? Shade these in with a dark pencil.

Have fun adding pattern inspired by Japanese kimono's and origami paper either onto your netsuke OR behind your hand outline.

About ivory - this was one of the most common materials used to make netsuke. This is because it is very hard, fine grained and can be carved and polished smooth. Artists located in Osaka, Kyoto, and Edo (Tokyo) had access to ivory in the old days. Netsuke made from mammoth ivory (huge quantities still exist in the Near East and Siberia) fill part of the tourist trade demand today. Under the 2018 UK Ivory Bill It is illegal to deal in items containing elephant ivory, regardless of their age, within the UK, as well as exporting and importing.



Types of netsuke

Katabori netsuke or 'sculpture *netsuke*' - are the most common type and are compact three-dimensional figures carved 'in the round'.



Share a photo of what you make!

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