

# A Family Dwelling Space

*House Model*, Unidentified Nayarit Artist

Let your eye move around this piece. Take note of what you see. What is familiar and what is not?

This ceramic house model was made by Nayarit (*nah-yah-REET*) artists, who lived on the western coast of today's Mexico. House and village models like this one were used in funerary rituals and were placed in tombs to connect the living world with the afterlife.

Here, three generations of a family gather in a common space. Grandparents sit at the rear of the house, parents sit along its ledge, and two children sit just outside the covered portion of the home. Below, two dogs lay right outside an opening to a tomb, providing protection for the deceased and an ongoing connection to the living world and the family above. While this house model shows a multi-story building, archaeological evidence suggests ancient Nayarit families lived in one-story dwellings. The lowest level of this house represents the underworld. The Nayarit believed there was only a slight barrier between the living world and the afterlife. The activities of the family above could be observed and mirrored by ancestors in the underworld below.

## Classroom Activities

- Three generations of a family are featured in this house model. Invite students to investigate their own family tree or people in their lives that love and care for them. Ask students to illustrate their “tree of love” and share their stories with classmates.
- The past lives on through the stories we tell about it. Ask students to interview a grown-up about someone from an older generation. Students should include questions about the time period and location in their interviews. Invite them to write a paragraph about the story they heard and read it aloud to the class. Create a group timeline to show when each story took place.



Unidentified Nayarit Artist. *House Model*. 4th century BCE–3rd century CE. Ixtlan, Nayarit, Mexico. Earthenware, 11 x 5 1/2 x 5 1/8 in. (28 x 14 x 13 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Alan Wurtzbarger, BMA 1960.30.19

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