

*"Make a Joyful Noise": Renaissance Art and Music at Florence Cathedral*

**STEAM Activity:** Luca della Robbia, Inventor and Innovator!

Not only was Luca della Robbia an artist, but he was a creative innovator and problem solver. During the Renaissance, many artists, including della Robbia, began using terra cotta as a sculptural material because it was highly flexible, expressive, and relatively inexpensive compared to marble or bronze. The problem was that terra cotta was a fragile material that was vulnerable to weather. della Robbia adapted a glazing technique that was used in creating household ceramics called *maiolica* to also be used in creating artworks. The use of this method produced terra cotta works that were durable enough to endure the weather and luminous enough to shine in poor lighting. His incorporation of this method was celebrated as a major scientific and artistic discovery.

Take some time to talk about della Robbia's innovative use of materials with your class. After the discussion, divide the class into groups and give them many different types of household materials. Ask the groups to brainstorm a list of ways that their materials could be used in ways that they are not ordinarily used. Give the groups a second type of material, and have them brainstorm ways that they two materials could be used in conjunction.