



Two Rats on a Mussel Netsuke

**Date**  
19th century

**Primary Maker**  
Unknown artist, Japanese

**Medium**  
Carved wood

**Description**  
The word netsuke is formed using the symbol ne (根) meaning “root” and tsuke (付) meaning “attach.” The first netsuke were created in late sixteenth-century Japan as simple button fasteners for pouches and other containers that were hung on the sash (obi) of a kimono. As time progressed, the carving of these small figures became increasingly intricate as netsuke transformed from purely functional objects into fashionable indicators of status. Netsuke commonly depict imagery from nature, myth, and Japanese history. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, netsuke also became a popular type of collectible in the West. Netsuke - carved wood with two rats on a shell and two holes for stringing.

**Dimensions**  
Overall: 1 3/4 x 2 1/4 in. (4.4 x 5.7 cm)