

## LESSON PLAN

# Mask Making: The Art of Concealing and Revealing

Inspired by 19<sup>th</sup> Century Haida Mask

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Grade Level Elementary & Middle School

## Overview

Mask making is one of the world's oldest art forms. Masks are found in every corner of the globe and throughout recorded time. Students will make their own masks, reflective of their own culture and experience. In this way they will communicate emotion and narrative, in a fun and communal way.

## Anticipatory Set

From the ancient Egyptians to the ancient Greeks, from Mexico to Japan, Europe, India, and the Americas, masks have played a vital role in culture's religion, theater, and in a basic understanding of the seen and unseen world. Whether they were used to communicate with the dead or scare the living, masks can be powerful tools. And fun! Students will make masks that tell their own story and communicate their own messages.



*Mask of Zarathustra*

## Objectives

- students will learn of the history and uses of masks
- students will handle new and challenging materials, inviting them to imagine in 2-D as well as 3-D
- students will create a mask for display

## Resources

- Haida Masks Lesson (paper version); YouTube video posted by theartsmarton <http://goo.gl/DMiHDy>
- More mask making ideas; Blick Art Materials <http://www.dickblick.com/lesson-plans/discipline/maskmaking/>
- *Great Masks to Make*, Robyn Supraner\*
- *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks*, Ann Fienup-Riordan\*
- *Masks from Many Cultures* (video)\*

\*Available via Joslyn's Nelson Teacher Resource Center <http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers>

## Supplies

- Celluclay
- Disposable pie tins, wrapped in foil
- Clay / pottery tools
- Buttons, beads, feathers
- Water based acrylic paint, brushes
- (For a simpler mask, crayons, oval template, and shish-kabob skewers)

## Vocabulary

- |                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| • carve         | • face      |
| • color         | • mask      |
| • communication | • narrative |
| • culture       | • shape     |
| • emotions      | • texture   |

## LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Outline

1. Each student is given a pre-wrapped pie tin. (Have children wear smocks or grubby clothes to be messy with. Lots of little dishes of water are also handy!)
2. Place a cup of prepared Celluclay on the student's pie tin to start. (They may need more, but this is a good start.)
3. Have students cover the surface of the pie tin - making a round face shape for their mask.
4. Encourage students to make large expressive eyes, noses and lips. (Use little pieces of clay for cheeks and chins, or horns if they want to make a monster!)
5. At the end of the process, students can press buttons, beads, and feathers into the wet clay (it will hold anything). Make sure to poke two holes on either side of the mask to run string or wire through. (These masks are not made to be worn, but they look so cool on display!!!!)
6. When the masks are dry, (after a few days or so) peel them off the pie tins, and students can paint them with acrylic paint.

### Extensions

- This lesson can be used in conjunction with a history class, especially if studying ancient cultures as the Greeks, Romans, or Egyptians.
- Students can use masks to learn empathy with their understanding of what a sad face looks like, a mad face, a joyful face, and how to be a good friend.
- Masks can be used in theater productions – for example, put on a play using children wearing animal masks.

### Academic Standards

Available on online version at [www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers](http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers) [select Lesson Plans, then European]

### About the Artwork



The greater part of the Haida people live on Queen Charlotte Islands, a chain of mountains separated from the British Columbia mainland by some of the roughest open waters on the coast. Often regarded as the pre-eminent sailors of the region, they were also admired by Europeans for their art – most notably the dramatic totem poles – which was avidly acquired by private collectors and museums from the mid nineteenth century. As their wealth increased and they acquired steel blades through the fur trade, their production of art attained a scale and quality that contributed to an early conception of Haida as epitomizing all Northwest Coast cultures.

Haida masks invariably maintain the strong rhythmic and symmetrical qualities of their art yet frequently display the surprising realism so evident in this unusual portrait of a European or American man. His ample hair and bushy sideburns are rendered in taut, incised curves which, highlighted in red, represent a tour de force of artistic economy. Most startling is the inlaid material across the nose and cheeks that represents freckles, or perhaps the effects of smallpox.

Thought to have been worn ceremonially by chiefs and people of high rank, the more traditional and abstracted Haida masks were adorned with elaborate crests. The purpose of the realistic portrayals of foreigners, such as this, is unclear, and it is possible that some of them were direct commissions.

IMAGE: Artist Unknown (American, Haida, 19th century), Mask, n.d., painted wood with glass insets, 10½ x 9 in., Museum purchase, 1959.532