

Masks, Bringing a Legend to Life

Activity Information

Grade Appropriate Level: 4-7 (lower grades will need more assistance)

Duration: 3-4 forty minute class periods

Materials:

- Blank paper and pencil for each student
- Your needs will be based on whether the type of masks you choose to make are plaster, model magic or papier-mache masks. See the attached “Mask Making Ideas & Materials” handout from *Opus Framing* or view the handout at http://www.opusframing.com/library/pdf/mask_making.pdf
- Share pictures and books of First Nations masks and other dramatic masks. For optimal creativity in mask making, offer a variety of decorative materials for students to add the finishing touches to their masks. For example: glitter, acrylic paints, feathers, coloured yarn or wool, fabric swatches, felt, different size brushes, hot glue, material appropriate for making whiskers, eye lashes, etc. You should have thin, flexible cardboard available for students who may want to add animal like features to their masks, such as snouts or beaks, etc.
- Hole-punchers or other implement to put holes in the side of each mask
- Stretchy string or white elastic to tie to masks so students can wear them
- Show students real masks from your school board or local band office.
- You will need lots of open table and floor space and several adult helpers. Consider asking parents and volunteers from local art schools to assist you.

Objective

The purpose of this lesson is to provide an opportunity for students to create their own mask that will portray a character in their First Nations legend. Ideally, they will be able to display their creation for the school to see and also use it to portray their character in a dramatic play. You may wish to bypass the legend writing assignment and have students make masks based on a story you read together.



Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Fine Arts, Social Studies

- Make 2-D and 3-D images:
 - using a variety of design strategies, including reproduction
 - using a variety of media
 - to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
 - to illustrate and decorate
- Describe various image-development and design strategies
- Demonstrate respect for the work of self and others
- Demonstrate the ability to collaborate to develop a group display for the school or community
- Demonstrate the ability to sustain belief in their imagined or created environment

- Use a variety of vocal elements and movement to communicate meaning
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain focus within a drama structure
- Interact in role
- Demonstrate appreciation of contributions of Aboriginal people
- Assess the relationship between cultures and their environments

Introductory Activity

- Talk to the students about mask-making as a follow up to their writing assignment about First Nations legends. Have them choose a main character from their legend for mask making. Encourage students to choose a character that will allow for a lot of creative touches to be applied.



- Show them real masks or pictures and books of creative masks so that they get some examples of what they are trying to achieve.
- On blank paper you provide, have students complete a rough sketch of their mask. Remind them that there will be holes for part of the eye area and small holes for breathing through the nose area. The mouth opening may be small or large, based on the character they choose.
- You will need to check the students' ideas prior to starting the mask-making lesson. Ensure that they follow the necessary criteria for developing facial features and for representing their character accurately.

Suggested Instructional Strategies

- Invite several parents or other volunteers to help you with making the base of the mask. Plaster masks, in particular, are an effective and relatively easy way to create a wonderful final product, though adult guidance is needed to ensure that students are careful when applying the materials to the face. Students should be placed in partners. Students then will have a partner apply the plaster mask to their faces, according to the instructions enclosed in this package.



- Clear a large area of floor space so that there is sufficient room for half the class of students to lie on the floor while their mask is being created. Every mask-making area will also need a space for the supplies they'll be using.
- Especially for younger grades, it is a good idea for you to begin applying the first mask to a student volunteer so that the class understands the procedure and the safety precautions.

- Have adult helpers circulate the room during the project to help students.



- Follow the steps of the mask-making instructions, supplied by *Opus*. Once the first group has their masks set, keep them in an appropriate place for drying and repeat the same steps again.
- Note: for students who will be adding any extra cardboard features, they can do this

- step on their own once the mask of their face is complete. Also, before the masks are completely dry, adults will need to assist in the careful removal of the masks from the students' faces to ensure they set properly.
- Once all the steps from the *Opus* handout are complete, students will make use of the extra materials and decorations to complete their mask.

Suggested Assessment Strategies

Students should be assessed on their ability to:

- Accurately follow the outlined steps for mask making.
- Cooperate in groups and stay focused on task.
- Produce a mask that creatively fits the description of the character they chose to portray in their legend.



Suggested Extension Activities

- Students portray their character in a monologue they write based on their legend.



- Students can portray their character in a small skit they write based on their legend. They can choose a few other students to act in their play.
 - Students can write a class play incorporating all of the characters and present it to a school or parent audience.
 - In a hallway or display case, students can display their masks with a copy of their legend for others to view.
- Invite local First Nations people to demonstrate their own masks or to provide guidance to students in First Nations mask-making techniques.

Suggested Links

<http://www.educ.uvic.ca/faculty/mroth/438/environment/haidamask.html>

(a Haida mask-making activity)

<http://www.fxsupply.com/mask/mask.html>

<http://www.nativeonline.com/artists.html>

<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/sifc/firstchart1.htm>



<http://artscenecal.com/Listings/Pasadena/SouthwestMsmFile/SouthwestMsmExhibitions/ShimmeringSkyFile/ShimmeringSkyPortfolio1.html>

(a collection of BC and other native masks)

Lesson plan provided by: [Fored BC](#)

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MASK MAKING IDEAS & MATERIALS

Mask making is a fun and easy way to prepare for festivities. Whether you are helping children make masks for costumes or creating your own mask for an upcoming masquerade party, masks can be made very simply and they are an extremely cost effective project.



PLASTER MASKS

Materials:

- petroleum jelly or cold cream
- Plaster bandage or Rigid Wrap
- a container (to hold the strips of rigid wrap)
- newspaper or paper towels
- a roll of plastic food wrap
- a bowl of water
- scissors
- hair pins

Plaster bandage wrap (Rigid Wrap) is an easy and fast setting mold material which is safe for application to the skin. It is also useful for building up 3D surfaces and facial features.

Using Plaster Bandage: The bandage should be used with a release agent for easy removal. An economical and accessible choice is regular petroleum jelly, however, cold cream is a better choice when applying the bandage to skin/body hair as it is less aggravating and easier to wash off. To prepare the surface of an object with the chosen release agent, simply smooth it over the surface.

Cut the bandage into 1-2" squares and set them aside in a clean, dry bowl. Beside this have a bowl of clean, room temperature water. Drop a few squares in the water starting with 10-12 pieces for face masks. Work in 'batches' to avoid the material setting before you have an opportunity to apply it. The squares should absorb water but they should not be soaked too long (usually about a minute).

Working one square at a time, smooth the squares onto the face/original, building up an overall layer and then adding subsequent layers. Smoothing out the

bandages will help them better adhere to one another, while creating a more even surface for painting or decorating. Alternating the directions of the layers will help to improve the strength of the mask.

Once you have a layer approximately 2-3 squares deep, let the plaster set until it is almost dry (about 10 minutes) and then gently lift it off the face starting from under the chin pulling upwards. At this stage the plaster will retain its shape but will still be flexible enough for easy removal — you will find it has an unfinished look, but keep in mind you will refine the details through subsequent layers and decoration.

After removing, let the cast dry further to improve strength. Once it is completely dry you can build up layers to improve strength or add-on features. When the mask is fully dry you can carefully sand, prime, and paint or decorate. In addition, as the plaster is porous you can use white glue to apply surface decorations to the mask.

Staff Tips:

~Using plastic wrap across the model's eyes will keep water from dripping into the eye sockets. — Kelaine

~Add a cardboard shape to the mask for projecting animal beaks or snouts and then layer bandages over it to blend it into the mask. — Kelaine

~If you are using petroleum jelly on the model's skin or if you are working on an object you would like to be able to clean, keep some baby powder around as it will soak up the oil for easier removal. - Jenn

MASK MAKING IDEAS & MATERIALS

CRAYOLA MODEL MAGIC™

Materials:

- Crayola Model Magic™
- Acrylic paint

Crayola's Model Magic™ is a non-toxic, light-weight modeling compound which is easy to shape and manipulate with your hands.

Using Model Magic™: Mask making with Model Magic can be approached in a couple of different ways, you can make a free-handed form/shape to suit your imagination, since the compound is easy to work with. Or, if you prefer, you can draw an outline of the mask you want to create on a piece of cardboard and then build up "between the lines" using different shapes which you have cut or molded from the compound.

Model Magic can also be applied over a mold surface (made out of modeling clay, plaster or papier maché) to achieve a hollow version of that form. Before applying Model Magic you must dust the dry form with talcum powder to prevent the Model Magic from sticking to the surface. Then press the "wet" or uncured Model Magic onto the form, molding it to take shape. If the form you are duplicating is concave then it is best to remove the mold for drying, however, it is okay to leave the compound on a convex form to allow it to dry completely.

When dry, any of the above methods can be painted or decorated with acrylic based texture gels,



paints, mediums and varnishes. Prior to use, Model Magic can also be coloured simply by kneading it with a squirt of acrylic paint or blending colours together to create unique marbled effects. For another effect you can jelly-roll different colours together and cut pieces off in cross-sections to create flat, multi-coloured discs which are excellent for additional surface designs. Imbedding materials into the surface while it is still pliable and "wet", is another way to create an interesting look.

Product Tips

~Model Magic should not be applied thicker than 3/4" as it may crack and the interior will take a long time to dry.

— Crayola™

~Use toothpicks, a stylus, or clay modeling tools to sculpt Model Magic™ and to make holes for attaching string or ribbon to hold the mask in place. — Crayola™

PAPIER MACHÉ

Materials:

- newspaper
- decorative paper or any light to medium weight paper
- cardboard
- Wireform Mesh
- wallpaper paste or flour
- water and preserving agent (Alum)
- white glue and water
- acrylic medium and water

Papier Maché is an ideal way to create masks using economical materials. It is great for building up basic shapes which can be decorated with paint, specialty papers and transferred designs.

Papier Maché Glues:

There are a variety of glues to choose from which range in application, cost and consistency. Most are non-toxic because they are applied by hand, however, some people may find that they react to certain formulas regardless of the toxicity rating.

MASK MAKING IDEAS & MATERIALS

The most traditional kind of glue used for papier maché is wallpaper paste mixed with water to a thick creamy consistency. As an alternative you can use a mixture of regular household flour and water. Be aware that with the flour & water mixture a preservative is needed to prevent the mask from deteriorating over time. Alum, which is used in pickling and for setting fabric dyes will work by sprinkling a tablespoon into the mixture. For the best results you should gently heat the mixture with the Alum in a double-boiler, in order to activate the gluten.

White Glue or Acrylic Medium:

A half and half mixture of regular white glue or acrylic medium and water also works well as a papier maché glue. Both dry to a clear and flexible film which is useful in applications where you want a relatively light-weight, durable yet flexible final product. The transparent gloss finish of Acrylic Medium also works well as a final varnish.

Using Papier Maché:

To work with Papier Maché start by drawing and cutting the outline shape of the mask (or object) on a piece of lightweight cardboard, or create a 3D mold with Wireform mesh. No release agents are required for papier maché as you build the mask on top of the form. Keep this in mind when you design your mask.

If you are using the cardboard method, build up the shape you desire by taping scrunched up newsprint to the cardboard shape. The overall shape will be rough looking at this point but you will be able to refine it once you start to apply the strips of paper.

Applying the Strips of Paper: We recommend you tear the paper into strips instead of cutting them because the edges will feather out more easily, which will help avoid harsh "lines" in the final piece. Working with one strip at a time to avoid waste and to control the amount of glue on the strip of paper, dip the paper into the glue mixture and wipe off the excess. Place the strips onto your mold. To improve drying time allow the piece to dry thoroughly between

layers. Once you have coated the entire surface with 2 or 3 layers allow it to dry thoroughly.

If you are using a 3D form made out of Wireform mesh, tear the strips of paper, dip them into the glue mixture one at a time, wipe off the excess, and place onto the form you have created. Continue to build up the mask until there are 2 or three layers, and allow it to dry.

When completely dry, you can decorate your papier maché piece using acrylic paints, mediums, texture gels and varnish. It is also a good idea to coat the piece with acrylic gesso or primer before decorating. This improves the stability of the item and creates a proper surface for the paint to adhere to.



Staff Tips:

~Consider building half masks for kids as they are lighter in weight and have greater visibility. — Danette

~Keep in mind that the weight of the final piece is increased with each layer you add. — Kelaine

~When using newspaper use broad sheets as opposed to tabloid, the paper quality is higher. As well, with broad sheets the paper grain always runs up and down the columns of print so with no effort you can tear straight strips as long as you tear in the direction of the grain. — Danette

Product Tips

~Lumpier pastes such as wallpaper paste or the flour and water mixture will cause the final dried appearance of your project to appear quite rough.

MASK MAKING IDEAS & MATERIALS

*~For a smoother finish try sanding with a fine sand paper,
or use Stevenson's Modeling Paste to fill in any rough
spots and sand when dry.*

*~Felt or Foam can be used to line the mask, or cover
sensitive areas to make it more comfortable to wear.*

*~Decorate your masks with acrylic paints, acrylic gouache,
acrylic texture mediums or decorative papers.*

NOTES:



OPUS
Framing &
Art Supplies

OPUS Vancouver
1360 Johnston St
604-736-7028

OPUS Langley
20484 Fraser Hwy
604-533-0601

OPUS Victoria
512 Herald St
250-386-8133

OPUS Kelowna
1357 Ellis St
250-763-3616

OPUS North Vancouver
120 Lonsdale Ave
604-904-0447

OPUS National
Mail Order Service
1-800-663-6953

'where artists prefer to shop'

www.opusframing.com