

GREAT ART IDEAS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

TITLE OF LESSON: MAGICAL MASKS

YEAR 1–4

OVERVIEW

In this activity students will explore how ideas and beliefs are expressed in objects from other cultures and times. They will explore ways in which masks can be used to represent various characters and characteristics and create a decorative mask design to communicate their own ideas.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Compare masks from different historical and cultural contexts to see how ideas and techniques are similar or different.
- Use art and objects from different cultures as inspiration to plan and create their own mask designs.
- Share their ideas with their classmates about the expressive choices they made in their own work.

STUDENT EXAMPLE



Masks – made by Clifton Hill Primary School Year 2 students in an NGV workshop

RELATED ARTWORKS



**Tolai people, East New Britain Province, New Britain,
Papua New Guinea**

Alor mask 1970s

synthetic polymer paint on wood, feathers, fibre, plant roots, cane,
polyester and cotton

(a-b) 65.2 x 39.5 x 42.7 cm (overall) (variable)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Todd Barlin, Governor, 2005

© Tolai people



Toby Cedara

Op Nor Beizam (Tiger shark mask) 2017

pearl shell, bamboo, twine, goose feathers, raffia

84.5 x 67.4 x 27.7 cm (variable)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Loris Orthwein, 2017

© Toby Cedar/Courtesy of Umbrella Studio



Deme Hidemitsu (attributed to)
Noh mask, Ōbeshimi (17th century)

(*Nōmen Ōbeshimi* 能面 大癡見)

pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (Hinoki),
silk (thread, cord)

22.0 x 15.5 x 11.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011

DISCUSS

The masks shown are made by artists from Papua New Guinea, Australia and Japan. Each mask is designed to represent a special character or qualities.

- Artist Toby Cedar comes from the Torres Strait Islands. His mask *Op Nor Beizam (Tiger shark mask)*, 2017, shows one of his totems, the tiger shark, which represents law and power. A totem is an animal assigned to a person, family or clan which each person has a duty to understand and protect. In the Torres Strait Islands, masks were traditionally worn while telling stories through songs, dancing and performance.
- The *Alor* mask, 1970s, made by the Tolai people of Papua New Guinea, is a stylised carved mask with a feather headdress. It was made to be worn by men during initiation ceremonies and cultural festivals. These masks are used to adorn special structural platforms and houses for special celebrations.
- The *Noh* mask, *Ōbeshimi* was made in Japan in the seventeenth century. *Noh* theatre is the oldest form of Japanese theatre and combines music, dance and acting. *Ōbeshimi* is used in plays featuring *tengu*, mythical demons or goblins which live deep in the mountains and have red faces, large noses, wings and supernatural powers.

Look at the related works and use the following discussion prompts to explore ideas with your class:

- When and why might the masks have been worn?
- What feeling does each mask evoke?
- What materials have been used in each one?
- What similarities and differences can you observe between the masks?

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Card or heavy craft paper
- Crayons
- Oil pastels
- Felt tipped pens
- Flat wooden craft sticks (20 – 30cm)
- Grey lead pencils
- Scissors
- Glue
- Feathers
- Fur
- String
- Beads

CREATE

Students can design and create their own mask using the following steps:

1. Think of a character or creature you would like to portray in a mask. Consider what special qualities your character might have.
Are they very wise? Do they have supernatural powers, like the tengu? Super vision? Super hearing? Can they fly? Are they masters of disguise? Are they scary, or very funny? How might you show these powers? Think of features like big eyes, extra eyes, wings, flippers etc.
2. Draw the design for your mask on craft paper.
The mask should be big enough to cover your face.
3. Decorate your mask using coloured felt tip pens and pencils.
Include designs and patterns that draw attention to your creature's facial features.
4. Add extra decoration using string, hair, fur or feathers.
5. Use tape to attach a stick to the back of your mask so you can hold it.
6. Give your creature a name.

PRESENT & REFLECT

Students share their mask with a partner or the group. If their mask is a dance mask, they might like to perform the dance.

- What is your creature called and what are his powers?
- What choices did you make about patterns, colours or other features?

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