

Portable Collections Program

Masks

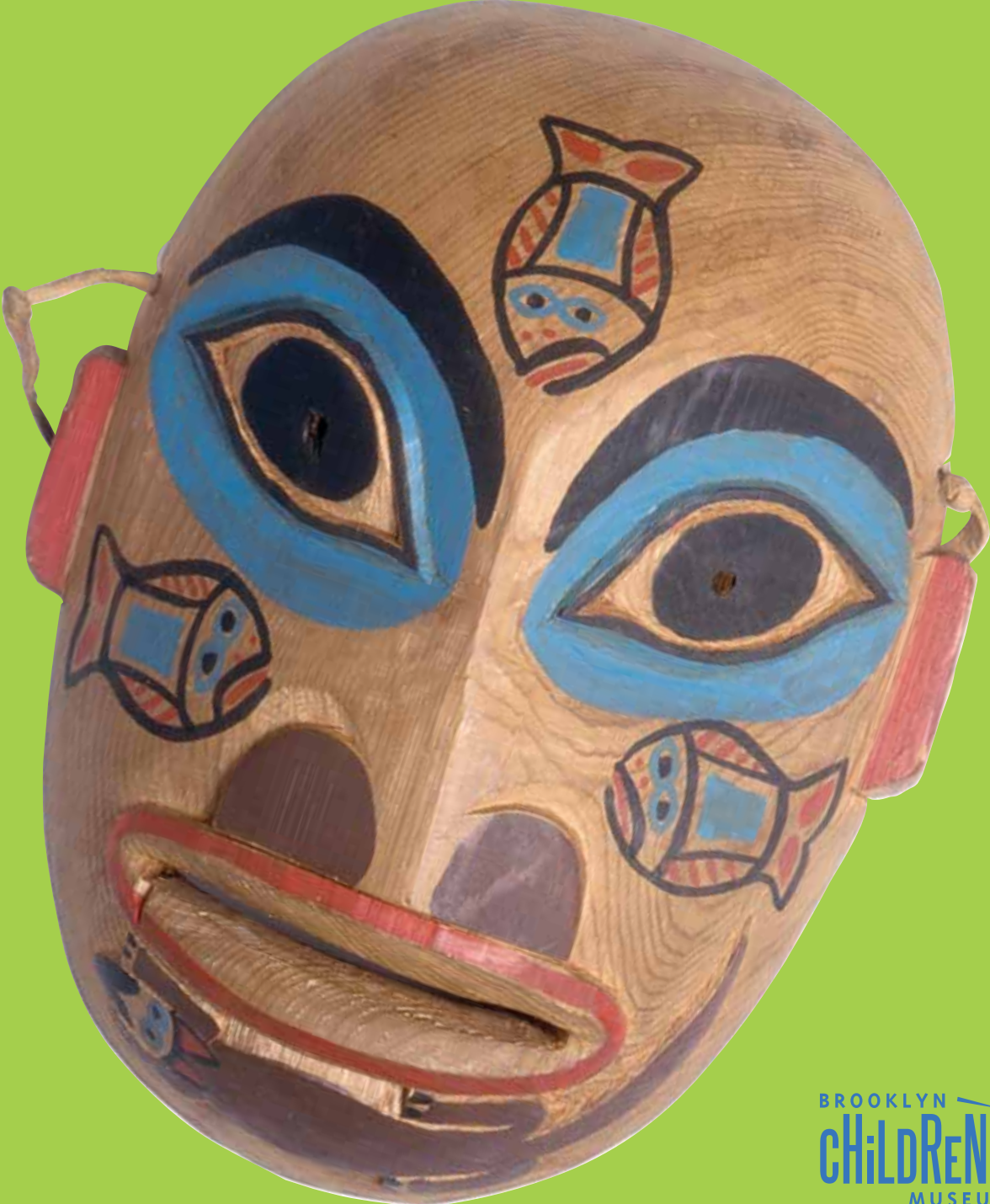


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What's in the Case?

Objects



Wayang topeng mask



Ajitz mask



Northwest Coast mask



Baba mask



Gägon mask

Resources

Masks Tell Stories by Carol Gelber

Joshua's Masai Mask by Dakari Hru

Masks (Crafts From Many Cultures) by Meryl Doney

Video: "Masks of Many Cultures." Crystal Video Productions, 21 minutes.

How to Handle Museum Objects

Learning to handle objects from the Museum's permanent collection with respect can be part of your students' educational experience of the case. Please share these guidelines with your class, and make sure your students follow them in handling objects in the case:

- **Students may handle the objects carefully under your supervision. However, they may NOT try on the masks.** Over time, sweat, body oils, and too much handling can adversely affect all of these objects, even those that seem sturdy. Many of these masks are not replaceable.
- **Hold objects with two hands.** Hold them by the solid part of the body or by the strongest area rather than by rims, edges or protruding parts.
- **Paint, feathers, fur and fibers are especially fragile** and should be touched as little as possible. Remember that rubbing and finger oils can be damaging.
- **Do not shake the objects.**
- **Temperature differences, direct sunlight, and water can be very harmful to certain objects.** Please keep the objects away from radiators and open windows, and keep them secure.

How to Look at Museum Objects

Objects have the power to fascinate people with their mere physical presence. Holding an object in their hands forms a tangible link between your students, the folk artist who made it, and the artist's homeland. This sense of physical connection makes it easier for students to think concretely about the ideas and concepts you introduce to them in your lessons.

Objects also have the power to tell us about their origins and purpose, provided we are willing to look at them in detail and think about what those details mean. Encourage your students to examine an object carefully, touch it gently and look at its design and decoration. Have them describe its shape, size, and color. Ask them questions about what they see, and what that might tell them. For example:

- How was the object made? What tools did the artist need?
- What materials did the artist use? Where might he or she have gotten those materials?
- How is the object decorated? What might the decorations mean?
- What does the object tell you about the person or people who made it?



Behind the Mask

To the teacher

There may be no object on earth with more power to transform people than a mask. Masks can turn a person into an animal, a legendary hero, a villain, or even a god. They help people set aside who they are, and give them a chance to be somebody else for just a little while. Masks show us how a new face can lend someone an entirely new personality, or even a new life. They help us tell stories about our culture, our history, and our hopes for the future.

This case is designed to help your students learn about the power of masks by studying examples of them from five different cultures. The class will learn the purpose behind each mask as well as some information about the people who created it. The activities in this teacher guide focus on developing connections between the masks in the case and the arts, literacy, and social studies. Students will have the opportunity to design and create their own masks, and to speak and write about the purposes behind them. However, these activities are not meant to be comprehensive. We encourage you to use them as a jumping-off point for following your students' and your own interests.

What is a mask?

A mask is anything used to partially or totally cover a person's face. Masks come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. They may be made from a variety of materials, such as wood, metal, plastic, ceramic, fiber, shells, or papier-mâché.

Throughout the world, masks are an important part of many cultures. Some masks are grotesque in shape and color, while others are beautiful and refined. Some masks have value or importance in and of themselves, while others must be worn with costumes to give them meaning. Today some masks that once had ancient religious or ceremonial importance are worn at festivals for entertainment. Others continue to be worn for the reasons they were originally created.



Why do people wear masks?

Masks may serve many different purposes, depending on whom you ask. Some people wear masks for physical protection while at work. Baseball catchers and hockey goaltenders wear masks of metal mesh to protect their faces from foul balls or flying pucks. Welders wear metal masks to protect their eyes from flying sparks and bright glare. Doctors and nurses wear gauze face masks to protect their patients from germs. Masks are also worn by soldiers and firefighters to protect them from harmful gases and smoke.

Actors sometimes wear masks as part of their jobs, too. In many cultures, masks are part of a costume for plays and theatrical **performances**. Such masks may be meant to convey a particular emotion (as in Ancient Greek theater), or a well-known character from myths and legends. The *wayang topeng* mask in the case comes from a theater tradition where audiences can tell who a character is immediately, simply based on the color or physical features of the mask the actor is wearing.

Along with theatrical performances, masks are also worn for cultural performances, too, such as the Dance of the Conquest in Guatemala. In this performance, masked actors play the parts of historical characters (such as Ajitz, whose mask is included in the case) in order to reenact an important moment in the history of the Quiche Indian people.



Behind the Mask (continued)

When used in plays and performances, masks provide their wearers with a way to hide their identities. However, you don't have to be an actor in order to pretend to be somebody else for a while. Many cultures have a rich tradition of **masquerades** (masked parties or celebrations). For example, masks are an important element in the pre-Lenten Carnival or Mardi Gras festivals held in Venice, Rio de Janeiro, New Orleans, and many places in the Caribbean.

Besides work and play, masks can also serve a spiritual purpose. In some cultures, masks provide a way of communicating with the spirits during religious ceremonies and **rituals**. There are several examples of this among the masks in the case. The Northwest Coast mask in the case is decorated with the images of **spirit helpers**, animals whose spirits were believed to give strength to the wearer during a healing ceremony. The *baba* mask from Papua New Guinea would be worn during **initiation** ceremonies for a secret society, and represents the spirits who act as go-betweens for the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Some masks have a purpose that blurs the line between theatrical and cultural performances and spiritual rituals. For example, the Gagon mask in the case represents the hornbill, a bird that the Dan people of West Africa believe was the first creature God ever created. When a person wearing the Gagon mask dances during a ceremony, it entertains the audience and makes people laugh. It also makes



them remember the hornbill **creation story**. But most importantly of all, this masked performance is believed to bring the spirit of Gagon down among them. For the Dan people, a mask is able to embody the very spirit of the thing it represents.

For some people masks are just ordinary objects, but for others they hold great spiritual power. So when teaching your students about the masks in the case, encourage them to show respect for these masks, particularly in the way they handle and talk about them.

Masks in our everyday lives

Although it may not be immediately obvious to your students, masks are a part of their daily lives in the United States, just as they are for people in other parts of the world. As discussed above, some people here wear masks as part of their jobs, whether for physical protection or for the purposes of a theatrical performance.

Masks can be an important part of American holidays and celebrations, too. For example, people may host masked parties, or hold festivals like Mardi Gras in New Orleans (as discussed above). Most commonly, every Halloween many children dress up in masks and costumes. This is a very old tradition. The Druids of ancient Britain believed that October 31 was the night witches and goblins haunted the evening sky. Christians adopted this same night as All Hallows Eve, and believe that this is the evening the souls of the dead revisit their former homes. Originally people dressed up as witches and goblins on October 31 in order to disguise themselves from supernatural beings. Today, though, this custom has grown to include all sorts of costumes and masks, from ghosts and skeletons to famous people and cartoon characters. □

*Words in **boldface** have been included in the Vocabulary Words section on page 15.*

Information About the Objects in the Case

WAYANG TOPENG MASK (Object No. 80.8.3)



Wayang topeng is a type of traditional theater from the island of Java in Indonesia. Today it is usually performed to celebrate a marriage, birth or other happy event. The plays are held at night and last for several hours. Dressed

in fine costumes, the performers dance and act out traditional stories while wearing a variety of masks representing well-known stock characters. However, we are not certain which character this mask is supposed to represent.

There are anywhere from 40 to 80 masks in a full *wayang topeng* production. With their brightly painted designs and shiny finish, these masks often look quite similar to the heads of rod puppets used in Javanese puppet theater (*wayang golek*). The actors may mimic puppet theater in other ways as well, for example by trying to act and move like puppets and by letting the play's narrator speak their lines for them.

Many *wayang topeng* tales revolve around a beloved Javanese hero, the noble prince Panji. Other plots may be taken from great epics like the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*, long story cycles originally from India that now form an important part of Indonesian culture as well.

AJITZ MASK (Object No. 74.81.1)



The Quiche Indians of Guatemala perform a masked dance known as *Tecun Uman* (or the Dance of the **Conquest**) as a way to remember the bravery of their ancestors during the Spanish Conquest of 1524. The dance is named for

the Quiche people's great warrior king, Tecun Uman, and tells the story of his death at the hands of the cruel Spanish general, Pedro de Alvarado.

This red-faced mask represents a Quiche Indian character named Ajitz (also sometimes called *Brujo*, a word meaning "male witch"). In the Dance of the Conquest, Ajitz is a messenger who foretells the great battle that is to come. Since his role is to bring tidings

of chaos and death, he is always painted red, and sometimes appears with quetzal birds or feathers (a symbol of sorrow) and marigolds (the flower of death) on his forehead.

Dance of the Conquest masks like this one are usually made by a *morería*, a business (often run by a single family) that rents dance masks and costumes. In recent times, though, the Dance of the Conquest has been performed less often because it is quite costly and requires many costumes.

NORTHWEST COAST MASK (Object No. 69.39.1)



Although this mask was made by a member of the Tlingit Indian tribe, its wide mouth, large eyes, and animal forms are all typical of masks made by many Native American tribes from the Northwest Coast of North America.

This mask was probably made for sale to an art collector or a tourist and may never have been used for performing rituals, but it still contains important spiritual elements. For example, the small fish painted on the mask's cheeks and forehead may be related to the idea of "**spirit helpers**." A Tlingit **shaman** (the spiritual leader of a village) usually owned several masks believed to help him or her cure sick people. These masks traditionally were painted with small animal figures representing creatures whose spirits would help the shaman perform the cure.

Besides using masks in a shaman's rituals, Northwest Coast peoples have also traditionally used masks at **potlatch** ceremonies (huge feasts where the person throwing the party demonstrates his wealth and political power by giving away lots of presents to those who attend).

Most Northwest Coast masks look like human faces, but have features and designs that mark them as representing an animal or mythical spirit. Masks may depict the spirit protectors of individual people or organized social groups (like dance societies). They may also depict family crests, usually by representing mythical ancestors, or animals or supernatural beings that helped the family in the mythical past.

Information About the Objects in the Case (continued)

BABA MASK (Object No. 70.50.5)



This woven **rattan** mask would be worn by an adult Abelam man during **initiation** ceremonies for the *Tamberan*, an Abelam men's secret society. Known as a *baba*, the mask represents the spirits who act as go-betweens for the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Baba masks are made from fiber, bark, or wood. They are painted (and usually repainted before each performance), and may be decorated with brightly colored leaves and flowers. The openwork weaving on the face of this mask is typical of *baba* masks, as is the long nose with a loop extending from the bottom. The fan of woven rattan extending from the top of the mask represents the headbands often worn by Abelam men on ceremonial occasions.

The Abelam people also make masks for their yams. Yams (known as *wapi*) are their most important crop, and are planted, grown, and harvested with elaborate **rituals** and **taboos**. During the yam harvest festival, yam owners exhibit their crops, and masks like this one are placed over the largest yams on display. The size of a man's yams is considered to be a sign of his virility and prestige. It is also an important factor in determining his status in the *Tamberan*.

GÄGON MASK (Object No. 80.27.2)



The Gägön mask is part of the most frequent **masquerade** performed by the Northern Dan people. Gägön is a bird-like entertainer who wears a mask with a narrow oval face and long beak. This particular Gägön mask is very simple,

but fancier versions might also be decorated with metal ornaments, a "beard" made from monkey fur, or carved designs representing tattoos.

Accompanied by a group of drummers and singers, Gägön sings and dances on festive occasions, first stretching his arms upwards as though trying to fly, and then spinning in circles. He also pretends to peck the ground, and may dance playfully with

women in the audience. Along with his mask, the Gägön performer wears a tall, feathered headdress, a blue-and-white striped robe, and a raffia fiber skirt.

Gägön represents the hornbill (or toucan), the first creature God ever made. According to the Dan creation story, when the hornbill's mother died, God created the earth so that the hornbill would have a place to bury her. The hornbill also brought humankind the oil palm, whose nuts are an essential part of Dan life. The hornbill is an honored and celebrated creature among the Dan.

You and your students can learn more about these masks and other objects from around the world by visiting our Collections Central Online database at www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum.

ACTIVITY 1

Introductory Activity: What Are Masks For?

All Grades

Related Objects: All

A good way to introduce the topic of masks to your students is by asking them to discuss the reasons why people wear masks, particularly by describing masks they have seen or worn in the past. Students will see that masks are used for different purposes, such as for work, play, ritual, and protection. Students will also have the opportunity to design a mask of their own creation. This activity will help students relate the masks in this case to masks they know from their own experiences.

Materials:

- One mask from the case
- Blackboard OR chart paper for recording group observations
- Crayons and markers
- Drawing Paper

What To Do:

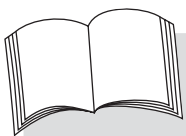
- 1** Select one mask from the case. Gather your students together in a circle, remind them of the guidelines for handling museum objects (see page 3), and have them pass the mask around. Ask them to describe what they see. What does the mask look like? What sort of expression or personality does it display? How might they feel if they wore it? (**Please remind students not to put on the masks.**)
- 2** Ask your students to discuss the reasons why people wear masks. Students (especially in the younger grades) may wish to do this by offering examples of different types of masks that are familiar to them. Encourage them to think of different places or situations from their own lives in which people commonly wear masks. (See Discussion Questions below.)
- 3** Based on your students' observations, start recording a list of reasons why people wear masks on the blackboard or chart paper.
- 4** (Optional) Show your students the videotape "Masks from Many Cultures" (included in the case). After the film, ask them to discuss some of the masks they saw in the video. How are these masks used?

- 5** Introduce the idea of masks used for performances, rituals, and spiritual protection. What are some examples of this from the video? Can the students name similar examples from their own lives? Continue to record their answers on the board.
- 6** By the end of the discussion, your students' list may include some of the following reasons why people wear masks:
 - For work
 - For play or celebration
 - For performances
 - For rituals or ceremonies
 - For physical or spiritual protection
 - In order to be someone else
 - In order to hide a person's identity
 - In order to hide or display a certain expression or personality
- 7** Have each student choose one of the reasons why people wear masks, and draw a mask that meets that purpose. Older students should write a short description of the mask's purpose below their drawing.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you ever wear a mask? Do you ever see people wearing masks? When?
- What are some holidays or celebrations you can name when people wear masks (in the U.S. or anywhere else in the world)?
- What are some jobs you can think of where you might need to wear a mask? Why do doctors and nurses wear masks? How about firefighters or athletes?
- Why do actors often wear masks? What is it about masks that makes them important for performances?
- Can masks have a spiritual or religious purpose? Can you name some examples of this from your own lives, or from the video?
- What is the purpose behind the mask you designed? Why would you wear it?

See page 16 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.



LITERACY AND RESEARCH EXTENSION: GRADE 3–5

Have your students investigate masks in the Museum's online collection (www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum) to learn more about how masks are used around the world. Students should choose a mask that interests them, and either write a short report or share what they learn with the class in an oral presentation.

ACTIVITY 2 What Can Objects Tell Me?

All Grades

Related Objects: All

Your students can learn a lot about the objects in the case by looking at them carefully. Ask them to focus first on the physical properties of each object, using their senses to determine its color, smell, texture, and so on. After the students examine the objects, you can share more about them using information from this guide, the resources listed at the back, or your own knowledge.

Materials:

- All masks from the case
- A copy of the “What Can Objects Tell Me?” chart for each student (OR a transparency of it for a whole class exercise)
- Blackboard OR chart paper for recording group observations

What To Do:

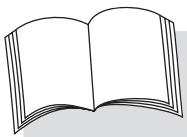
- 1 Depending on the age and interests of your students and the amount of time you would like to spend, you can do this activity in small groups or as a class, looking at each of the masks in turn and filling out the chart using an overhead projector or large chart paper.
- 2 For small groups, prior to the presentation of the lesson, set the classroom up into stations (make sure there are enough stations that you have only 3–4 students working at each one). Place one object at each station.

- 3 Distribute copies of the “What Can Objects Tell Me?” chart and go over it with your students.
- 4 Divide the children into groups and have each group explore their object and fill in the boxes of the chart. After a few minutes, have the groups rotate to a new station, until each group has examined each mask.
- 5 Have the students reconvene as a class to discuss their findings. You may want to use the chart paper to make notes about the students’ observations, and respond by presenting some background information on the objects (such as what country or region each mask is from, who made it, when the mask is worn, who wears it, and what purpose it serves in that culture).

Discussion Questions:

- What kinds of things can you learn about an object just by examining it closely?
- Based on the materials these objects are made of, what can you say about the people who made them or where they live?
- What else can objects tell you about the people who made or used them?
- How are these masks similar to masks you might see in your everyday life? How are they different?

See page 16 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.



LITERACY EXTENSIONS: GRADE K–3






- Read [Joshua’s Maasai Mask](#) (included in the case) aloud to your students. Discuss with them how masks have the ability to transform our personalities and even our lives. What was the moral of the story? What did Joshua learn?

GRADE 3–5

- Tell your students that they can learn a lot about a group of people by examining the objects they make. Have each child choose one mask from the case and write a paragraph about it. Remind them to be sure to describe the mask and what it “told” them about the people who made or used it.

What can objects tell me?

Look at each object closely. What kinds of things can we learn about an object just by examining it closely? What do objects tell us about the people who made them? Use this chart to record everything you discover.

	What does this mask look like? (Human or animal? Funny or sad? Etc.)	What color or colors is it?	What kind of decoration does it have?	What material or materials is it made of?
				
				
				
				
				

ACTIVITY 3

Make a Mask from Found Materials

Grades 2–5

Related Objects: All

This lesson offers students the opportunity to explore the many different materials used to make the masks in the case. After observing the masks closely, students will learn that people all over the world make masks from the diverse materials found in their environments. Students will design and create a mask using craft materials and other small objects found in their environment.

Materials:

- Craft materials (such as construction paper, yarn, pipe cleaners, glitter, or pasta)
- Natural materials (such as pebbles, shells, leaves, twigs, or feathers)
- Found objects (such as buttons, small coins, stickers, erasers, images cut from magazines, or anything else students find at home or at school)
- Colored tag board
- Crayons and markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- String and stapler

What To Do:

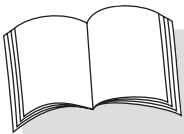
- 1 (Optional) You may wish to prepare for this activity in advance by asking your students to bring small “found objects” from home to use in creating their masks.
- 2 Divide your class into five groups. Give each group one mask from the case. Ask your students to observe the mask closely to determine what materials it is made from.
- 3 Have each group report its findings to the rest of the class. Record the different materials they have observed on the blackboard or chart paper.

- 4 Ask your students to brainstorm other materials people might use to make masks, and record their answers on the blackboard or chart paper. Encourage students to think of materials used to create masks they have seen in real life, in books, on the Internet, or in the “Masks of Many Cultures” video. Some examples might include clay, metal, or papier-mâché.
- 5 Give each student a piece of tag board. Have students cut an imaginative mask shape and cut holes for them to see through. Distribute the “found” and craft materials and have the students select and layout the materials. Encourage them to exercise their imaginations and use their materials in unusual ways.
- 6 When they are satisfied with their designs, have them glue the materials to their masks. When the glue is dry, staple short lengths of string to each side of the face to create tie strings.
- 7 After their masks are complete, have each student write a paragraph describing the materials they used to make their masks, and why they chose them (see Discussion Questions below).

Discussion Questions:

- How did you choose a design for your mask? Does it have any special meaning or particular purpose?
- What materials did you use to create your mask? If you used “found” materials, where did you find them?

See page 16 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.



GEOGRAPHY EXTENSIONS: ALL GRADES

Copy the information pages and cut out images of the masks in the case. Share information about these objects with your students. Look at the places each mask comes from on a globe or world map, and have students tape each image to the country or region it comes from. Older students may do library or Internet research to find out more about what kinds of materials are used to make masks in each of those countries.

ACTIVITY 4

Make a Papier-Mâché Mask

Grades 2–5

Related Objects: All

As your students learned in the previous activity, masks can be made from any number of materials. Papier-mâché is one very common material, and is often used for making masks in Mexico, India, Indonesia, and China. Unfortunately, these masks are too fragile to be included in the Museum case. In this activity, students will construct and decorate a papier-mâché mask of their own design.

Materials:

- Wallpaper paste or flour
- Water
- Large bowls
- Scissors
- Hole-punch
- Paint
- Yarn
- Newspaper cut into strips
- One pre-inflated balloon for each child
- Pipe cleaners

What To Do:

- 1** Mix the wallpaper paste or flour with water in a bowl until it reaches the consistency of pudding and all lumps have disappeared
- 2** Place the newspaper strips and balloons next to the bowls.
- 3** Demonstrate to your students how to take a strip of newspaper and pull it through the paste so that it is covered, but not dripping. Then place the strip on top of the balloon.

- 4** Have students repeat step 1 until they have covered one half of each balloon. *Remind them not to cover the whole balloon.*
- 5** Stop for the day. Allow the paper strips to dry.
- 6** On the second day, students should add a second layer of paper strips on top of the first dried layer by repeating steps 3–5.
- 7** When the second layer is dry, have your students pop their balloons. The layers of paper should hold their shape, forming the mask.
- 8** Assist your students in cutting two holes for the eyes.
- 9** Students may add more layers of papier-mâché to the mask to give it strength, but they should always allow the mask to dry between layers. They can create strong facial features by building up layers. Remind them to leave the eyeholes uncovered.
- 10** After the last layer of papier-mâché has dried, have your students decorate their masks with paint, fabric, or yarn.
- 11** Have students punch holes in the sides of their masks, and attach yarn to create tie strings.

Discussion Questions:

- What sort of masks could you make using the papier-mâché method? What are the pros and cons of using this material?
- How did you choose to decorate your mask? Who or what does it represent?

See page 16 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.

ACTIVITY 5 Masks and Stories

All Grades

Related Objects: *Wayang topeng* mask, Ajitz mask, Gägon mask

Some of the masks in the case are based on fantastic myths and legends. Share these stories with your students, and have them tell or write their own stories about a mask they have drawn or made.

Materials:

- Objects from the case (see above)
- Stories about the objects from the case (see following pages)
- Pencils and writing paper

What To Do:

- 1 Select one of the related masks (the *wayang topeng* mask, the Ajitz mask, or the Gägon mask) from the case. Display it at the front of the classroom as you read its story aloud to your students.
- 2 (Optional) Alternatively, for older students, you may photocopy the mask stories from the following pages and distribute them to students so they may read them silently or take turns reading them aloud.
- 3 After the story, pass the mask around among your students. Discuss with them how the mask connects to the story they just heard (see Discussion Questions below).
- 4 Perform steps 1–2 for one or all three related masks.
- 5 Working individually or in groups, have students write or tell aloud a story about a mask they have drawn or

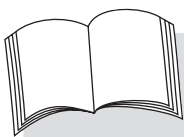
made in one of the previous activities (or on their own). For younger children, this story may consist of a few sentences about the character they have created. For older children, the story may be more elaborate.

- 6 You may wish to facilitate the creative process by brainstorming possible characters, settings, and plots as a class (see Discussion Questions below).
- 7 Have students read their stories aloud to the class, or turn them into dramatic performances (see Theater Extension below).

Discussion Questions:

- How does the mask from the case connect to the story you just heard? Does it represent a specific character? What did that character do in the course of the story?
- How is the character's identity or personality reflected in the appearance of the mask? Does it look like a particular animal? Are there colors or shapes on the mask that have a special meaning?
- What character does the mask you made represent? What does the character look like? What is his or her personality like?
- What will happen to your character? Is the story about him or her alone, or does it include other players, too? Does your character get along with the others? What will happen to them in the story?
- Will your story have a happy ending or a sad one? Will your character learn any important lessons, or is your story simply for entertainment?

See page 16 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.



THEATER EXTENSION: PERFORM A STORY GRADES 3–5

Working in groups, have students dramatize one of the stories they wrote about their masks (or one of the mask stories included in this guide). They should choose masks from the growing classroom collection to represent the characters in their stories. Students may ad-lib their performances, or older children may write a script for the action. Give them time to rehearse their plays, and ask each group to perform its play at the front of the classroom. If you wish to invest more time and preparation, you might have students create scenery, props, or costumes to accompany their performances, and invite parents or other classes to watch their performances.

Gägon mask: "Gägon and the Creation of the World"



According to the Dan people of Africa, the hornbill bird was the first creature God ever made. The hornbill was named Gägon. After God created the Gägon, He gave the bird a mother. He also created other birds, but they had no place to live and had to wander the world with-out any place to rest.

When Gägon's mother died, he mourned for her, and looked for someplace to bury her. But there was no water, no wood, and no stones to sit upon. Gägon went to God and asked him for a place to lay his mother to rest. So God created the Earth for his favorite child, the hornbill, giving Gägon a place to bury his mother. For this and many other reasons the hornbill is an honored and celebrated creature among the Dan people.

Wayang topeng mask: "The Immortal Prince Rama" (A Tale from the Ramayana)



A long time ago, a king named Dasharatha had three wives who were beautiful, graceful, and faithful. However, none of the queens was blessed with children.

As was customary in those ancient times, the king performed many rituals and made many sacrifices, and at last The God was pleased. A divine being appeared before the king and said:

"O king, I am very much pleased with your deep devotion to me. I offer you these four fruits for your three queens, which will make them bear four sons."

The king, the queens, and the whole kingdom was filled with pleasure and joy. In the due course of time Princes Rama, Bharata, Laxmana, and Shatrughna were born, and the palace was filled with merriment. The four brothers grew under the loving care of their parents in the royal comforts of the palace. They were all sharp, intelligent, and brave. They were obedient and respectful towards their parents and teachers, and loyal to each other.

Prince Rama was the eldest son, and thus had first claim to the royal throne. But he was different from his brothers in other ways, too. Prince Rama looked like an ordinary mortal, but he was actually the embodiment of Lord Vishnu, the savior of the universe, who had come to the earth to eliminate evil and restore righteousness. But only a few wise men knew that Rama was a god. Everyone else (including the king and the queens) thought Rama was human.

Years passed by. The princes reached adulthood, and the time came for them to marry. The search for royal brides led their father to the kingdom of Mithila, where King Janaka had four beautiful daughters. Among these four sisters, Princess Sita was the most perfect in purity, grace, modesty, and beauty. King Janaka had decreed that Sita could only marry the prince brave and powerful enough to break the Bow of Shiva. But this magical bow belonged to a god, and was unbreakable for ordinary mortals!

Each of the four princes (led by Rama) decided to pursue marriages to King Janaka's daughters. With great pomp and show, the foursome left for Mithila. The princes were welcome guests in King Janaka's palace. As soon as Rama and Sita laid eyes on each other, they felt the blooming of love in their hearts. Sita secretly vowed to marry Rama and Rama alone.

The day of the contest for Sita's hand soon dawned. One by one, princes from kingdoms near and far tried to break the Bow of Shiva, but none was able to. Even the most powerful could not even lift the bow more than an inch off the ground! At last it was Rama's turn. Rama prayed to Lord Shiva himself to give him strength and courage to attempt and succeed in this almost impossible task. In one attempt, Rama lifted the bow and broke it in two! The whole Royal Court was filled with shouts of "Glory to Rama! Victory to Rama!"

Thus Rama and Sita were married. Along with Rama, his three brothers also married the three sisters of Sita. The four sons of King Dasharatha married the four daughters of King Janaka, and there was great rejoicing in both kingdoms.

ACTIVITY 6

Masks and Stories (continued)

Ajitz mask: "The Tale of Tecun Uman"



Long ago, deep in the highlands of what is now Guatemala, the Quiche people ruled over a small territory. Their ancestors had lived there for hundreds of years, and they were the most powerful people in the land until foreigners from a distant shore invaded their kingdom.

At first the Quiche heard nothing but rumors about these strangers, the Spaniards, who arrived on great ships and were said to be pale. But even before the Quiche laid eyes on the strangers, they fell victim to the Spaniards' most unusual weapon: foreign diseases, which killed the Quiche in great numbers. Bodies lay piled in the streets, where they were eaten by dogs and vultures. Parents died, and many children were left orphaned.

Only after enduring four years of Spanish plagues did the Quiche finally meet the Spaniards face to face. Led by a *conquistador* (conqueror) named Pedro de Alvarado, an army of Spanish soldiers marched into the highlands, ready to defeat the Quiche once and for all.

The news of the Spaniards' approach was brought by a dwarf named Ajitz, who was jester in the palace of the Quiche prince. The prince, a gallant young warrior named Tecun Uman, knew that the Spaniards were powerful, but he met their threat with great bravado. "Ajitz, my friend," he said, "I do not fear evil or death, nor does

torture make me tremble. Tell my soldiers to make themselves ready! I will face this insolent young Pedro Alvarado and send him to the underworld."

So many of the Quiche had died that their army was full of young, inexperienced fighters, some no more than children. Tecun Uman led them, wearing a crown of rare jewels and metals. His body was covered with a suit of beautiful feathers from the quetzal bird, which made him look like an eagle.

When the two armies met in battle, the Quiche fought bravely. Wearing his suit of quetzal feathers, Tecun Uman seemed to rise in flight as he attacked Pedro de Alvarado. But the Spaniards were too powerful, and after a long fight, Alvarado stabbed Tecun Uman in the chest with his spear. The Spanish general admired his dead foe's strength and beauty so much that he called all his soldiers to come and see this Indian. He told them he had not seen another Indian so handsome and regal in any other town they had conquered. And so Alvarado said that the name of their battleground would be Quetzaltenango (meaning "the place of the quetzals"), in honor of the brave prince Tecun Uman.

Vocabulary Words

Abelam people:

a cultural group native to Papua New Guinea.

Conquest:

a historical term referring to the European (and particularly Spanish) conquest of the Americas from the 15th to the 17th centuries.

creation story:

a myth or tale about how the world came to be.

Dan people:

a cultural group native to West Africa, particularly the country of Ivory Coast.

Guatemala:

a country in Central America, located between Mexico and Belize to the north, and Honduras and El Salvador to the south.

initiation ceremony:

a ceremony in which children are made into adult members of society. There are all kinds of initiation ceremonies practiced by peoples all over the world.

Java:

an island that is part of the country of Indonesia, off the coast of Southeast Asia.

masquerade:

a performance or party in which people wear masks and costumes, often to impersonate characters from stories or history.

performance:

a public presentation of a ritual or a play.

potlatch:

a ceremony traditionally held by members of many Northwest Coast Indian tribes, consisting of a huge feast where the person throwing the party demonstrates his wealth and political power by giving away lots of presents to those who attend.

Quiche Indians:

a cultural group native to the highlands of Guatemala.

rattan:

a type of palm plant native to parts of Africa and Asia. Its tough stems are used for making masks and other objects, like chairs.

ritual:

a ceremony that is performed regularly and in a particular way. Rituals may be part of religious or tribal custom, and they often have a symbolic value.

shaman:

a priest or spiritual leader.

spirit helpers:

animal figures painted on a shaman's ceremonial objects, which represent creatures whose spirits are believed to help the shaman cure illness.

taboo:

something that is forbidden, either because it is deeply respected or because it is feared.

Tlingit Indians:

a cultural group native to the Northwest Coast of North America, including parts of Alaska and British Columbia.

wayang topeng:

a type of traditional masked theater from the island of Java in Indonesia.



■ RESOURCES AND REFERENCE MATERIALS ■

Correlations with New York State Learning Standards

The activities included in this guide meet the following New York State Learning Standard Performance Indicators for elementary students (K–5):

New York State Learning Standard Performance Indicators (Elementary Level)					Activity				
Standard Area	Standard #	Subject	Letter	Students will	1	2	3	4	5
Arts	1	Theater	b	Imitate experiences through pantomime, play making, dramatic play, story dramatization, story telling, and role playing					•
Arts	1	Theater	c	Use language, voice, gesture, movement, and observation to express their experiences and communicate ideas and feelings					•
Arts	1	Visual Arts	a	Experiment and create art works, in a variety of mediums (drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, video, and computer graphics), based on a range of individual and collective experiences	•		•	•	
Arts	1	Visual Arts	b	Develop their own ideas and images through the exploration and creation of art works based on themes, symbols, and events	•		•	•	
Arts	3	Visual Arts	a	Explain their reflections about the meanings, purposes, and sources of works of art; describe their responses to the works and the reasons for those responses	•	•	•	•	•
Arts	3	Visual Arts	b	Explain the visual and other sensory qualities (surfaces, colors, textures, shape, sizes, volumes) found in a wide variety of art works	•	•	•	•	•
Arts	4	Visual Arts	a	Look at and discuss a variety of art works and artifacts from world cultures to discover some important ideas, issues, and events of those cultures	•	•	•		•
English Language Arts	1	Listening & Reading		Gather and interpret information from children's reference books, magazines, textbooks, electronic bulletin boards, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, and from such forms as charts, graphs, maps, and diagrams	•				
ELA	1	Listening & Reading		Ask specific questions to clarify and extend meaning	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms such as summaries, paraphrases, brief reports, stories, posters, and charts	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Select a focus, organization, and point of view for oral and written presentations	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Observe basic writing conventions, such as correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as sentence and paragraph structures appropriate to written forms	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	2	Listening & Reading		Read aloud accurately and fluently, using phonics and context cues to determine pronunciation and meaning					•
ELA	2	Speaking & Writing		Create their own stories, poems, and songs using the elements of the literature they have read and appropriate vocabulary				•	•

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New York State Learning Standard Performance Indicators (Elementary Level)					Activity				
Standard Area	Standard #	Subject	Letter	Students will	1	2	3	4	5
ELA	2	Speaking & Writing		Observe the conventions of grammar and usage, spelling, and punctuation	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	4	Speaking & Writing		Listen attentively and recognize when it is appropriate for them to speak	•	•	•	•	•
ELA	4	Speaking & Writing		Take turns speaking and responding to others' ideas in conversations on familiar topics; Study about different world cultures and civilizations focusing on their accomplishments, contributions, values, beliefs, and traditions	•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	2			Study about different world cultures and civilizations focusing on their accomplishments, contributions, values, beliefs, and traditions	•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	2			Explore the lifestyles, beliefs, traditions, rules and laws, and social/cultural needs and wants of people during different periods in history and in different parts of the world	•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	3			Study about how people live, work, and utilize natural resources	•	•	•		
Social Studies	3			Locate places within the local community, State, and nation; locate the Earth's continents in relation to each other and to principal parallels and meridians			•		
Social Studies	3			Ask geographic questions about where places are located; why they are located where they are; what is important about their locations; and how their locations are related to the location of other people and places			•		
Health & Physical Education	2	Physical Education		Work constructively with others to accomplish a variety of goals and tasks			•		•

Corresponding Field Trips

The following museums have exhibits or programs related to masks and to the cultures discussed in this guide. Check with each for days and hours. Then do a treasure hunt through the galleries to find actual masks or images of people wearing masks. At the larger museums, check out the Native American, Asian, and African galleries to see examples of masks from around the world.

American Museum of Natural History

Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan
(212) 769-5100
www.amnh.org

Brooklyn Museum

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn
(718) 783-6500
www.brooklynmuseum.org

Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan
(212) 535-7710
www.metmuseum.org

Rubin Museum of Art

150 West 17th Street, Manhattan
(212) 620-5000
www.rmanyc.org

El Museo del Barrio

1230 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan
(212) 831-7272
www.elmuseo.org

The Brooklyn Children's Museum also offers programs on a variety of cultural topics. For a listing of programs currently available, please see our website at www.brooklynkids.org, or contact the Scheduling Assistant at 718-735-4400, extension 118.

Bibliography and Web Resources

The following books and websites may help you to enrich your experience with the objects in the case.

Nunely, John W. and Cara McCarty. Masks: Faces of Culture. New York: Harry N, Abrams, 1999.

Mack, John, Ed. Masks and the Art of Expression. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994.

Hahner-Herzog, Iris, Maria Kecskési, and László Vajda. African Masks. New York: Prestel Verlag, 2002.

Finley, Carol. The Art of African Masks: Exploring Cultural Traditions. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 1998.

The Art of the African Mask:

An online exhibit from the Bayly Art Museum at the University of Virginia.

www.cti.itc.virginia.edu/~bcr/African_Mask.html

Brooklyn Children's Museum Collections

Central Online:

Explore masks from around the world in Brooklyn Children's Museum's searchable online collections database.

www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum

Mask Links at the Costumer's Manifesto:

A collection of links to websites about mask history and use, mask production, and masks around the world.

www.costumes.org/HISTORY/100pages/masksand.htm#General2

Mexican Masks:

This site features links to images and information about masks from all over Mexico and Central America.

www.mexicanmasks.us

Native American Masks:

This page features text and images of Native American masks, as well as links to other mask resources and to the homepages of Native American mask artists.

www.native-languages.org/masks.htm

Noh Masks:

A commercial site that describes the history of traditional Japanese Noh theater and shows examples of common Noh masks.

www.nohmask21.com

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www.brooklynkids.org

For information about renting this or other Portable Collections Program cases,
please contact the Scheduling Assistant at 718-735-4400 ext. 118.