

# Mask Making

*By Caponi Art Park*

## **Project Overview:**

*Recommended for ages Pre K-12 years*

From the jungle to the ocean, and everything in between, students will create creatures of all kinds in the form of a mask. Masks are constructed using a paper base and are then adorned with a variety of different materials, which introduces students to the world of mixed media art. Once their animal creations have come to life, students will be encouraged to impersonate and discover their favorite animals through play!

## **Supply List:**

- Animal mask templates (Parents can make these ahead of time with cardboard and scissors, or you can just let participants free hand their own before cutting them out.)
- Construction Paper (You can also use any other heavy duty paper or cardboard)
- Markers, crayons or colored pencils ( Paint will also work if the base you are working with for the mask is heavy enough)
- Materials for decorating (feathers, glitter, stickers, collage paper, etc.)
- Glue (Glue stick or liquid Elmer's glue is preferred)
- Scissors (You need scissors to cut out the animals shape, the rest of the paper materials can be torn if you'd like.)
- Yarn OR a stick (This is to keep the mask on your face. Use yarn to tie the mask around the participants face, OR you can tape a stick to one side of the mask and it can be held up like an opera mask)

## **Instructions:**

- Each student should select an animal mask template to trace and cut out of heavy construction paper or cardboard. Parents can create a few templates beforehand, or you can just let participants draw their own mask shapes directly onto the materials they are creating their masks from.
- Parents should assist with cutting as needed.
- Cut two eye holes for the mask. You can do this by punching a hole in the center of each eye, and then inserting the scissors to finish off the eye hole, or you can gently fold the paper where the eye hole will go, and cut half circles, that when unfolded, will turn into whole ovals. Do this for each eye hole.
- Participants should first use markers or crayons or colored pencils to decorate their masks. They should be encouraged to think about what their animal looks

like in real life, and decide whether or not they will try to create a realistic or abstract representation of their animal.

- Next, participants should use the collage materials to continue decorating their masks. This includes collage paper of any kind and extra materials like glitter, stickers, etc.
- Let the masks dry for about an hour, then either attach two long strings to either side of the mask, or tape a stick to one side of the mask. (If you choose to use string, they should be plenty long enough to wrap around, and then tie behind a child's head. If you're using a stick, this can be one you find outside, a leftover chop stick, or even a tongue depressor. Anything long enough for a child to grasp onto.)
- Once the masks are complete, encourage participants to put on a play with their masks. Or, you can follow the discussion questions to learn more about their masks.

**Example photo:**



**Discussion Questions:**

- What is your favorite animal and why?
- What purpose does your mask serve? (Performance? Disguise?)
- How did the mask you made and wore help you play your part during your performance?
- What other activities do people typically wear masks for?

### Short Lesson for Mask Making:

- A mask is an object normally worn on the face, typically for protection, disguise, performance, or entertainment.
- The masks you will be making today will serve as a form of entertainment and performance!
- The oldest mask known to us, made from stone, is from the pre-ceramic neolithic period and dates to 7000 BC:



- Inuit groups in North America mask traditions are often made out of driftwood, animal skins, bones, and feathers.
- Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest make masks that often take the forms of animals, like whales. They are highly skilled woodworkers and their masks often have moveable parts or masks within masks:



- Many African cultures use masks in ceremonies. Often times they are created not for wearing during ceremonies, but for decoration.
- In West Africa in particular, masks are used in masquerades that form part of religious ceremonies which help to communicate with spirits and ancestors.
- In China, some dance masks are used in rituals to thank the gods, while other dance rituals are used to ward off bad spirits:



- Commedia dell'arte, or Comedy of the Profession, is a type of professional theater that originated in Italy and was popular throughout Europe during the 16th through 18th centuries.

