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MAKING MARVELOUS MASKS

Combine art and language arts with these three-dimensional masks that are fun to make and use. Two skilled mask-makers tell you how.

BY RON AND MARSHA FELLER

"WILL YOU teach me how to make a mask?" That's the question we're asked most frequently when we take our masks into classrooms. So we developed directions for making and using many styles of masks.

We suggest you begin by making one or two masks yourself, ahead of time. That way, you'll be familiar with the steps when you present them to your students—plus you'll have a few finished samples for your class to see.

Masks have all sorts of marvelous uses: everything from unusual classroom decorations to providing the basis for original plays and stories. Of course, they're a natural for Halloween or Mardi Gras celebrations. And making and using masks can also be a fun project for the beginning of the school year.

General directions

You'll need these supplies: construction paper (or Strathmore 300 art paper, which makes a more durable mask), pencil, scissors, white glue, hand-held stapler, lightweight 9-inch paper plates, a cardboard rod from a clothes hanger, masking tape, and an X-acto knife (optional).

Here are some general techniques:

• **Cutting out basic shapes.** To make *symmetrical* shapes for the head or facial features, fold a piece of paper in half, then, working from the fold, draw half the shape you want and cut it out. To

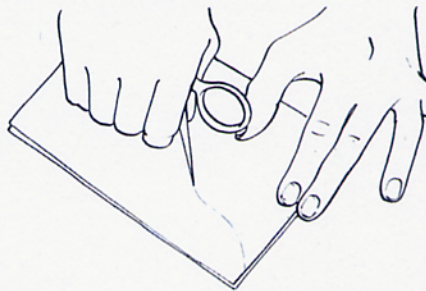


make two *identical* shapes, cut two pieces of paper at the same time. Keep paper scraps to make eyes, cheeks, and so on. *Note:* Cut all edges evenly and straight so, when glued, they'll adhere properly.

• **Scoring.** Scoring makes a flat piece of paper three-dimensional. You can score with curved lines or straight, depending on the effect you want. Practice scoring on scrap paper so you'll have a feel for it:

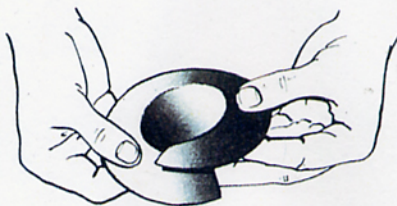
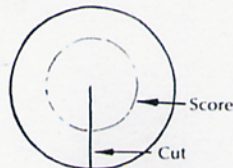
1. Draw a light pencil line along the paper, showing where you want to score it.

2. Pull the point of the scissors toward you along the line, exerting just enough pressure to break the fiber but not to go through the paper.



3. Cut out the shape and bend it along the scored line. (If you prefer, you can cut out the shape first, then score it.)

To make a three-dimensional circle, cut out a circle and score a smaller concentric circle inside it. Cut a straight line to the center. Overlap the cut edges while gently bending the scored line. Secure with glue.



• **Gluing.** Use glue sparingly. Run a small bead of glue along the edge that's to be secured. When gluing a scored piece to a surface, put glue *only* on the places that touch the surface. Set the shape in position and hold it for a few seconds; don't press down too hard on scored shapes or you'll flatten them.

• **Making a mask to wear.** The masks described below are to be held in front of your face. If you want to make a mask to wear *over* your face, skip the direction about attaching the mask to a paper plate. Just make simple eyes and cut holes inside them so you can see, or make interesting eyes and cut slits below them (an X-acto knife works best for these methods). Be sure to fold the mask and cut out the holes or slits at the same time so they'll be symmetrical.

HOW TO MAKE A HUMAN FACE

1. **The head.** Cut out a head shape from a piece of 12 x 18-inch construction paper, folded in half lengthwise. Cut "pie"

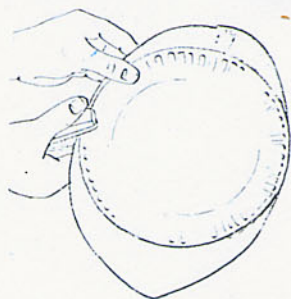


shapes at either end. Open up the paper, then overlap the pie shapes and staple them together. This forms the chin and the top of the head.





Staple a paper plate to the back of the head. The "eating side" of the plate should be facing outward. If some of the plate shows from the front, trim it away.

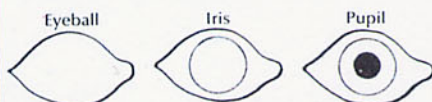


2. The nose.

Noses can be any size but should be basically triangular. Use a folded 6 x 9-inch piece of paper.



3. The eyes. Use different colors of paper to make the three parts of the eye: eyeball, iris, and pupil. Be sure to cut



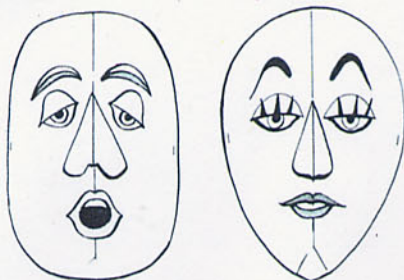
out each pair at the same time. To glue each eye to the face, start with the eyeball, add the iris, then add the pupil.

To make eyelids, cut out two half circles and gently curl them between your thumb and index finger. Put glue on the top edge and attach them above the eyes.

For eyelashes, glue a fringed piece of paper to each eyelid before attaching it to the eye.

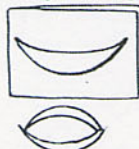


Cut out interesting shapes for eyebrows.



4. The mouth. Cut out a simple, symmetrical mouth-like shape. To make the mouth look open, remove a section from the center. If you want it raised, put

drops of glue at the corners and position the mouth slightly lifted from the basic head shape. Hold it until the glue sets. (You can also make a mouth by cutting out two identical crescent shapes and using them as upper and lower lips. Again, put drops of glue on the corners only.)

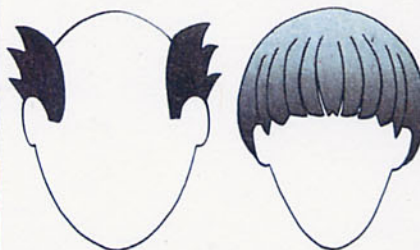
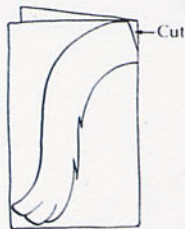


5. The ears and cheeks. Make simple ears by cutting them out as part of the original head shape. Or add them later by stapling or gluing symmetrical shapes to the head.

Cut out two identical shapes for simple cheeks. If you want more sophisticated cheeks, use the three-dimensional circles described earlier under *Scoring*.

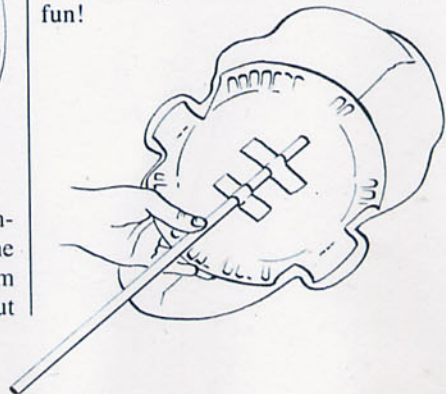
6. The hair.

For a half-bald head, glue two identical "fluffs" of paper behind the ears. For hair that goes over the head, cut the pie-shaped wedge on top so it's contoured. For curly hair, cut out a lot of long thin strips, wrap them around a pencil to curl them, then glue them individually around the face. Experiment with other "hairstyles."



Once you've made a basic human face, try adding hats, mustaches, beards, and ties. By making exaggerated features, you can create clowns, African masks, and other fanciful characters.

When you've finished your face, use masking tape to attach the cardboard rod from a clothes hanger (or a tightly rolled sheet of 12 x 18-inch construction paper) to the back of the paper plate. Hold the mask by the rod and get ready for fun!



USING THE MASKS CREATIVELY

Once your students make their masks, what can they do with them? Here are some suggestions:

- Each student can choose and memorize an animal poem to recite while holding a mask of that animal. If students are shy, two or three of them can recite the poem in unison. After they've tried it a few times, invite the principal to their performance.
- Each student can research and present to the class three facts about the animal or person his mask represents. If his mask is an imaginary animal or character, the student can invent the three facts.



- Small groups of students can get together and act out spontaneous dramas using their masks.
- After students play in small groups, read aloud a provocative story that students can later act out using some of the masks. Read another story and do the same. Students might find stories of their own that they'd like to act out. If you have access to video equipment, tape the students' performances for viewing by themselves or other classes.
- Students can use their masks as inspiration to write their own stories and plays. Extend the activity beyond the

masks by turning one of the stories into a radio play. Discuss the different background sounds they need to create and whether they should have a narrator. Rehearse the story, then record it on audio tape.

Tell your students to keep these two pointers in mind when using their masks:

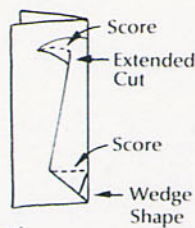
- Decide ahead of time how your character should walk and gesture. Try to show how your character feels by the way you move.
- Keep your body positioned so your mask is pointed in the general direction of the audience.

HOW TO MAKE A TIGER

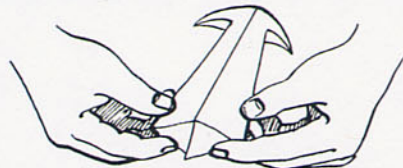
1. The face. Cut out a face shape with rounded ears from a sheet of 9 × 12-inch paper, folded in half lengthwise.

2. The nose.

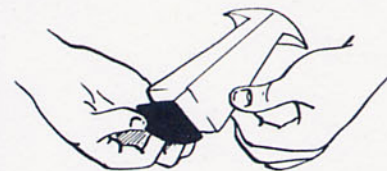
For a simple nose, cut out a black triangle. For the nose shown in the photograph, fold a 6 × 9-inch piece of paper in



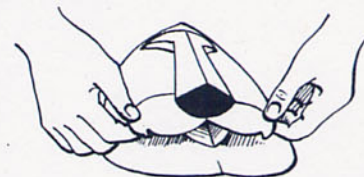
half lengthwise and cut out the shape shown in the illustration. Score along the dotted lines, then fold



on the scored lines. Overlap the front nose tabs and glue them. Next, trace around the end of the nose on dark-colored paper. Cut out this triangular shape and glue it to the tip of the nose.

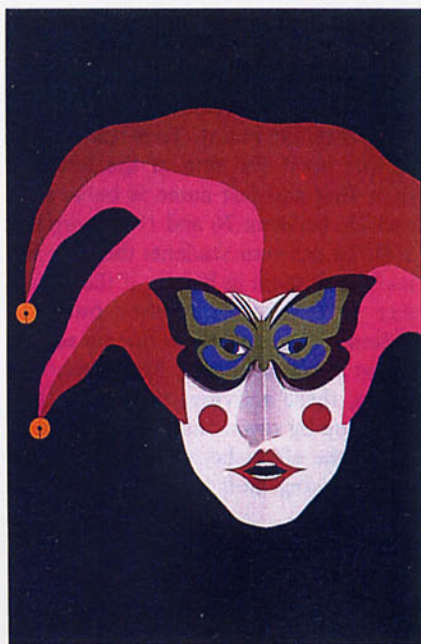


3. Other details. Cut out the lower lip and muzzle. Glue the nose, lower lip,



and muzzle as shown. (Note: As with the mouth for the face mask, don't glue the pieces down flat.) Add eyes and dark shapes inside the ears. Using dark paper, cut thick strips for the tiger's stripes and long, thin strips for the whiskers.

You can change your tiger's personality by varying the size, shape, and position of the individual features. To change the tiger to a lion, omit the stripes and add curled strips of brown and yellow paper for the mane.



Ron and Marsha Feller give workshops on mask-making and storytelling. They're the authors of *Paper Masks and Puppets for Stories, Songs and Plays* (The Arts Factory, 1985).