

# PAPER PLATE MASKS

This lesson is combined and adapted from Sivin's *Maskmaking* and Foreman's *Maskwork*.

## Introduction

This is another simple way to do maskmaking in the classroom. Again it can be done in as simple or complex a way as is appropriate for your age group. Given here are two separate lesson plans for Paper Plate Masks. The first follows Sivin's activity. It is appropriate for all age levels. She writes, "A paper plate can provide an excellent base for a mask. Most paper plates are strong enough to support any number of appendages. It is fun to see how many ways they can be altered so that they no longer resemble paper plates" (p. 27). These masks can be created to represent anything—animals, fantastical beings, people, etc. See examples below.

In Foreman's lesson plan (pp. 61-65) she uses paper plate masks as a way to encourage students to think about the ways in which our facial expressions and features portray emotion. While this activity can be adapted for all age groups it may be easier to implement with older children, from upper elementary on. She guides students to create masks that show happiness, sadness, anger, contemplation, etc. Foreman compares the communication of emotion in masks to the stylization of features, much like what we do with cartoon drawings. She writes, "When we experience emotions the muscles in our face move and our features alter. Although we sometimes say that we can read someone's face 'like a book', it is doubtful whether this is ever actually true. Research does not suggest that there is a simple, direct relationship between appearance and emotion. In mask-making we are, therefore, less concerned with real emotion than with caricature and stereotype. This is the first stage in understanding the expressive power of the character mask" (p. 61).

## Materials

Paper plates

Scissors

Construction paper

Crayons, markers, and/or paint

Glue

Decorating materials: pipe cleaners, yarn, shredded paper, felt, sequins, ribbon, cotton balls, string or sticks (depending upon how students will wear the mask), etc.

## Procedure for Sivin's Activity

1. Guide students to brainstorm and sketch out the plan for their mask.
2. Once students have a plan, with the help of a partner, have them position the mask and mark the appropriate place for the eyes and mouth. Students can then cut out the eye and mouth holes.
3. Decorate the mask using construction paper, felt, paint, etc. Students can use other paper plates to extend the mask if necessary. Yarn or shredded paper can be used for hair or fur.

4. When the mask is completed students can thread string through holes in order to tie it on or they can glue some sort of stick or wooden dowel to hold the mask up.

### Procedure for Foreman's Activity

1. Introduce the idea of how we show emotions on our faces to students.
2. Have student practice making faces that show different emotions. If mirrors are available, allow students to make different faces while looking a mirror, making note of the different parts of the face that change and how they change. If mirrors are not available, have students do this activity with a partner. While one student makes the face, the other student sketches the changes in the face they observe. Students then switch roles.
3. Have students begin making their mask. First, they need to mark the appropriate place for the eyes, nose and mouth. One student can hold the paper plate on while their partner marks the plate.
4. Next, decide on the expression of the plate mask and draw the features on the mask.
5. Cut out the eyes, mouth and nostrils so the wearer and can and breath.
6. Make holes in the mask and tie string or elastic through the holes so the mask can be worn.

### Example of Paper Plate Masks

The scanned visual below is taken from Foreman's *Maskwork* (p. 60). In addition, see the following page for more examples of how colorful and original paper plate masks can be.



## Examples of Paper Plate Masks



Image taken from <http://artandcreativity.blogspot.com/2007/02/paper-plate-art-share-share-your-ideas.html>



Image taken from <http://spinsandneedles.com/stuff/2009/10/31/diy-last-minute-where-the-wild-things-are-mask-tutorial/>



Image taken from <http://howsb.info/1805-how-to-make-a-mask-from-a-paper-plate.html>