

WHO IS BEHIND THE MASK?

DETAILED CLAY RELIEF MASK
ART AND HISTORY
GRADES: 7-12

BASED ON



Japan

Suit of Armor, 19th century

Metal and leather

Gift of Mrs. Enoch T. Carson through Women's Art Museum Association, 1881.152a-n

OBJECTIVES

- Students will brainstorm, discover, and discuss the many reasons for wearing a mask in various cultures.
- Students will sketch a mask (human, animal, or alien) concept.
- Students will design and construct relief masks with clay.

CONCEPT

In this unit, students will explore masks and the reasons to wear a mask. Students will research, design, create, and glaze clay relief masks.

MATERIALS

Images of *Suit of Armor* for each table

Reference books and images on masks

Laptops for further mask research

Mask handout: 'Who is behind the mask?'

Newspaper/masking tape (for creating 'hump molds/drapes')

Colored pencils, for sketching

White, low-fire clay (approximately 1 ½ lb. per student).

Clay tools: loop tool, needle tool, modeling tool, rolling pin, textures

Clay slip

Canvas mats for each student

Plastic bags for storage

Trays, as needed for transporting

Newspaper, paper towels

Glaze in various colors, oxide stains

Brushes and sponges

VOCABULARY

Samurai – a member of a powerful military caste in feudal Japan

Slab method – a method of making pottery in which a thick, flat plate or slice of clay is cut into shapes, which are then joined to form an object using slip.

Slip - a liquid mixture of clay suspended in water

Relief – a method of molding, carving, or stamping in which the design stands out from the surface to a greater (high relief) or lesser (bas-relief) extent

PROCEDURE

1. Define the terms MASK and HELMET. Brainstorm, in small groups, reasons to wear a mask. Share each group's ideas, distribute the handout, and review as a class. Look at the images of the Samurai armor. View a clip of the Khan Academy video (as listed in resources).
2. Students research and discuss what they discovered about the cultures and their various uses of masks.
3. The students sketch out a mask concept and identify the purpose that the mask could be used for.
4. After watching a demonstration, the students receive a 1 lb. block of clay. They roll out and cut a slab to accommodate a 6"-7" oval. The students create a hump mold (formed with crumpled newspaper and tape) that the clay can be draped over as the mask is created. Slip, needle tools, exacto blades, modeling tools, loop tools, textures, and rolling pins are all used to create the mask and all the details of it.
5. Students complete all the details of their unique mask, adding modeled clay and cutting out holes if desired for eyes, mouth, etc.
6. Low fire clay: Drying time took about a week before bisque-firing. Once bisque-fired, the students glaze their masks. One color glaze or an oxide stain was emphasized (vs. inaccurate multi-color application of glazes, resulting in a sloppy finished project).
7. Students evaluate their projects. Questions include: what they liked best about their mask, what they found challenging, which mask do they admire and why, and what they would do differently in creating their mask.

ASSESSMENT

Individual artwork evaluations will examine the following criteria:

Meeting the goals of the assignment:

1. Hand built slab-based mask
2. Relief format (curved flat back)
3. Newspaper mold used to create rounded appearance
4. Include eyes (or holes), nose and mouth (or hole), or similar human/animal/alien features
5. At least 6" oval
6. Include at least 5 'additions'
7. Include at least one hole
8. Emphasis on details
9. Decorative, expressive mask
10. Consider ears, eyebrows, hair/fur/feathers, piercings, glasses, hats, eyes, nose, mouth, tongue, teeth...
11. Identify the purpose that your mask could be used

Successful craftsmanship and effort: Sturdy construction with pieces that are securely attached, clay carefully rolled out, slip used to securely attach the facial details, thought was given to the many details of their mask, skill is demonstrated in the care and use of materials, time was spent to create all parts of the mask, glaze was carefully applied, time and effort is apparent in the final project.

Creativity/visual impact/originality: The student demonstrated creative thinking throughout the design and production process. The mask is unique with high visual appeal. Careful consideration was given to the glazing.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Standard 1- Understands and applies media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts.

Standard 4- Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Standard 5- Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others.

RESOURCES

Books & Websites:

Masks & the Art of Expression, John Mack

Masks of the World, Douglas Congdon-Martin, Jim Pieper

Masks: Faces of Culture, John W. Nunley

Masks of the World, Joseph Gregor

Masks of Mexico, Barbara Mauldin

<http://web.archive.org/web/2003121111954/http://www.mpm.edu/collect/mask.html>

<http://www.history.com/topics/samurai-and-bushido/pictures/samurai-and-bushido/samurai-armor>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia/art-japan/kamakura-period/v/samurai-armor>



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