The power of masks
Primary Lesson Plan

This lesson plan was developed by Curriculum Corporation.

Source
Part of a Pattern: Years 2–3 (Integrated Units Collection)

Learning areas
The Arts

Level
Middle to lower primary

Description
Students move through a series of study centres to examine cultural contexts for masks. They design and build a mask for themselves. This activity is a part of the unit 'Behind the mask'. The unit explores the idea of masks, from facial expressions and mime, through face painting and tattooing to more formal masks.

Purpose
To develop an appreciation of the various purposes for masks and the skill to make a mask for a special purpose.

Duration
2–3 sessions

Possible outcomes
In relation to The arts — a curriculum profile for Australian schools, work in this activity could lead to the achievement of outcomes in the following strands:

- Visual arts
  - Creating, making and presenting
  - Arts criticism and aesthetics
  - Past and present contexts

This also has links to other learning areas such as Mathematics and Studies of society and environment.
Materials required
Each student will need paper, pencil and coloured pencils or textas.

The class will need:

- face paints
- cardboard and white paper
- elastic or tape
- staples
- glue or sticky tape
- strips of newspaper
- papier-mache glue

A range of work stations presenting a variety of materials, for instance:

- examples of face decoration;
- party masks, and pictures of cartoon superheroes in masks
- masks from other countries such as Europe, Africa and Indonesia
- pictures and artefacts showing animal masks including those of Ancient Egypt and Indian totems

Many of these may be brought to class by students as a result of the resource hunt in step 1 below.

Procedure
The following focus activities could run concurrently in the classroom, or sequentially, as listed here. If organised as a set of learning centres, student tutors and/or parents may facilitate the learning. Students make several masks and contribute to a class exhibition.

1   Introducing masks
Discuss students' ideas about masks, encouraging a broad range of views. Invite students to participate in a resource hunt and contribute to establishing the learning centres. With the class, label, describe and categorise the items collected (for example, masks or face designs; masks for fun, for hunting).

2   Focus on painted faces
Students examine examples of face decoration and are challenged to think about people who decorate their faces, how it is done and why.

Ask students to draw a picture of their partner's face, design a pattern and draw it on the picture. Encourage them to think about patterns, lines and colours and then write about their design, explaining their choices of pattern and colours. Students finish by decorating their partner's face. Extra care needs to be taken when painting near the eyes.

3   Focus on disguise and deception
Students examine masks used for disguise or deception, and discuss why people wear these masks, and when. Have students design, make and appraise a party mask for themselves. It should keep their identity a secret but still allow them to speak clearly and eat easily.
When the masks are completed use the following questions to help with appraisal.

- Did you stick to your plan?
- Did you have to change anything?
- What was the most difficult part of making the mask?
- Were the materials you used right for the task?
- What would you change if you made another mask?

4 Focus on masks for magic
Have students examine pictures, artefacts and/or masks from other countries where masks are designed to scare away evil spirits or invoke the power of the spirit world to protect the owners or wearers. Focus discussion on the feelings aroused by the mask in the person wearing it and someone looking at it.

Students design, make and appraise a tube mask. Begin with a piece of cover paper rolled into a cylinder big enough to fit snugly over the head, and stapled when it fits. Explain and model techniques such as curling, pleating and fringing paper. Invite students to write about their masks, giving them names, deciding who would wear their masks and when, where and why they might be worn.

5 Focus on animal masks
Using stimulus material, explore animal masks. Explain to students that many cultures have made masks to represent admired animals, in the hope of taking on some of their attributes, such as strength, cunning, swiftness.

In groups, have students list animals they think represent strength, cleverness, sneakiness.

Individuals then choose an animal with a particular quality they think is sometimes a part of their character and design, make and appraise a papier-mache mask of that animal.

Provide strips of newspaper, white paper and papier-mache glue. Instruct students, as necessary, in the techniques of making papier-mache. Depending on the shape of the animal's face, they could put the papier-mache over a balloon, or on one side of a ball made from newspaper and masking tape.

Extension activities
3. Visit a museum to look at, categorise and sketch masks.

Related products
Other titles in the Integrated Units Collection are:

- *Oodles of Noodles*: Early Years
- *From Igloos to Yurts*: Years 4–7