



Seasons of Life and Land

THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Lesson #3: Arctic Mask Design

Focus questions

1. Why are masks created by native people living in the circumpolar region?
2. What animals are chosen by artists to use in mask designs?
3. What are common shapes and patterns seen in Arctic mask designs?
4. What materials are used to create a mask in the Arctic?

What students do in this activity

Students will design and create Arctic style masks that express the relationship between animals and people in the Arctic.

Estimated teaching time

One or two class periods, depending on the time reserved for mask-making.

Good examples of Arctic masks can be found on the Burke Museum's Ethnology online collection at www.burkemuseum.org. Click RESEARCH and COLLECTIONS, ETHNOLOGY, COLLECTIONS. Click images below BROWSE COLLECTIONS, and choose ARCTIC COLLECTIONS. Take note of Inupiaq masks, Skin masks and Yup'ik Masks.

General supplies to complete this lesson plan

- Markers
- Scissors
- Tape
- Glue
- Paint, tempera or watercolor
- Thick paper or board and other paper products
- Faux natural materials such as: feathers, bamboo skewers, toothpicks, wooden beads, felt, pipe cleaners in black, white, gray or brown colors, popsicle sticks and wax paper to imitate seal or walrus skin.

Use as many or as few of these materials as you like.

For showing mask examples

- Overhead projector (if using overheads)
- Copies of mask images (provided on pages 34 – 36) onto overhead transparency
- Film
- LCD Projector (to project images from a computer)



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Learning goals

Students will:

1. Learn to describe two purposes of masks in Arctic cultures.
2. Learn to create a mask in the Arctic style.
3. Learn to express the meaning of a story or intention visually, using the style and patterns of a specific culture.
4. Learn to differentiate between the mask styles of the Yup'ik and Iñupiaq cultures.
5. Learn to explain the significance of an art piece they have created.

Advance preparation

Make copies, either overheads or individual pages, of the three mask images provided at the end of the lesson plan. (*All mask examples from collection of Burke Museum.*) Look at the Burke Museum or Smithsonian Web sites and/or books listed in Additional Resources to familiarize yourself with what the different masks look like. You may want to develop an additional set of examples to the show class either from the Web or from books.

Become familiar with different Native American people from the Arctic Circle. Research the Iñupiaq from the Northern area of Alaska, Aleut from the Aleutian Islands, Yup'ik, Netsilik, Copper Eskimo, Ingalik people and Caribou people.

A few basics of Arctic mask design

Yup'ik (YOO-pik)

Repetition of circles and circular wood bands surrounding mask represent the cosmos and universe. Body parts are often separated and displayed disjointed from one another, jutting out from the center of the mask.

Iñupiat (in-YOOP-ee-at)

Faces are often simplified and broad. Features are smaller and exaggerated, with a combination of geometric design and smooth form. Complex appendages often create extensions to the mask.

Introducing the Activity

Discuss the relationship between animals and humans. Many Native American peoples believe animals have unique spiritual qualities and should be treated with respect. In order for a person to catch an animal, the animal needs to be encouraged or give permission to be killed. Once killed, it is important to ask for the animal's understanding. If not asked, other living animals will not allow themselves to be caught.

Encourage the students to take notes and/or make sketches throughout the following discussion.

1. Ask students to create a list of Arctic animals. Write names on the blackboard. (See arctic.fws.gov/ for a detailed list of Refuge animals.)
2. Introduce common features in Arctic masks. Examples include dots or punctate; concentric rings; tooth or killer whale motif; frowning face is female; smiling face is male; more than one animal on a mask; simple geometric designs; only a few colors, primarily black and red; feathers; skin; baleen; and seal/walrus whiskers.



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3. Ask students why they think that Arctic people make masks. Reasons include: honoring an animal who gives food, such as a seal, walrus, whale or salmon; honoring an animal with qualities you admire — such as the sharp eye of an owl, swiftness of a bird or cleverness of a fox; acknowledging kinship with an animal; and telling a story. Ask students to think about what they want other people to see and learn when they look at the student's mask.
4. Show the students the three images of the masks provided, as well as any other examples you have found.
5. Ask the students to consider and discuss the following questions in class.
 - Do each of these groups of people represent animals differently?
 - How do the patterns and shapes differ from one mask to another?
 - What materials are used to make the mask?
 - Do the materials change depending on the geographic region?
 - What are some ways the artist helps you see what he or she had in mind?
 - Is this a realistic representation of the animal?
 - What animal would you choose to help you in your life?

Facilitating the Activity

For this activity, each student may pick an Arctic animal of his/her own, or one animal may be chosen for the whole class to use in their designs. Seeing variations in individual interpretations of a single subject could be part of a student discussion.

Encourage the students to add at least one other additional animal to their initial animal choice. For example, a seal mask often includes images of fish, and the animal inua (spirit or soul) is often shown with a human face.

1. Lay out all materials on a table.
2. Each student should take a piece of thick paper as a base structure for the mask and can use any of the materials provided.
3. Each student creates an Arctic mask by using patterns, shapes, animals and other themes from the class discussions.

Summarizing and Reflecting

As an artist, it is important to be able to talk about your art. Volunteers may stand and show their masks to the group. Prompt students to talk about the animals in the mask, patterns they used, color or design choices, meaning of their masks, title if decided upon, and allow for one or two questions. This process may also help the artists clarify their intentions.

Ask the students to consider the following:

If the students could design masks based on the city or area in which they live,

- What animals would be important to them?
- Do they rely on these animals for survival or food?
- What patterns, colors, repetitive shapes or materials would they use?
- What modern materials might they use?



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Extensions

1. Each student may complete a museum identification tag. Each tag will give detailed information on the artist's work including name of the mask, animal(s) depicted in the mask, materials used and meaning of the mask. (See examples at end of lesson.)
2. Create a space or location for a gallery show of your Arctic masks. As a group, create a title for the art show. Hang and display as desired with the tag below or next to each mask. Consider lighting when hanging your show.
3. Invite other classes, parents, teachers and administrators to tour the exhibit!

"The Inuits," by Shirlee Newman. A fluid history of the Arctic Inuit culture. Descriptions of community life, hunting, whaling and modern Inuit customs.

"The Artists Behind the Work," by Ann Fienup-Riordan et al. Focuses on the lives and artwork of four Alaskan native artists. Created for an exhibit at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Additional Resources

washington.edu/burkemuseum/collections/ethnology/index.php — Access point for the Burke Museum's extensive collection on cultures. To access the information on Arctic cultures, click on COLLECTIONS. On that page, click on one of three images under the banner that reads BROWSE COLLECTIONS. When that page opens, click on ARCTIC COLLECTIONS.

mnh.si.edu/arctic/features/yupik/index.html — A site produced by the Smithsonian on Native Alaskan Yup'ik material presented from a Yup'ik perspective. It highlights 27 Yup'ik objects from the National Museum of Natural History collection.

museums.state.ak.us/collectionsearch.html — Use Alaska State Museum's collections search to find Arctic masks from Yup'ik to Aleut. Type in a keyword to see details and images from their collection.

"The Far North: 2000 Years of American Eskimo and Indian Art at the National Gallery of Art," by Henry B. Collins, Frederica de Laguna, Edmund Carpenter and Peter Stone. This is a book produced to accompany an exhibit of the same name, which was on display at the National Gallery of Art, March 8 – May 15, 1973. The book is available at the UW and Seattle Public libraries.



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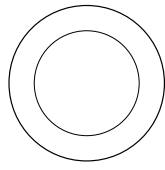
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Arctic Mask Activity

Here's an idea for an Artifact Identification Tag students can use to identify their work.

Title of Mask:	_____
Animal:	_____
Material(s):	_____
Meaning of Mask:	_____

Artist's Name:	_____
Date:	_____





Newspapers In Education

The Seattle Times

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LESSON MATERIALS

Mask 1





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Mask 2





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LESSON MATERIALS

Mask 3





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TEACHER BACKGROUND

Supplemental Information for Teachers on Masks



Object name	Mask
Culture	Yup'ik, Kuskokwim Area
Made by	Yup'ik, Kuskokwim Area
Locale	Kuskokwim Area
Credit	Gift of Mr. E. M. Blackwell
Source	Mr. E. M. Blackwell, Ellis Allen

Mask features:

- Mask is made of wood with red and black paint.
- It depicts two faces — Seal (sea mammal) and Human.
- The human face combined with the seal shows the soul or inua of the animal.
- The seal is not depicted realistically; the form is simplified and the mouth is enlarged.
- Repetition of circle designs is used for the shape of the mask, nose and eyes of both the seal and the human.



Object name	Mask
Culture	Inupiaq, Point Hope
Made by	Inupiaq, Point Hope
Locale	Point Hope, AK
Material	Wood
Date	1894
Source	James T. White
Credit	Gift of Mrs. James T. White

Mask features:

- Mask is carved from wood.
- It shows exaggerated facial features, including smiling mouth, glowing cheeks, squinting eyes and distinct brow line
- The mask shape is circular/oval.
- The surface of the mask is smooth and broad.



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TEACHER BACKGROUND



Object name	Mask
Culture	Yup'ik, Nunivak
Made by	Yup'ik, Nunivak
Locale	Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island
Material	Wood, Feather, Fur, Ivory, Paint
Date	Date Collected late 1940s; 1945 – 1949
Credit	Gift of Redman Family in Memory of M. Chandler Redman
Source	Mr. Eric Redman

Mask Features:

- Materials used are feathers, wood, fur, ivory and paint.
- Two concentric circles framing the mask represent the universe.
- Wood carvings of animal body parts, including fins and flippers, are attached to feathers encircling the mask.
- Walrus motif is recognized by accentuated teeth.