



## Finding Yourself: Masks as Personal and Community Portraits

### *Lesson plan*

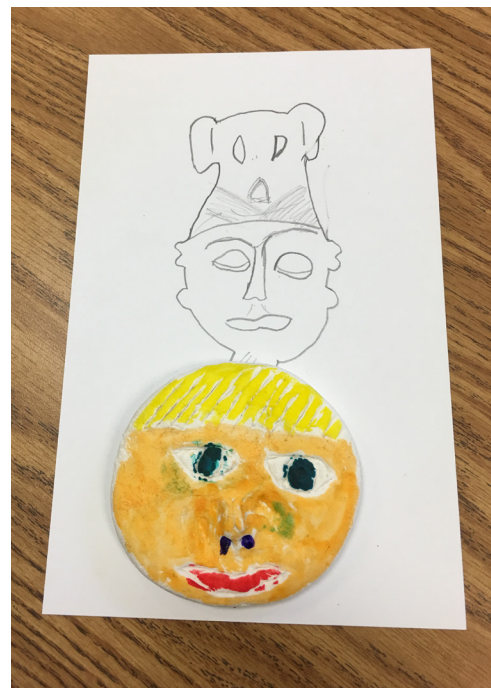
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Educator Resources and Lesson Plans

Spring 2016

### *Passport Masks from the UMFA Education Collection*

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*Samples from lesson plan activity. Artwork by students at Springdale Elementary, Springdale UT.*



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### ***Lesson plan***

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### ***Passport Masks from the UMFA Education Collection***

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#### **Lega Peoples Passport Mask**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood, fiber

ED 2015.1.6

Carved wooden mask with grass-like fiber beard.



#### **Lega Peoples Passport Mask**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood, pigment

ED 2015.1.8

Carved wooden mask with white pigment around eyes and scarification markings.



**Lega Peoples Passport Masks**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood, pigment

no accession number

Carved wooden mask with red and white pigment.



**Lega Peoples Passport Masks**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood, pigment

no accession number

Carved wooden mask with red and white pigment.



**Lega Peoples Passport Masks**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood

ED 2006.2.51

Carved wooden mask with exaggerated long face.





### **Lega Peoples Passport Masks**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood, pigment

ED 2006.2.52

Carved wooden mask with scarification markings, open eyes and mouth.



### **Djimini Peoples Passport Mask**

Côte d'Ivoire  
wood

ED 2015.1.7

Carved wooden mask with protruding elongated nose and three bumps on each side of the face.



### **Kom Peoples Passport Mask**

Cameroon  
wood

ED 2015.1.9

Carved wooden mask ram head and goatee.



### **Kuba Peoples Passport Masks**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood

ED 2006.2.54

Small carved wooden mask with spiral scarification patterns.



### **Warega Peoples Passport Masks**

Democratic Republic of Congo  
wood

ED 2006.2.55

Small carved wooden mask with heart shaped “eye-brows,” open eyes and mouth, and small nose.

## ***Finding Yourself: Masks as Personal and Community Portraits***

Laura Decker and Annie Burbidge Ream

### **Overview**

Students will look at African Passport Masks to discuss topics of identity, form, function, and make their own mask to express their identity.

### **Objectives**

Using passport masks from the UMFA Education Collection as inspiration, students will:

1. Analyze a variety of masks from several African countries
2. Recognize similarities and difference between masks
3. Connect art to Core Subjects at grade appropriate levels
4. Make a mask that expresses their identity

**Intended Audiences/Grade Levels** K–12 (see extensions as listed by grade level below)

**Duration** 30–60 minutes

### **Materials**

1. Passport masks from UMFA education collection (email [schoolprograms@umfa.utah.edu](mailto:schoolprograms@umfa.utah.edu) to reserve Museum objects to use in your classroom—this program is FREE!)
2. Gloves
3. Model magic
4. Clay tools
5. Paper (to protect desks and for optional writing extension)
6. Markers
7. *Optional: beads, sequins, string, and other decorative additions*

### **Activity**

**Part One:** Sketching—begin the activity without providing any background information or telling students that they will be looking at masks: use words like “artwork” or “object.” Divide students into small groups and give each group one mask. Have students sketch the mask.

- K-2 students can draw their three favorite shapes and then the shapes they see in the masks.
- Grades 3-6 can focus on both the largest and smallest of details. As they sketch, ask students to think about shape, size, emphasis, design, and line.
- Secondary students can focus on the prompts above plus color, shading, texture, and composition of the drawing on the paper.

**Part Two:** Looking—Model good object handling practices: wear gloves, do not hold the object above your head, look at the object from all sides, and only one person holds the object with two hands at all times.

Younger students can sit in a large circle to view and discuss the masks in more detail as a class. Older students can remain in groups at their desks. Choose one mask to start with and begin asking the students questions. Some basic ideas for questions include:

- What do you see?
- What shapes, colors, lines, patterns, and textures do you see?
- What is this object made of? Why were those materials chosen?
- How was it made? With what tools?

Pass out gloves to each student. Remind them about good object handling practices. Pass around the mask and continue asking questions with at least three other passport masks. Discuss:

- What does it smell like?
- How are these objects the same? How are they different?
- Who do you think made these objects? Were they all made by the same person?
- What was it made for?
- Where is this object from?
- How old is this object?
- Does the object tell a story?
- What do you think this object is?

What is a Passport Mask? Guide the discussion to begin talking about the specific art form. (see below for grade specific ideas)

- What are these objects used for?
- Have you ever worn a mask?
- Why do people wear them?
- Where would this mask be worn on the body?
- What is a passport?
- How do people know that your passport is yours and not your neighbor's? Is there a picture of you on your passport?
- These are called passport masks and are from different cultures in Africa. They are used a lot like the passports we use in this country but they would be worn on your shoulder, or your belt, or even hung outside to show where someone is from.
- Just like our passports, these passport masks are portraits of the people who use them.

- Discuss with students what they think the person who owned the different masks might have looked like. Then have them discuss how they might depict your passport mask and how they would depict their own.
- Passport masks can also tell us something about the person who owned the mask, like what they liked to do or what they did for a living. (The mask with the goat head on top was probably made for a shepherd or could symbolize wealth and status.)

### ***Part Three:*** Creating—Make a passport mask to reflect your identity.

Explain that today students will be making their own passport masks. Direct the art making by grade level. (see below for grade specific ideas)

- Roll model magic into a ball and use your hands to flatten it out into the shape of your face.
- Place model magic on a piece of paper to protect desks.
- Use clay tools, fingers, and other objects to sculpt features.
- Magic markers work well on the clay but do bleed a little as the clay dries. To change the color of the clay, scribble with a marker and then knead it together thoroughly.
- Students can add beads, sequins, feathers, and more to personalize their mask even more.
- Model magic is an air-drying clay and takes about 72 hours to harden.

### ***Grade Specific Extensions***

#### K–2: Roles in Various Communities

Review different communities in the world: home, school, neighborhood, city, state, etc.

- What kinds of people work in these communities? What do they look like? What do they wear? Why do they wear those things?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What is a portrait?
- Can you make your passport mask into a portrait of you that shows us what you want to be when you grow up?
- Writing extension: On your paper, next to your passport mask, write five things that tell us about your mask. Write a story about your mask and what you want to be when you grow up.

#### 3–6: Symbolism and Storytelling

These passport masks tell stories about the people who owned them. Not only do they tell us about what these people might have looked like, but they also tell us about what these people liked, what they did for work, and about their cultures through symbolism.

- What is a symbol? Do you see any symbols in this classroom?
- Can colors or shapes be symbols?
- What kinds of symbols can you find in these masks?



- What stories do those symbols tell about the people who owned these masks?
- Write a couple sentences that tell a story about you. What do you like? What do you want to be when you grow up? Where were you born? How many people are in your family?
- Think of some symbols that could represent those ideas.
- What is a portrait?
- Make your own passport mask that is a portrait of you and tells the story you wrote using symbols.

### 7–9: Investigate “Identity”

- What is identity?
- Is there a difference between group and individual identity?
- How do people express their identity both individually and as part of a group? Think of a few different kinds of groups: school, cultural, home, etc.
- What is a symbol?
- Why do artists use symbols to tell stories or express ideas? Do other people have to understand these symbols?
- Discuss the identities of the people who owned these passport masks and what the use of symbolism adds to the story of their identity.
- Describe your own identity in one to two sentences. How do you express your identity?
- Make your own passport mask that tells us about your identity. Use symbolism to tell a story. Do you want to use universal symbols so everyone understands your story, or do you want to use personal symbols to keep it a secret?

### 10–12: Aesthetics and Identity

- Use 7–9th grade discussion points as a basis for the conversation about identity.
- Incorporate course specific aesthetics (color schemes, form, line quality, symmetry, etc) exercises into construction of the masks.

### **Method for Assessment**

Students should participate in conversations and execute art activity at grade appropriate levels.

### **State Core Links**

#### **Visual Arts**

*Standard 1: Making—The student will explore and refine the application of media, techniques, and artistic processes. In this standard the students learns to use new tools and materials and expand skills in the creation of art.*

*Standard 2: Perceiving—The student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art. In this standard the student uses meaningful works of art to recognize the elements and principles and applies them in personal work.*

*Standard 3: Expressing—The student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes. In this standard the student investigates artistic content and begins aesthetic inquiry through observation, discussion, and the creation of art works.*

*Standard 4: Contextualizing—The student will interpret and apply visual arts in relation to cultures, history, and all learning. In this standard the student will place their artwork and the artworks of others within the context of civilization, other areas of learning, and life skills.*

### **Additional Resources on African Masks and Cultures**

- <http://www.hamillgallery.com/SITE/MasksandHeads.html>
- <https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/peoples/>
- <http://komheritage.org/history.html>