

# Papier Mâché Chinese Opera Masks

USE SIMPLE MATERIALS TO DEVELOP SCULPTURES THAT HAVE INTRICATE, DETAILED CHARACTER AND IMAGERY



**target learning:** Makes silhouette support for a Chinese Opera character mask.

**criteria:** Draws simplified shapes defining contours of head/shoulders of a specific character, cuts out, and traces onto cardboard.

**target learning:** Creates a three-dimensional papier mâché mask.

**criteria:** Builds a head/shoulders/face form by attaching wadded newspaper to cardboard support for height, width, and depth; covers entire surface with white paper and cellulose.

**target learning:** Conveys specific character through surface decoration.

**criteria:** Uses color, pattern, and texture to represent details of costume and theatrical face paint observed in character.

## vocabulary

contour  
detail  
sculpture  
silhouette  
simplified form  
surface decoration  
three dimensional

## materials

beads

cellulose  
hot glue  
hot glue guns  
lightweight white paper  
masking tape  
recycled corrugated cardboard  
recycled newspapers  
ribbon  
tempera paint  
white glue  
yarn  
sequins  
glitter glue

SCHOOL: Blue Heron Middle School  
TEACHING ARTIST: Martha Worthley  
TEACHER: M.J. Rak  
GRADE: 6 (can be adapted to any grade)

**resources introduced:**

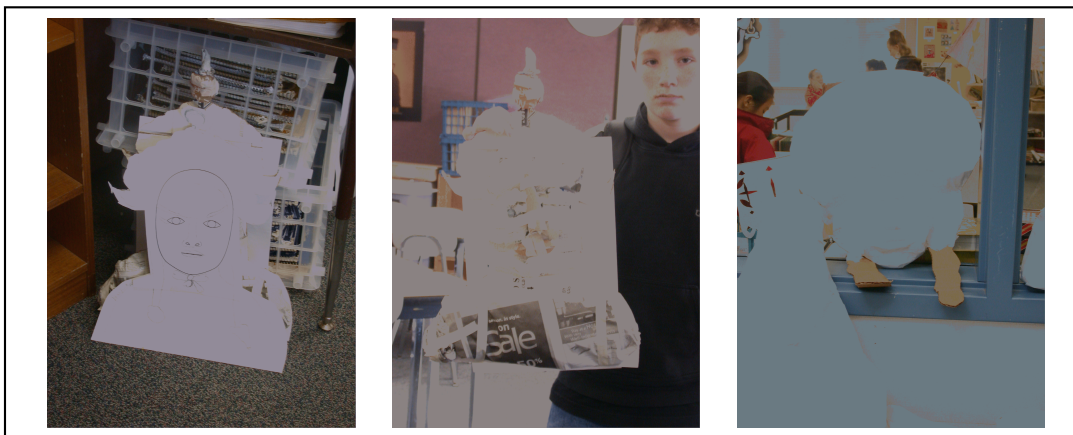
6<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts/Social Studies research includes learning about the origins and significance of Chinese Opera. Students become familiar with archetypical traditional characters of the opera: their gender, age, social class, personality, physical attributes.

**creative process:**

Students identify and research a specific Chinese Opera character. Students then are asked to draw their character in pencil, (by adding shapes to a basic face prototype) while looking at photographs of the character. Surface pattern and decoration distinguishing individual characters is discussed, along with color and simplification of form. Project takes place over at least five days of 1-2 hour sessions.

**class assessment strategies:**

Criteria based self assessment, Whole class discussion and critique.



**essential learnings:**

- Port Townsend Visual Art curriculum
- OSPI Visual Art frameworks
- OSPI Classroom-based Performance Assessments

**Arts 1.1 concepts:** shape, 3-D form

**Arts 1.2 skills and techniques:** papier mâché sculpture

**Arts 4.4 makes connections:** arts reflect culture

## teaching sequence: (printable version)

### ► Day one:

Using a photo image of a specific Chinese Opera character, teaching artist and teacher discuss how to decide on the basic shape of the mask. Contours of the human head are discussed: *Feel the contours of your own face...observe the contours of other faces in the room... Look at the character you will be representing: How can we simplify in order to show the basic shape of this character's head and shoulders?* Teaching artist creates a cardboard silhouette on which to build the form of the mask by making a drawing the character, cutting it out, tracing it on cardboard, and then cutting cardboard out.



### ► Day two:

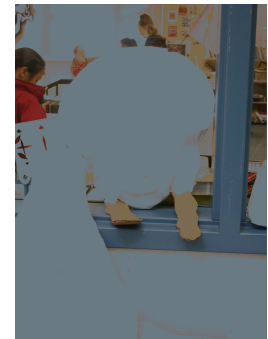
Teaching artist demonstrates rolling the newspaper into padded newspaper "dumplings." These basic building blocks have one smooth side and retain their shape. They are taped to the cardboard with masking tape. Dumplings are added on top of dumplings, increasing the volume of the form being created. She then demonstrates rolling tubes and other forms out of newspaper to make different shapes.

**embedded assessment:** students check for 3-dimensional form representing facial contours.



### ► Day three:

When the student has achieved an accurate three-dimensional form with the newspaper, the "skin" or papier mache layer covers the form. White paper is smeared with a mixture of cellulose fiber and water that makes a paste. The paper is torn into strips and applied over the newspaper. Attention is paid to creating a smooth, contoured surface. The white paper must cover the front and the back so that the mask becomes a strong, secure object.



### ► Day four:

The next step is painting the form using ideas from images of opera characters with focus on theatrical face paint and costume.



### ► Day five:

The final step includes using hot glue and white glue to add embellishments such as sequins and beads, ribbons, yarn, glitter and any other material the student discovers to enhance the surface decoration, and reference the opera character.

**class assessment strategies:** Criteria based self assessment, Whole class discussion and critique.