



# Mask-Making

*This unit starts by exploring why the Maya wore masks and culminates in you creating your very own Mayan masterpiece! We will look at the different media that can be used to create 3D form by appraising the work of a range of designers and craftspeople throughout history.*

## Art

### Key Questions

- Why did the Ancient Maya use masks?
- What were Mayan masks made from?
- Where might we see masks in modern times?
- How can we use drawing to develop ideas for a 3D mask?
- What different media and techniques can be used by craftspeople to create 3D masks?
- Which are the most effective and why?



### Key Vocabulary

form	Form takes up space and volume. You can create actual form by working in three dimensions or implied form by making a 2D image appear 3D (usually using value).
funerary mask	Frequently used to cover the face of the deceased. Generally, their purpose was to represent the features of the deceased, both to honour them and to establish a relationship through the mask with the spirit world.
incising	A decoration technique where lines are drawn into the clay surface.
line	The path left by a moving point. It can take many forms (horizontal, straight, diagonal, curved etc.) and is often used to indicate shape, form, texture or value in an image.
mask	A covering for all or part of the face, worn as a disguise, or to amuse or frighten others.
medium/media	The substance(s) an artist uses to create a piece of art work. (medium=singular, media= plural)
score	To draw or scratch lines into the clay surface to either connect two pieces of clay or to add texture.
slip	Watered down clay used as the 'glue' to connect pieces.

### Julie Taymor



Julie Taymor is a director and designer who created many of the masks for The Lion King stage production. She was inspired by Asian puppetry culture. Nobody's face is ever hidden by a mask. The mask is, in fact, above the face so we see the actor's expressions and the mask at the same time. They are comprised of silicone rubber (to form the mask imprint) with carbon graphite overlay - the same durable material used to build airplanes. They are then all hand painted.

## History of Masks



The earliest use of masks was for rituals and ceremonies, and the oldest found mask is from 7000 BC (see image). The art of making masks could be older but because of the materials used for making them (leather and wood), they did not survive to this day.

## Mayan Masks

The Maya were a civilisation who lived in modern-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. The Maya civilisation lasted from around 1000 BC to AD 1697.

Masks played a central role in Maya culture. They were made for a variety of occasions and purposes. In fact, they were even used to decorate temples. It is well known that the Mayans, who used no metal tools, were able to create art from very dense materials such as jade. The most sacred of ritualistic masks were made out of jade and delicate forms of mosaics.



## Death Masks



Mayas were buried with a funerary mask, which was intended to protect the wearer on their journey to the afterlife. The death mask of King Pakal is one of the most famous Maya artefacts. Pakal ruled the city of Palenque for 68 years. During this time, the city became very wealthy. Each mask was made by hand and inspired by the maker's own imagination. Jade, a precious stone, was used because it symbolised the soul.

## Priests and Warriors

The Maya didn't just use masks for funerals. Mayan priests, for example, wore scary masks to frighten away demons and Mayan warriors wore masks to intimidate their enemies. Masks were often inspired by animals and made of cedar wood; they were vibrant and colourful. The Mayas believed that animals represented the spirits. For example, many Maya often associated strong kings with jaguars.

## Ceremonies and Festivals

Masks were also used for wedding ceremonies and for other festivities - just like present-day masquerade ballroom events.

## Home Learning Suggestions

1. Explore the shapes, forms and textures of masks. If you have the chance, visit a museum that has an ethnological collection and look at their masks. (The British Museum has a large selection of masks on their website). Use sketches, photographs and notes to capture details you find interesting. Look at the work of Picasso, the German Expressionist artists, Henry Moore, and Caroline Achaintre to see how they have used these masks as a starting point to develop their own responses.
2. Choose one of your favourite stories and design/make a mask to represent one of the characters.
3. Research a famous designer, like Julie Taymor (who created masks for the incredible Lion King stage show), and write a set of instructions about how they create their masks.