

Mask Making

Materials:

Face forms	Tempera or Acrylic paint
Sculptamold or Claycrete	paint brushes
Newspaper	water jars
Water	Mixing bowls (glass, metal or plastic)
Smocks	Mixing spoons (metal or plastic)
Measuring cups	lots of small plastic tubs
Paper plates or pallets	Paper towel
String or yarn	

Vocabulary:

Paper Mache
Character
Features

Setup:

Two paper machier materials available for creating masks are Sculptamold and Claycrete. Both products have pros and cons. Sculptamold has plaster of paris in the mixture. This makes a heavier but sturdy mask. It dries very quickly, so the students must concentrate on their work. Claycrete is pure paper machier, so it is lighter than the Sculptamold. But it is not as sturdy. Claycrete takes several days to dry completely, while Sculptamold takes only two. If you are using Claycrete, the material must be made up in advance and allowed to sit for at least fifteen minutes before the students can work with it. The Sculptamold needs to be made in small batches as needed.

Session One:

Discuss with the students the character they will be creating. How does that character look - what features are predominate? What is the character's chief emotion - happy, sad, confused, angry? What is the character's condition - king, pauper, knight, footsoldier?

Make up small batches of the paper mache paste. Demonstrate to the students how to apply it to the molds.

- Tear long thin strips of newspaper to be used as the base of the mask. Starting at the eyes of the mask, place a strip across the mold and drop glob of paste onto the paper. Slowly add more paper strips and work up the mask pressing the paste tight to the mold. Make sure the paste is thick enough to cover the newspaper, and that all the cracks are pressed closed and sealed. Work the paste out to the edge of the mask mold.
- Go back to the eyes and dig out the eye holes. It is very important that the eyes fall in the same place as those of the form, otherwise the actor will not be able to see. The hole also need to be large enough to see through - no smaller than a half dollar. Shape the eyes as needed for the character. Continue adding newspaper and paste down the front of the mask. For comfort and to allow the actor to speak clearly, stop at the base of the nose.
- When the mask base is complete, go back and add features that will define the character, such as nose shape, eyebrows, hair, wrinkles, etc.
- Hair could be added at this time by shaping the paper mache into lumps or ribbons as needed.
- Let the mask dry completely.

Let the students create their own masks. Have the students help clean up.

Session Two:

The masks can be painted when they have dried completely.

Discuss the possible paint schemes for each mask. The colors do not have to be realistic - after all what does a wood nymph really look like? Soldiers may be dark in color and have scars. Wood nymphs might have green tones or water nymphs may be in all blues. Gods and Goddess may be all in gold and sparkles. Have the students discuss their characters.

Distribute pallets, paintbrushes, paint, water jars and paper towels.

Let the students paint their masks

Have the students help clean up.

When the masks have dried completely, strings may be attached. Hold the mask up to the face and mark where the string should go. Try to align it like eyeglasses with the ear.

Take down the mask and secure the string to the interior with hot melt glue or duct tape.