

Forms in Masks

Grade 4 – Lesson 4

(*Art Connections*, Level 4, pgs. 118-121)

Big Idea

Human heads generally conform to the same set of proportions. Exaggerating certain parts of the face can express symbolic meaning.

Learning Targets and Assessment Criteria

Target 1: Learns and approximates the naturalistic proportions of the human face. (Arts EALR 1.1.2 *Principles of Organization: Naturalistic proportions*)

Criteria 1: Places eyes in the middle of the head, bottom of nose half way between eyes and chin, and lips half way between nose and chin.

Target 2: Uses ceramic hand-building techniques. (Arts EALR 1.3 *Skills and techniques: Ceramic hand-building*)

Criteria 2: Uses slip and score technique to securely attach pieces of clay together.

Target 3: Uses exaggeration for expressive effect. (Arts EALR 3.1 *Arts as Communication: Expressive abstraction*)

Criteria 3: Makes bigger, twists, stretches, adds texture to or adds concentric shapes around at least one feature to express something about self.

Local Art References



Belt Mask of Iyoba (Queen Mother of Oba) Idia, 1517-50
Nigerian, Court of Benin
81.17.493



Mask: Beke, 1953
Chukwu Okoro (artist)
Mgbom village, Afikpo Culture,
Nigeria, West African
2005.32



House Mask, 20th c.
Melanesian, New Guinea, Sepik River
81.17.1469

(NOTE to Teacher: See **Art Background** section at end of lesson for more information about these works of art.)

Looking at Art Questions

1. The relationship of parts to a whole – for example the parts of a face to the whole head – is called **proportion** (in both math and art). Which of these masks has the most **naturalistic** proportions? (Belt Mask of Iyoba Idia). Why do you think so?

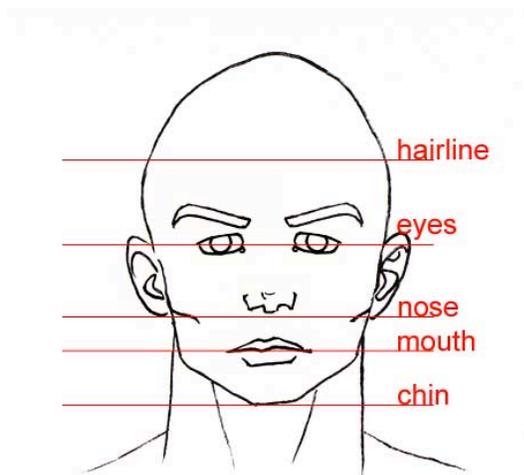
2. When we did our contour line portraits of each other, we tried to use naturalistic proportions, and we implied the 3-D forms of the face in a 2-D drawing.
3. What is the third dimension you can measure on a real 3-D object, besides height and width? (Depth). In art, we call 3-D objects **forms**. (In math we call them solids.)
4. Which 3-D forms really jump out at you in these masks?
5. What did the artist do in each case to draw your attention to those forms?
6. An artist can draw our attention to something by **exaggerating** it. You can exaggerate a form by making it bigger, stretching or twisting it, adding more texture to it, making it a stronger color, drawing lines or colors around it. Which parts of these masks do you think are exaggerated?
7. What **symbolic** meanings do you read into the exaggeration in the masks?

Art Making Activity I

(See the **Create** section *Art Connections*, Level 4, pages 120-121)

Make a Naturalistic Self-Portrait Sketch

1. We are going to first do self-portrait sketches in naturalistic proportions.
2. In order to draw a 3-D portrait that resembles the you, you need to understand some of the basic proportions of the human head:
 - The eyes are halfway between the top of the head and the chin.
 - The bottom of the nose is halfway between the eyes and the chin.
 - The mouth is halfway between the nose and the chin.
 - There is about one eye's width between each of the eyes, and one eye's width to either side of each eye.
 - The corners of the mouth line up with the centers of the eyes.
 - The top of the ears line up above the eyes, on the eyebrows.
 - The bottom of the ears line up with the bottom of the nose.



Drawing excerpted from: <http://www.animatedbuzz.com/tutorials/proportion.html>

Each Student Needs

Day 1

- A sketchbook
- A sketching pencil (2H)
- A Staedtler eraser
- A self-portrait mirror

Vocabulary

Organic forms	Exaggeration
3-D	Height
Naturalistic	Width
Proportion	Depth

Tips for Teachers

During Class

- Before students draw themselves, you might want to walk them through the proportions activity of measuring the parts of their face in relationship to the whole. With their fingers stacked on top of each other like firewood, measure: a) the distance from eyes to top of head, and from eyes to bottom of chin (roughly equal), b) from eyes to bottom of nose, and bottom of nose to bottom of chin (roughly equal), c) from bottom of nose to line between lips, and from line between lips to bottom of chin (roughly equal).

Art Making Activity II

Make a 3-D Exaggerated Self Portrait Mask

What part of a 3-D mask can you exaggerate to show something about yourself?

1. In your self-portrait mask, you are going to exaggerate some part of your face to express something about you.
2. What is something important about you that you could show in your face?
3. Which part of your face will you exaggerate to show this idea? How will you exaggerate it?
4. Steps for the Teacher:
 - a. Have students write and sketch in their sketchbooks to decide what they want to express about themselves, and how they will exaggerate one of their facial features to express that feeling.
 - b. Demonstrate working the clay with your hands to warm it up and make it supple.
 - c. Demonstrate flattening out a large oval and draping it over some crumpled newspaper to create the convex form of the face.
 - d. Demonstrate both pinching forms into relief as well as adding new clay forms by using “scratch to

attach,” (slip and score technique) in which you make scratchy lines on bottom side of the form you want to attach, dip your finger in water and rub it lightly over the marks, then attach the piece and smooth out the edges where it is attached.

- e. Remind students not to use too much water, as this can cause cracking in firing.
- f. Ask students to respond to the self-assessment questions in writing and then share with the class, in a full-class critique.

Each Student Needs

- Their self-portrait sketch from Day 1
- Sketchbook
- Sketching pencil (2H)
- A piece of recycled cardboard on which to work
- Approximately ¾ lb of clay
- Clay cutting tool
- A bamboo skewer
- A wooden tongue depressor or big popsicle stick
- Boxwood clay tools
- Water container

Each Small Group of Students Needs (Optional)

- Various old pieces of silverware, kitchen utensils

Tips for Teachers

During Class

- Demonstrate ceramic hand-building techniques, emphasizing the slip-and-score technique (“scratch to attach”).
- While students are working, remind them to hollow out any form that is more than ¼ thick, and pierce closed forms so that they won’t explode in firing.
- Make sure students scratch their names or initials in the inside of their self-portrait mask.

After Class

- Allow the masks to dry on the pieces of cardboard until they are leather hard.
- Carefully pack the masks in boxes and take them to Seattle Pottery Supply for firing (35 South Hanford Street, Seattle, WA 98134, (206) 587-0570).

Reflecting on Our Art (adapted from *Art Connections*, Level 4, pg. 121)

- **Describe:** Where does your mask show naturalistic proportions?
- **Analyze:** Which feature(s) did you exaggerate on your mask? How did you exaggerate them?
- **Interpret:** What symbolic aspect of yourself were you trying to express? How did you express that?
- **Decide:** Do others agree that your mask shows the symbolic idea that you intended? Is there anything you would change or add to make your idea more clear?

Self-Assessment

Name _____

What title would you give your self-portrait mask?

Which symbolic idea about yourself did you want your mask to express?

How did you use exaggeration to emphasize that idea?

Art Background

Belt Mask of Iyoba Idia, by anonymous artist from *Kingdom of Benin*

"Iyoba Idia's visage is the most widely known face of an African royal woman after the Egyptian Queen, Nefertiti." - Nkiru Nzegwu, 2005

Queen Idia's face conveys the considerable courage and allure that has inspired centuries of respect for her role as an astute leader and spiritual mother of the Benin kingdom. This icon was one of four created in her honor by her son, Oba Esigie, who led the kingdom to the height of its prosperity in the sixteenth century. All four were worn each year in a ceremony by a succession of Obas up until 1897, when a British military force confiscated them from the Oba's bedroom in the palace and brought them back to Europe.

--Pam McClusky, Curator of African and Oceanic Art, 2007

Excerpted from Seattle Art Museum Close-Ups at:

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/SAMcollection/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse¤trecord=10&page=search&profile=objects&searchdesc=Benin&quicksearch=Benin&newvalues=1&newstyle=single&newcurrentrecord=13>

Mask: Beke, by *Chukwu Okoro*

We are dealing with an aesthetic that emphasizes action, in which beauty and ugliness, delight and foolishness, come out of doing rather than being.

Simon Ottenberg, Anthropologist and collector, 1973

An Afikpo play, called Okumpka, is a showcase for sophisticated humor. It is put on by the community for the community and offers direct comments about specific persons who have faced real situations but not fared well. The play names names, exposing foibles in satirical songs that direct attention to the actions of particular people. Because the players wear masks, they turn into *mma*, a type of spirit, and thereby have the freedom to be critical. In just one play, up to fourteen short original songs and skits might turn attention to henpecked husbands, men who behave as if they are "rabbits of the night," men who are stingy, leaders who should speak up about issues but don't, leaders who take advantage of others, and men who don't act as men should but as foolish women. The powerful opening act of the play is the appearance of an impressive mass of costumed men who proceed into the village center and sit down there. Audiences crowd in to listen and watch for hours, as songs with explicit lyrics unfold and highly skilled maskers perform related skits. Humor keeps people tuned in, as songs point out mistakes people have made, and the audience watches as the person mentioned reacts to being portrayed.

Excerpted from Seattle Art Museum Close-Ups at:

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/SAMcollection/code/emuseum.asp?style=single¤trecord=38&page=collection&profile=objects&searchdesc=WEB:CloseUps&newvalues=1&newprofile=objExplores>

House Mask, by anonymous *Sepik River* artist

Initiated men worked together to create this mask and place it at the pinnacle of a house exclusively for men. Its startling scale and wide features were designed in part for its original location at the peak of the gable of the house. Several of these prestigious houses served as the domains of village councils, where men talked together and planned their hunting and fishing trips, ceremonies, warfare and the planting of yams. These houses are as wide as 50 feet and can be 120 feet long. They feature monumental saddle roofs with faces such as this one carefully positioned at the front. The house is considered to be the figure's body, and men come and go to and from the ground floor, where a fiber curtain is hung to represent her leafy skirt. Her spirit served to protect the inhabitants of the house from disaster.

Excerpted from Seattle Art Museum Close-Ups at:

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/SAMcollection/code/emuseum.asp?style=single¤trecord=2&page=search&profile=objExplores&searchdesc=house%20mask&quicksearch=house%20mask&newvalues=1&newprofile=objMakers>

Assessment Checklist

Student	Places eyes in the middle of the head, bottom of nose half way between eyes and chin, and lips half way between nose and chin	Uses slip and score technique to securely attach pieces of clay together	Makes bigger, twists, stretches, adds texture to or adds concentric shapes around at least one feature to express something about self	TOTAL 3
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Total Points				
Percent Comprehension				

Teacher Notes:

Letter Home

Dear Family,

*Today we learned that all human faces generally conform to the same set of **proportions**. We looked at the 16th century Belt Mask of the Iyoba (Queen Mother) Idia from the Kingdom of Benin, in present-day Nigeria which had very naturalistic proportions. We did self-portrait sketches with naturalistic proportions.*

*We also looked at a Beke Mask by Chukwu Okoro from Nigeria, as well as a House Mask by an anonymous artist from the Sepik River region of New Guinea in which the artists **exaggerated** forms to express certain **symbolic** ideas. We took inspiration from these works of art and created 3-D self-portrait masks in clay in which we exaggerated at least one feature to express something important about ourselves.*

At home you could look at political cartoons and the comics for exaggeration. Ask your child why they think the artists exaggerated the features they did to express the character or situation referenced in the cartoon.