

**Meet the Masters**

**January Program**

**“Jaguar Mask” Mexico**  
**“Monkey Mask” Korea**

**About the Artists:**

The artist who made these masks would have traditionally been craftsmen whose trade is furniture making or wood carving. In the case of the “Jaguar Mask” of Mexico the material used for the mask is painted wood, thus the artist would be a skilled wood carver. The “Monkey Mask” from Korea is made of paper -mache and was made by a craftsmen working close to the community where the mask was worn, perhaps during a celebration. In either case, the mask maker is a skilled artist whose creations are, and have traditionally been, an important part of cultural celebrations and ceremonies.

**About the Artwork:**

The “**Jaguar Mask**” is made of painted wood and is about 9 1/2 inches in height. This is a contemporary mask, made around 1960. The oldest evidence of masks in Mexico date to the middle pre-classic period (1000-300 BC). The mask has been an important part of the Mexican culture for a very long time. Many early masks and headdresses represented a limited number of animals including the jaguar, puma and fox. Animal masks may have been used during annual religious ceremonies or at initiation and burial rituals to represent the intervention of ancestral deities. Masks have been used in funerals, to impersonate deities, as trophies, for warrior headdresses and entertainment.

Masks were believed to contain supernatural powers which would somehow transform the wearer. Today the mask is still a powerful symbol in Mexican culture as can be seen in the use of the jaguar image. Notice the bright colors and playful decoration of this mask. The person who wears this mask would be a jaguar impersonator, thus taking on the identity of the animal. This mask would be worn in dances in several parts of Mexico.

This “**Monkey Mask**” from Korea was made for a child to wear during village festivals. The material is painted paper-mache, fabric and fur.

**Topic for Discussion:**

1. When do we wear masks on our culture? (Halloween, costume parties, Mardi Gras)
2. Would you like to wear either of these masks? Why or why not?
3. How are these two masks similar?
4. What colors were used in these masks?
5. If you were to wear one of these masks do you think you would feel as if you were the animal that it represents?
6. If you were to make an animal mask which animal would you like to be and why?

## **Hands-on Art Activity:     Make an Animal Mask - Paper Mache**

**Teacher preparation:**     **Please allow three work sessions to complete this activity. This activity is very messy (but fun), extra hands are always needed for session one. It is best to have the newspaper cut into strips prior to the first session. If possible, work in the cafeteria and cover the tables with plastic for session one.**

**Materials:**     Mask forms  
                  Plastic wrap  
                  Masking tape  
                  Newspaper strips approx 1 inch wide  
                  White glue and water (50%/50% mixture)  
                  Disposable bowls or butter tubs  
                  Plastic to protect tables brushes  
                  Tempera paints  
                  Paint brushes  
                  Paper plates for paint  
                  String or yarn  
                  Beads, glitter, feathers, straws, etc.  
                  Glue  
                  Acrylic gloss

### **Directions:**

#### **Session One:**

1. Place plastic wrap over the mask form. This prevents the paper mache from sticking to the form.
2. Write the child's name on a piece of masking tape and put on the inside of the form.
2. Dip strips of paper in glue mix. Gently slide strips through finger to remove excess glue.
3. Place strips on mask form, overlapping edges to cover completely. **Two to three** layers are recommended or the mask will crack easily.
4. The eye area can be left open or covered for eyes to be painted on later. Ears, horns or other animal features can be added at this time by shaping the wet strips and attaching to the mask form.
5. Allow the masks to dry on the forms for a minimum of two days.

#### **Session Two:**

1. **MTM teachers:** When masks are dry, gently remove the mask from the form and trim any rough edges. Transfer the masking tape on the inside of the form to the inside of the mask.
2. Paint mask using thick tempera paint to represent your animal.
3. Allow to dry completely.

#### **Session Three:**

1. The masks can now be decorated with beads, glitter, pipe cleaners, feathers, etc. if desired. Glue objects onto mask and allow to dry.
2. **MTM Teachers:** Staple string or yarn onto each side of the mask to use as a hanger and apply a single coat of acrylic gloss to protect the mask.
4. After drying, the masks are ready to be displayed.