

# Magic Mud Masks

Grade Level: 4-6

## Description:

Magic Mud, a new product from Amaco, is a versatile, non-toxic natural clay. It can either be used as an air-dry clay or it can be fired. Dried Magic Mud can be recycled like other natural clays by adding a bit of water and sealing it in an airtight container. Using Magic Mud to create masks is an excellent way to take advantage of the many ways of working with the clay. Almost every part of the world has, at some time in its history, had a culture or cultures that made masks. Once you have focused on a culture, find some examples that you can show your students. Some of Sax' visual arts resources have examples of masks and you can search the library and the Internet for other examples. Try to find out what purpose these masks served. Did they give the wearer of the mask powers? Did they help in telling important stories or myths of that culture? Involve your students in finding out why masks were important in that particular culture. Discuss the style used in creating the masks—the way line, shape/form, and color were used. Let your students create their own design in the style of your chosen culture. Let them tell in writing what their mask means and why they created it in the way that they did.

## Objectives:

- Students will learn about the importance of masks in at least one culture.
- Students will define what is the visual style of the culture they are studying.
- Students will create a mask using Magic Mud and acrylic paint that is in the style of the culture they are studying.
- Students will create a mask that conveys their intended meaning.

## Materials:

Magic Mud Multi-Project Pack (406824-705)

School Smart Rolling Pin (085817-705)

Combination Wood and Wire 6" Tools (443882-705)

## You may also need:

Large rolling pins

Masking Tape

Water Containers & Water

Wire or ribbon tools for clay

Paper Towels

Paint or Glaze

Sponges cut to 1" x 2" pieces

Newspaper (wadded up and taped to form a mold)

Found Objects (such as round oatmeal boxes, to use as a mold)

Plastic Bags (to seal the projects until they are complete)

## Resources:

Hands-On Master Set of 3 Books (248033-705)

## Directions:

1. Read cautions and suggestions in Teacher's Guide included with the Magic Mud.
2. As stated in the "Description", study the style and meaning of at least one culture's masks.
3. Prepare a work area and give each student about 1 lb. of clay (less for younger students).
4. Teach them how to wedge the clay if it is to be fired.
5. Each student should roll out a 1" thick slab of clay.
6. If creating a mold from newspaper, students will wad the paper into the shape they desire and wrap it with tape. Alternatives to a newspaper mold would be round boxes or any found object that has the desired form.
7. Students will cut the slab of Magic Mud to the shape and size they would like their mask to be.
8. Students will drape the clay over whatever they are using for a mold.
9. Note: When storing the project so that it may be worked on again the next class period, students should remove the clay from the mold. Then drape a damp paper towel over the clay and seal the project inside a plastic bag. Drape the clay (inside the plastic bag) over the mold again and store.
10. Using the tip of a tool, students should draw the features of their mask on the clay and begin carving and modeling the clay.
11. Demonstrate how to carve into the clay with the wire end of the tools and how to model and smooth with the wooden end. Any clay that gets added needs to be attached by the "score and slip" method. (Score the area of the clay to be joined with a pointed tool, rub a little water onto the scored area to create "slip" and firmly press the clay pieces together.)



12. Students should now begin carving and modeling their masks. They may also wish to add texture by pressing various objects into the clay's surface.
13. When students are done with their work they should "clean up" and smooth out the surface of the clay. Sponges of various sizes work well for this. (Do not allow the students to overwork the clay's surface as it will cause problems when the clay is dry.)
14. Once completed, the masks should be left on the mold with a plastic bag draped over it. (If clay dries too quickly, it is more likely to crack). If the mold is paper or cardboard cover it with plastic so that it does not become "soggy".
15. It should be left like this for a week or more, with the students occasionally checking the drying process.
16. When the clay feels "leather-hard" the bag can be removed and the drying process can continue. This will prevent the clay from shrinking so much over the mold that it will crack.
17. When it is "bone-dry" (no longer cool to the touch), it may be fired or painted.
18. If not firing the clay, the finished pieces should be handled with care as they are more prone to breakage than fired clay.
19. Paint may be applied. The example was begun with acrylic paints, but other paints can be used.
20. When the masks are completely colored, have the students write about what their mask is supposed to represent and what it means to them personally.
21. Display the masks with the statements.

**National Standards:**

Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques and process.

Grades K-4: Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories.

Grades 5-8: Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.

Grades K-4: Students use structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.

Grades 5-8: Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas.

Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Grades K-4: Students demonstrate how history, culture and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

Grades 5-8: Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.