

# **“Giinaquq, Like a Face”**

## **Lesson Plans for Art: Drawing and Interpretation**

### **Lesson Summary:**

These lesson plans are for high school art students (grades 9 – 12) observing the masks of the “Giinaquq, Like a Face” exhibit. Initially, **drawing** will be used as a tool to implement close observation and understanding of the artifacts included in this exhibit.

**Written interpretation** will follow in order to expand students’ initial visual experience. This written work, when accompanied by focused discussion of the cultural links provided by the masks, will create a deeper connection between student and artifact. The unique qualities of Alutiiq masks as compared to other Native Alaskan masks will be explored as well. Then, as an **enrichment opportunity**, the high school students will share this knowledge with younger students in a nearby elementary school (fourth graders at Main Elementary). This sharing facilitates a kind of learning that is both enjoyable and memorable; a kind of learning that can lead to not only improved art skills, but more importantly to increased appreciation of our local Native culture.

The technology used to enhance learning will include a digital camera to record the images from the exhibit and a digital projector and computer to project the images in the classroom.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Explain the advantages of learning to observe subjects more closely by drawing them, especially by creating *blind contour drawings*.
- Describe and demonstrate how to create a blind contour drawing.
- Point out and incorporate accurate *proportions* within the human face and mask drawings that they create.
- Evaluate their own drawings and the drawings of others in the area of accuracy.
- Discuss a variety of reasons why artists create artworks, especially masks.
- Consider how masks, as simplified faces, can incorporate shapes and colors in expressive ways.
- Recognize the importance of careful study of another culture and its artifacts as a tool for understanding that culture.
- Reflect, in written form, on why a work of art was created and how that work of art affects them visually and emotionally.
- Share what they learn with other students.
- Create an art exhibit featuring their art work as well as their written work.

### **Instruction Activities:**

#### **Day 1**

Introduction of Lesson: 1 ½ hours

Materials:

Disk of images, large prints of masks, projector, computer, copies of the “Two Journeys” book, overview of unit, large drawing pad on easel, markers

At the beginning of class, a brief overview of this unit of lessons will be posted in the classroom and the teacher will go over the expectations with students. (See attachment #1).

### 1. Introduction:

Introduce lesson by brainstorming with students about the process of observation and memory. The discussion should include the idea that listening to information and looking at pictures in a book is not as powerful as physically observing the subject to be studied. Even more powerful is the act of drawing; for when drawing, we must *slow down* and *focus completely on the subject*.

The teacher will reinforce this idea by sharing how a person will be more likely to remember a face once they have drawn that face, due to the fact that recognition of faces is an important part of the human brain.

### 2. Drawing Demonstration:

To drive this point home, the teacher will demonstrate a “blind contour drawing” of the face of a student in the room. (See attachment #2).

The blind contour is a way of drawing where the person drawing looks only at their subject and draws in a slow, continuous line, recording *all* of the contours of their subject. It will be important to point out and include textures in these drawings, for this is an important element of the masks. (Instructions are from the book, Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, by Betty Edwards. It should also be pointed out ahead of time that these drawings are made up of CONTOUR LINES, and shading will be considered at a later time.)

Once the teacher has demonstrated the blind contour, she will draw the subject again, this time looking and checking for placement. **Point out and emphasize how important it is to pay attention to the distances between the features within a face: it is the “key to the likeness”.** It will also be emphasized that the blind contour drawing is helpful in creating a more accurate drawing of the face the second time because of the emphasis on **slowing down and looking carefully**.

### 3. Slide Show:

Now a discussion can take place about how complicated the human face may seem to students, and how a simplified version of a face may be seen in a mask. The images of the masks from the mask exhibit will be projected at this time. The teacher will lead students in looking at the masks and having them point out how the eyes must be in the correct places to facilitate looking through the holes and how the nose and mouth could be more exaggerated, in placement and in shape. It should be emphasized that these masks are excellent examples of SIMPLIFIED shapes. This use of simplified shapes can be most effective in conveying personality and mood.

Students and teacher will also brainstorm about the possible reasons for the creation of masks by different cultures versus the creation of artworks by artists working today.

Questions for prompting discussion could include:

What is the reason artists today create artwork? (Most students will bring up the issue of trying to make a living...)

Why do you think someone would take the time and energy to design, carve and paint something like these masks when they would not receive anything in return (such as money for payment)?

Do you think the specific shapes, such as a round mouth or a pointed head, have a purpose? Is that purpose spiritual? Aesthetic? Practical?

In what way are Alutiiq masks unique within Alaska Native culture?

How do the shapes and colors used relate to the environment where they were created?

Could the painted patterns on the masks relate to animals used or observed by the creators?

The final drawing demonstration will be for the teacher to look at a large reproduction of one of the masks from the exhibit and do the same sequence as above; first a blind contour and then a more conventional drawing, once again noting distances between features to achieve accurate proportions.

## Day 2

First trip to museum: 1 ½ hours

Materials: Sketchbooks, pencils, examples

1. Students will attend the mask exhibit as a group. It must be stressed ahead of time that cell phones and music devices will not be allowed and talking will not be allowed. This is to facilitate careful observation. Sketchbooks and pencils will be required.
2. After viewing the entire exhibit, students will choose a mask to draw. Two drawings will be completed: a full page blind contour drawing, 5 – 10 minutes minimum, and a full page contour line drawing, with texture included. **SHOW EXAMPLES OF WHAT SIZE DRAWINGS AND THE TIME INVESTMENT THAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM THEIR WORK.** These first drawings must be kept in each student's sketchbook.

\* Please note: If there are not enough days available for museum visits, the above drawing lesson and the writing interpretation below could be combined into one day, just so that there is time to introduce the writing activity ahead of time.

## Day 3

\*Second visit to museum: 1 1/2 hours

Materials: Sketchbooks, pencils, worksheets for interpretations

1. A second visit will be scheduled. Before leaving the classroom, the students will receive and go over an example of a written interpretation of a mask. This interpretation will include imagining what the mask was used for. Students will be instructed to complete their own interpretation using the worksheets given to them. These papers and their sketchbooks must be taken to the museum. The quiet rule will be implemented, as before.
2. During the second visit, students will first compare their drawing to the original mask and make adjustments and or complete a second drawing.
3. The rough draft of the written interpretation will be completed at this time, using the worksheets. This writing can be finished in the classroom, as the final work must be turned in typed.

#### Day 4

Turning in final drawings and writing: 45 minutes

For the first part of their grade, students must turn in their full page drawings of the chosen mask and their typed interpretation. Rubrics are attached. A large copy of this and all other rubrics will be posted in the classroom so that expectations are clear.

#### **Enrichment Opportunity: Instruction Activities with Elementary Students:**

The second part of the final grade for this unit will be earned by sharing the experience of looking, drawing and interpreting the mask exhibit with the fourth grade class at Main Elementary. Student expectations are outlined in the attached rubric.

Three days will be spent with the fourth graders; these days will follow the lesson plans used above, with advanced high school students taking turns leading discussions and doing drawing demonstrations for the elementary students. All of these lessons will be simplified somewhat to work with younger students.

- Day One will introduce the lesson in the elementary classroom, using a slide show, drawing demonstrations and examples.

- Day Two will entail taking the fourth graders down to the museum to view and draw the masks. High school students will be matched up ahead of time to have drawing and writing “art buddies” from the fourth grade classes to work with.

- Day Three will include going to the exhibit again\*\* and assisting the younger students in writing an interpretation of what they think the story is behind the mask they drew. \*\*Once again, if time is not available, this could be done during the first visit to the museum. The final work could be accomplished by having high school students return to the elementary classroom and work with their “art buddies” to refine their drawings and edit their first writings.

This unit will conclude with an exhibit of both sets of student artworks, along with the written interpretations.

#### **Standards Addressed:**

##### Arts:

- A. A student should be able to create and perform in the arts: 1. participate in visual arts and creative writing; 2. refine artistic skills; 5. collaborate with others to create works of art; 6. integrate two or more art forms.
- B. A student should be able to understand the historical and contemporary role of the arts in Alaska...: 1. recognize Alaska Native cultures and their arts; 3. recognize the role of tradition and ritual in the arts; 8. respect differences in personal and cultural perspectives.
- C. A student should be able to critique the student’s art and the art of others: 1. know the criteria used to evaluate the arts; 3. accept and offer constructive criticism.
- D. A student should be able to recognize beauty and meaning through the arts in the student’s life: 1. make statements about the significance of the arts and beauty in the student’s life; 2. discuss what makes an object a work of art; 5. consider other culture’s beliefs about works of art; 6. recognize that people connect many aspects of life through the arts.

### Cultural Standards

B. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life: 1. acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own; 2. make effective use of the knowledge, skills and ways of knowing from their own cultural traditions to learn about the larger world in which they live.

### English / Language Arts

A. A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences: 1. apply elements of effective writing and speaking; 4. write and speak well to inform, to describe,...and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats; 5. revise, edit and publish the student's own writing as appropriate.

### **Another Enrichment Activity: Kathleen Carlo-Kendall's Masks**

High school as well as elementary students could expand their appreciation of masks as art forms by studying the works of contemporary mask makers such as Kathleen Carlo-Kendall. Lesson plans relating to Carlo-Kendall's masks and other resources based on Alaska artworks are available at [www.akart.org](http://www.akart.org).

### **Modifications For Special Learners:**

Students with special needs would be allowed extended time for drawing and writing and one on one help would be provided when necessary. The written expectations as far as length and content could be tailored to the abilities of the student.

### **Assessments:**

High school students will be evaluated according to the point systems outlined in their attached rubrics. The student will score themselves, turn this in and then the teacher will adjust if necessary, according to their observations.

Teachers will also assign a number each day for each student's level of involvement in that day's activity: discussion, drawing, writing, sharing.

This number will range from 1 to 5, reflecting the following:

5 = student is fully engaged and focused on the task at hand

4 = student is mostly engaged, but also distracted by other students or surroundings

3 = student is doing the bare minimum, work is uninspired

2 = below average focus and quality of work

1 = student is present, but not participating

## Attachment #1 – **Overview of Lesson Expectations:**

Attendance to class is mandatory; observation of demonstrations and participation in discussions are an important part of this lesson. Anyone missing class must obtain extensive notes and view slide show to prepare for field trip to museum.

### **1. Drawings**

Two final drawings will be completed at the museum and turned in:

- a. One full page blind contour drawing of the mask observed in the museum exhibit.
- b. One full page contour line drawing of mask, including textures, normal method.

### **2. Written Work**

A full length, typed page will be turned in along with drawings after creating a rough draft during our field trip to the museum.

### **3. Working with Elementary Students (for Advanced Art)**

Participation will be expected as all of you take turns presenting the information, leading the discussions and demonstrating the drawing exercises for the fourth graders at Main Elementary.

You will each be paired with “art buddies” for a field trip to assist these younger students in drawing and writing about the mask exhibit.

### **4. Exhibit**

Each of you will mount your drawings, writings and the drawings and writings of your “art buddies” for a public art exhibit.

Advanced art students will put up the exhibit.

Career Arts students will design a poster to publicize the exhibit.

## Attachment #2

### Blind Contour Drawing:

1. Look carefully at your subject. Using your pencil, slowly trace the edges, in the air, of all of the shapes that you can see, both within and along the outer edge of the subject. These are Contour Edges.
2. Now, place the point of your pencil on the paper and look at your subject. Draw, without looking at your paper, every contour edge that you see. Move your pencil slowly; try to consciously connect your eye to the tip of your pencil.
3. Do not pick up your pencil. Let the line that you draw flow, creating a map of everything that you can see. This is called a Continuous Line Blind Contour Drawing.
4. Be aware that this is an exercise in SEEING – the drawing will look strange. That is not the point. The point is to slow down, look carefully and to record what you see.
5. You will often discover things about your subject as you draw that you were not aware of during your first look.

## Attachment 3

### Rubrics for Mask Exhibit

#### **Drawing:**

Two full page drawings are completed; one is a continuous line blind contour drawing and one is a traditional contour line drawing with a focus on accurate proportion and texture.

Assign your points honestly; subtract points in areas where you did not meet the goals described. (Example: 8 points for drawing filling the page if it is a bit small.)

1. Blind Contour Drawing: 50 pts. Possible

- a. My drawing fills the page: 10 pts.
- b. The line I have used is mostly a continuous line that describes the contour edges of the mask I chose to draw: 10 pts.
- c. I looked only at the mask as I drew, not at my paper: 10 pts.
- d. I spent all of my time looking and drawing: 10 pts.
- e. This drawing was done to the best of my ability: 10 pts.

Total for this section: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Traditional Contour Line Drawing: 50 pts. Possible

- a. My drawing fills the page: 10 pts.
- b. The lines used are carefully describing the contour edges and textures seen within the mask: 10 pts.
- c. I looked carefully at the mask as I was drawing, looking at my paper to check for placement and proportion: 10 pts.
- d. My time was spent looking and drawing: 10 pts.
- e. This drawing was done to the best of my ability: 10 pts.

Total for this section: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Written Interpretation:**

1. Consider this quote from the book “Two Journeys” when writing your interpretation:

“In traditional Alutiiq culture everything in nature had a spirit that could take different forms. Masks represented spirits; they were alive. Masks were used for a variety of purposes – to teach proper behavior, to recall mythical events, to remind the living of the departed, to reaffirm traditions and to reaffirm identity with a particular group.

Masks were essential to the practice of rituals, and rituals were part of everyday life. There were public masked rituals and private rituals. Since most masks were destroyed after use, masks still in existence were those collected by Europeans and Russians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Traditionally, Sugpiaq people believed that a mask held two spirits, one of the person or spirit being honored and one of the mask itself. The mask shared a story and represented part of it as a prop for a dance or play. It allowed the wearer and the observer to transcend time and space to experience another world.”

2. Now, observe the mask that you drew. Think about what kind of a spirit your mask could have represented and what kind of ritual it could have been a part of. Draw out a rough diagram, with the mask in the middle and your ideas in “bubbles” around the outer edge. This is only one way to brainstorm, you may have another way. You need to have a minimum of one full page of brainstorming before you begin your final writing.
3. Write a rough draft of at least three paragraphs describing the reason your mask was carved and what kind of ritual it was worn in. Include what the shapes, colors and/ or textures of your mask represented. Go into detail, use your imagination, but support your interpretation with what you see in the mask you are using as your inspiration. For example, “I know that my mask was used to describe the wind because the round shape of the mouth could make loud, rushing sounds”.
4. Have another student read your rough draft and give you suggestions. Double check spelling and grammar.
5. Write and type out your final draft to turn in with your drawings.

Give yourself points according to these objectives: (100 points possible)

I spent time brainstorming a variety of ideas before beginning my writing, a minimum of one page: 25 pts.

My rough draft reflects the development of one of my ideas with specific visual information from my mask giving support to my story: 25 pts.

A fellow student read my rough draft and gave me suggestions. I also checked spelling and grammar: 25 pts.

My final draft is typed; double spaced and a minimum of three fully developed paragraphs in length: 25 pts.

Total points earned: \_\_\_\_\_