

Masks as Social History



Grade: 6th-12th

Time: 1-2 Days

Lesson Description: Students will learn about Alutiiq masks and discuss how they represent social history. Then students will create their own masks.



Photo: Unnuyayuk, "Night Traveler" from the Pinart Collection at the Musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, ca. 1872

Kit Includes:

- Masks as a Social History PowerPoint (Found on USB)
- Book: Giinaquq Like a Face: Sugpiaq Masks of the Kodiak Archipelago
- Book: Two Journeys: A Companion to the Giinaquq Like a Face Exhibition
- Llarpet — Our Alutiiq Universe Handout
- Saqullkanat Ikayusqat — Birds as Helpers educational Handout

Materials Needed:

- Markers or Paint
- Computer

Vocabulary	Alutiiq Vocabulary	Art Elements	Art Principles	Content Connections
Social History	Maas'kaa, Giinaruaq, Giinaquq — Mask	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pattern	Language Arts
Duality	Giinaq — Face	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shape	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rhythm/Movement	Social Studies
Spirit	K'ligluku — Carve It	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Color	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proportion/Scale	Alaska Content Standards:
Comparison	K'raasirluni — Paint, Color	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Balance	English
Analyze	Qelltek — Bark	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Texture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unity	Geography
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Space/Perspective	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emphasis	History
				Arts

Objectives and Assessment Criteria:

Students will learn...

- That artwork represents a personal view of social history, and it is as important as the dates and stories written in history books.
- To look at a piece of art and 'read it' like a book.
- To create their own mask, title it, and write a song to represent their own social history.

Cultural Relevance:

Masking is an ancient Alutiiq tradition. For centuries, Native artists carved images of powerful ancestors, animal spirits, and mythological beings into wood and bark. Masks were made in many sizes. Palm-sized miniatures may have been used to teach children traditional stories or carried by adults as amulets. Dancers wore full-sized portrait masks and enormous plank masks during ceremonial performances. Masks were often brightly painted and adorned with a variety of attachments. Feathers, fur, and small wooden carvings were tied to an encircling hoop. Some masks were held in the hands or teeth, others were tied to the dancer's head, and very large pieces may have been suspended over performance areas. A long-headed mask was a sign of power and authority. A whistling mask could conjure spirits.

Following ceremonies, masks were broken and discarded. This tradition reflects the spiritual power of the images they portrayed. Masks were part of the dangerous process of communicating with the spirit world. They were used in dances that ensured future hunting success by showing reverence to animal spirits and ancestors. While Elders today remember the older word *giinaquq*, most today use the words *giinaruaq* (like a face) and *maas'kaa*q (borrowed from Russian) for mask. Today, "masking" refers to a tradition that takes place during the Christmas season, when revelers visit village households in disguise singing and dancing.

AK Standards Addressed:

Language Arts

Social Studies – Alaska Native People

Alaska Content Standards:

English: AI, 2, 4-6, BI-3, CI-3, DI-2, 4, EI & 4.

Geography: AI, 5 & 6, B4-8, DI & 2, 4 & 5

History: AI-9, BI-5, DI, 2, 6

Arts: AI-3, BI, CI-3, DI-2

Create:

1. Hand out the note taking worksheet to students then project an image of the painting Washington Crossing the Delaware onto the board. [Emanuel Leutze | Washington Crossing the Delaware | American | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/american/emanuel-leutze-washington-crossing-the-delaware) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
2. Ask students to spend 2-3 minutes silently observing the painting and taking notes about their thoughts/ beliefs about this work of art on the worksheet. Tell them the basic facts about this work. "This painting describes the historic moment when General George Washington led the American revolutionary troops across the Delaware River in order to surprise the English and Hessian troops in the Battle of Trenton the day after Christmas in 1776." Inform them that the opinion worksheet will not be graded for content but may be graded for completeness, it will allow them to get their thoughts on paper and to practice looking at art.
3. Ask students to share their thoughts on the meaning of this piece with a partner or small group for a few minutes and ask them to back up their opinions with 'proof' that they see in the artwork.
4. When students are done, lead them in a discussion towards the main idea that art is a means of telling a story. That history is and will be a more authentic means of telling

- history than reading dates in a history book. Art discusses an individual's interpretation of events and history. For example, we all know that George Washington led America through the Revolutionary war, but this painting allows us to see his strength and leadership and view him as a person. The link above includes more information on this work of art that may help your class discussion.
5. Questions you may want to ask students: What do you think? What did you like, dislike? How did the painter tell a story with this work of art? What is the main idea that you think that the author is trying to tell? How do colors, shadows, positioning of figures, etc. add to the piece and help tell a story? Ask students to share their thoughts and ideas about the piece. Accept all answers as all art is subjective and depends on the viewer's interpretation. Tell them this so that they work on the next part of the lesson without inhibition.
 6. Provide students with a copy and take turns reading out loud Pinart's Masks.
 7. Play the video: Coming Home the Return of the Alutiiq Masks: Earthsongs Special Documentary: Dmae Lo Roberts (YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEUbSfGIPKM&t=2s> also on slide 2 of the PowerPoint.
 8. Have students explore the online resources —The Giinaqaaq Like A Face Project. Found on the Alutiiq Museum website under carving.
 9. Share with students slide #3 which shows Alphonse Pinart's picture and travel route. Discuss the video and what they learned about Pinart.
 - Proceed to the image of the Unnuyayuk — Night Traveler on slide #4. Don't tell students what the song is yet. Ask students to do the same thing for this mask as they did for the previous artwork.
 - Ask students to:
 - Make predictions about its meaning and write it down.
 - Have students share their thoughts with the class.
 - Show the translation and share the song that goes with the mask on slide #5.
 - Legend: They say that during a trip this mask looked at the devil and half of its face was burnt by the sight.
 - The Alutiiq universe contains many layers. Share with the students the Llapet — Our Alutiiq Universe educational handout.
 - Helpers in Alutiiq society. Share with the students Saquulkanat Ikayusqat — Birds as Helpers educational handout.
 - Lead a class discussion about the possible meanings of the song and the mask.
 - Knowing the song and having a title are very important to understanding the mask. We have Pinart to thank for this.
 - Concept of Duality in the mask – could it be about feelings and about our world and the underworld. Day and night? Discuss all together.
 10. Show the class the Chumliiq — First One mask on slide # 6. Have them make predictions about its meaning and write it down.
 - Ask the students:
 - Why do they think that the mask shape, eye shape, and mouth shape may be different? What about the colors on the mask? What do they think the title of the mask is?
 - Show students slide #7 revealing the title and the song that goes with the mask. Discuss the mask all together.
 - Legend: The legend says that one day, a man who wanted to become a shaman retreated in the woods. There he started getting inspired, saw the devil, and turned into this mask.

- The Alutiiq Word of The Week: Devil — Iraq
 - 11. Have the students talk about the differences and similarities between the Unnuyayuk — Night Traveler and the Chumliiq — First One.
 - 12. After students have an understand of Alutiiq masks and how they had a title and song associated with them. Students will explore the different publications.
 - Giinaquq Like a Face: Sugpiaq Masks of the Kodiak Archipelago
 - Two Journeys: A Companion to the Giinaquq Like a Face Exhibition
 - 13. Once they have reviewed the resources and have a better understanding of Alutiiq masks. Students will do an activity.
 - 14. Students can use one of the masks that was discussed and change the title and the song or sketch their own mask that deals with an issue, event, or emotion that is in their lives. Work together to come up with a few ideas (Examples: An argument with someone, a sad message, their first hunting trip, nervous about a game, scared to move to a new place, excited to visit friends etc.)
 - 15. Once they have made their own mask the students will create a title and song to go with it.
 - 16. When all the students have created their masks or changed an existing mask. Have the students share with the class. Display the students' masks around the classroom including object labels explaining the artwork. Students can use index cards to provide information.
-

Close and Assessment:

- Students understand that artwork represents a personal view of social history, and it is as important as the dates and stories written in history books.
 - Students can look at a piece of art and 'read it' like a book.
 - Students created their own masks, made a title for it, and wrote a song to represent their own social history.
-

Modifications:

- The students could work in small groups to read and create masks together.
 - Students can create a dance based on the mask's songs.
 - Research other masks from different cultures and conduct a cross-cultural mask comparison. Use a Venn diagram comparing the differences and similarities.
 - Explore the Alutiiq Museum's resources on the Alutiiq masks Alphonse Pinart collected and discuss the various masks and their meanings.
 - Have students explore and learn about the Alutiiq Colors using the Alutiiq Museum's Word of the Week Archive and the Alutiit Kraas'kait —Alutiiq Colors handout.
-

Additional Resources:

- Alutiiq Word of the Week: Bark — Qelltek
- Alutiiq Word of the Week: Paint, Color — Kraasirluni
- Alutiiq Word of the Week: Carve It — K'ligluku
- Alutiiq Word of the Week: Face — Giinaq

Pinart's Masks

Pinart's Masks Alphonse Pinart, born in 1852, was born into very rich French nobility in the area near Boulogne- Sur- Mer, in the north of France. He could have stayed in France living the easy life of French nobility but he was full of questions about life and the world so he set out from his home on his own at 18 years old. Primarily, he was interested in researching the peopling of the Americas. He took a steam ship to San Francisco (the journey would have taken weeks) and eventually to Alaska's coast. He made it to Unalaska and explored the Bering Sea. When he returned to Unalaska he hired some Aleut men to guide him by kayak along the coast towards Kodiak. Pinart wrote in his journal about this 3 month trip to Kodiak, kayaking the dangerous seas off of the Aleutians. When he made it to Kodiak he acquired a large number (86) of masks in 1872 before going back to France to much interest and acclaim.

The amazing thing about his time in Kodiak was that he took the time to write down the Alutiiq songs that went with the masks, as well as the names of the masks. Why is this amazing? Traditionally, Alutiiq masks would have been burned after they were danced. Also, the church looked down on the making of masks because it linked Kodiak's native peoples to the beliefs that they held before they converted to Russian Orthodoxy. Consequently, very few masks remain from this time period and little is known about the uses how Kodiak masks would have been used.

Pinart was very interested in writing about the Alutiiq worldview since Alaska had just been purchased by America in 1867 and the native people's future was far from known. Basically, Pinart came at the perfect time. The other amazing thing? Pinart took these masks home with him donated them to the museum near his family's home, the Château Musée in Boulogne Sur Mer, where they have been care for over 130 years before people in Kodiak rediscovered them and realized that they could re-learn from them. Thanks to Alphonse Pinart, Kodiak people have many records of what their traditional Kodiak masks looked like, and also the songs that would have gone with them.

The twist to this story? Pinart was gone from his home country of France long enough for a war (The Franco-Prussian war of 1870) to unseat the nobility from their position of power and make his name in France, not for who is family was but what he did. When Pinart returned he had used all his inheritance and had to find work. When he passed away in 1911 his name went unknown for over 70 years and now, thanks to what he documented and collected, Pinart will not be forgotten. In a way Pinart was an Indiana Jones for France, but one who documented what he collected.

Name: _____

Note Taking Worksheet

Use this sheet to take notes on the artwork shown in class. It does not need to be written in complete sentence but should show thought.

Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, American, 1816-1868 George Washington Crossing the Delaware, 1851

Unnuyayuk, "Night Traveler" from the Pinart Collection at the Musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, ca. 1872.



Chumliiq, "First One" from the Pinart Collection at the Musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, ca. 1872.



Mask Names and Songs

Share with the students after previewing the masks.

1. Unnuyayuk, Night Traveler Song: Why is it my helper spirit, why is it you are apprehensive of me? On the seal rocks I will bring you game to be caught. I went through the inside of the universe, my helper, that one made me afraid. I went down where they are motioning.



Unnuyayuk, "Night Traveler" from the Pinart Collection at the Musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, ca. 1872.

2. Cumugiyak, First One Song: My house up there, in the Universe up there you don't know it. Is it behind the sun, it is behind the one up above? (Behind that one up there the suns up there) –pik'um up there behind. My helper, I am approaching you from up above, I keep trying to come. My helper, that one's lands doesn't need performers.



Chumliq, "First One" from the Pinart Collection at the Musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, ca. 1872.

Name: _____

Masks as Social History Culminating Activity

Masks are a form of social history and reflect the beliefs of the time in which they were made. Now it is your turn, design a mask that represents something in your life or that you would like to happen. Draw the mask below, once you have made your mask write a song that goes with your mask. The song does not have to rhyme, but it should summarize what is happening in the mask. Be sure to tell a story.

Title: _____

Mask Drawing below:



Mask Song:

How does your mask represent an object of social history, i.e. 100 years from now, how could your mask help archaeologists understand today's youth?
