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The Mask: A West African Ceremonial Object

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Man's interaction with nature and his environment has been continuous throughout human history. Art is a form that is used in ceremonies intended to help control the environment. As children we act out the world of make-believe especially through the use of masks. Identification of African tribal masks, their culture, and certain characteristics of the mask, will help us gain insight into the culture that created it. Through this approach, the mask provides a fascinating key to unlock and explore West African culture.

I intend to apply this method in the middle-school art classroom to teach both culture and art and the relationship between the two. This approach will help the student understand the significance of mask-making. While the student in the art room actually creates a mask he can experience the relationship between the meaning and the process of art. Mask-making becomes a more interesting art project because it has a significant purpose; the student begins to understand the reasons for creating such a mask.

(Recommended for Art classes, grades 5 through 8)

Key Words

Masks Art Africa West African Ceremonial Use

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