Maskerade—“My Self—And No Other”

Curriculum Unit 97.04.09
by Carol Ann Viccione-Luce

“As long as I live
I shall always be
My Self—and no other,
Just me.”

Walter de la Mare

Introduction

An immense diversity exists in all children’s environments, educations, and cultural lives. But an enormous sameness is inherent in all children—the need to be respected, nurtured, and accepted. Those needs must be met externally. But for all individuals those needs must also be met internally in order to develop a sense of self-worth.

*Maskerade*—“*My Self—And No Other*” will endeavor to enable the TAG 1-3 students to examine themselves, discover their strong, positive attributes, and recognize areas in need of improvement (since each individual possesses strengths but all people have some weaknesses). This process of self-discovery will be carefully teacher-guided with encouragement toward self-acceptance, trust in oneself, and assumptions of a right to belong and participate in the ‘community,’ in society, in life.

Attitudes of appreciation for the diversity in one another and acceptance of all individuals will be fostered. The students will be introduced to literary works, art pieces, and hands-on creative activities from different cultures. They will compare and contrast experiences and draw conclusions. Is it possible that people, although different, have much, even more, in common? Is it possible that people are the same where it is
important to be the same, different where it makes life interesting?

New Haven’s Talented and Gifted Early Identification Program (Grades K-3) provides itinerant services on a weekly basis to identified first through third grade students. (Kindergartners receive whole-class instruction.) The K-3 Program has been designed as an enrichment curriculum incorporating age-appropriate hands-on activities, critical thinking skills, creative problem-solving opportunities, independent projects, and field trip experiences. This unit has been prepared for the students participating in this program.

**Procedure**

The K-3 curriculum has been developed around three central themes: Early American Life; Native American Indians; and Art and Science. Students entering the program in first grade remain in it for three years. The three themes are rotated during the three years to prevent repetition for the students attending during first through third grades.

The central theme for the 1997-1998 school year will be Art and Science. *Maskerade—“My Self—And No other”* will combine the meanings of diversity and multiculturalism, attitudes toward diversity and multiculturalism, and multicultural activities with the Art and Science TAG curriculum (developing only the art component for this unit). Requiring twenty weekly TAG sessions, this unit could be accomplished in five weeks in the self-contained classroom.

*Maskerade—“My Self—And No Other”* is a lengthy title. It will be termed *Maskerade* for expeditiousness and simplicity.

Utilizing the artist’s notebook/sketchbook as a format for recording observations, discoveries, puzzlements, determinations, and conclusions the students will insert information on a weekly basis. This artist’s notebook, an integral component of *Maskerade*, will become a written and illustrated depiction of the student, his world, and the world through his own eyes.

Each student will receive an unlined blank book. Throughout the course of this unit they will follow a process of making observations, taking time to reflect upon their observations, repeating the observation process, and recording their thoughts. Keeping a notebook facilitates thinking. It is a system of examining what appears to be obvious, formulating theories, looking carefully again and reassessing assumptions. It is an occasion to test one’s experiences against those of others, to work one’s way through questions, employing critical thinking with genuine interest and determined intent. It is an avenue for establishing a separate identity, revealing an observant eye, and gathering knowledge about how the world is put together.

The learner is encouraged to put into written form items of interest, capturing the observation in language and fostering verbal development. The notebook will be evidence that curriculum concepts have been understood and that independent thinking has occurred. Entries will include illuminations stimulating visual thinking and perceptual processes. Drawings included in the notebooks are not evaluated on artistic ability. They are part of the documentation process and should be regarded as such. For characteristically non-verbal students graphic notes are essential to communication. The teacher may record thoughts dictated by the student.
**Components of Learning**

*Maskerade* is an interdisciplinary unit composed of six components: self-perception; other-perception; artists’ perceptions; revelations; deceptions; and conceptions. The individual components consist of:

1. **Self-perception**—a. The students will record in their notebooks observations of what they believe to be the way that they are perceived by others (family, friends, acquaintances, strangers). b. The students will record in their notebooks how they perceive themselves.
2. **Other-perception**—The students will discuss stereotypes with which they are familiar pertaining to their own personal experiences or to those of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
3. **Artists’ perception**—The students will study written/visual renditions of children’s experiences in children’s literature illustrated by the authors. The literary works will depict children from four ethnic backgrounds—European American (Italian), Hispanic American (Mexican), African American, and Asian American (Japanese). Observations will be recorded in their notebooks. The students will participate in art activities coordinated with each of the four groups. (Native American Indians are studied for a full academic year as part of the TAG Program’s three-year curriculum. Therefore, they will not be included in this unit.)
4. **Revelations**—Groups discussions will be followed with written thoughts, observations, revelations, and conclusions. The students will consider new information, insights, or corrections that they have experienced during this process.
5. **Deceptions**—The students will study the history and purpose of mask making. They will examine reasons people ‘seek’ to deceive (fun—Halloween/make-believe, hide identity—insecurities/deceit/ceremonies).
6. **Conceptions**—The students will design and construct a mask that will embody and reveal aspects of themselves. The students will determine which characteristics are important for them to depict in a three-dimensional format. The title of this unit is derived from this activity.

In order to continue the thinking/learning process between weekly TAG sessions, encourage a student-parent-family learning relationship, and intensify interest, bridging activities will be provided. These activities are designed to be fulfilled at home with family involvement. Meeting once a week can effectively limit how much can and what should be accomplished during class sessions. Bridging activities generally entail studies and projects that do not necessitate teacher assistance.

Activities planned are: developing a family tree; sharing experiences related to the curriculum; helping in the selection of a personal item to share with the group; playing “Life Stories,” a board game engaging family members in conversation, the sharing of life’s experiences; “Future Stories,” a board game involving the imagination in the hopes and dreams for the future; “In the Picture,” a board game requiring the identification
of the masterpiece missing from the gallery; “Art Lotto,”; borrowing from a lending library developed by the TAG teacher (containing books pertaining to the unit content, spanning the reading abilities of the students); and parents’ participation in field trips. The students will realize increased learning capabilities and a sense of achievement during this study if families nurture their children’s eagerness to learn.

Self-perception is the introductory component of Maskerade. Throughout this section the students will go through a process of self-discovery and will develop a stronger sense of self-worth. The students will be shown several items—small shovels, soft-bristle brushes, magnifying glasses—and told that they are going to embark on a hunt, a search, for something—something that you have always had and that you take with you everywhere. Does anyone think that they know what it is? Entertain guesses.

Containers with clean, dry sand will be distributed to each student. Embedded in the sand will be small notebooks (inside plastic bags) with the word ‘Me’ written on the covers. The students will dig, hunt, to find ‘the thing that you take everywhere,’ always have taken everywhere, and will never be able to “leave home without.” What did you find? What does it mean? Can you really find yourself? How would you accomplish that task? You are going to find yourself with your very own words, with your very own hands. The ‘hunt’ is on!

Well, who are you? Write your name on your notebook. Discuss the fact that your name is a kind of label, a way of enabling people to identify you, to know who/what to call you. Do you know what your name means? How was it chosen? But, who are you? Are there other ways that you could define yourself? Are there other ways that you could answer the question, “Who are you?” Let’s reword the question. Ask yourself, “Who am I?” Share Felice Holman’s poem, “Who Am I?,” with the students. Inside your notebooks you will list as many adjectives, descriptive words, as you feel necessary to describe yourself. You may illustrate your ideas to help you express yourself.

After the students have had a sufficient amount of time (determined by the completion of the assignment) ideas will be shared, and recorded on an easel pad. This process will include teacher participation. Responses will be charted on a graph. Results will be discussed. Are any characteristics shared? Shared by a few? By many? By all?

Who are you? Who do others say you are? How do other people see you? Have you had times when someone thought something about you that wasn’t true? How did you feel? Did you try to correct that impression? Were you able to change that person’s mind? The students will record their responses in their notebooks without group discussion at this point. This will allow for privacy and will eliminate the possibility of the perpetuation of uncomfortable or embarrassing misconceptions or occurrences.

“Life Stories,” a board game that engages students in conversation, the sharing of life’s experiences, hopes and dreams, will be played. This game helps the students connect with one another since they come together once a week and usually don’t interact outside of their TAG sessions.

Blue nose, green teeth, short feet, hippo’s voice and lovely, very lovely states Karla Kuskin in her poem, ‘Me.’ After reading this piece to the students, elicit reactions. Would they like to be like that? Would they be friends with someone who was?

Other-perception will deal with stereotypes and prejudice. The students are going to be searching for ‘Me’ but what about the people that we call ‘You?’ Who are they? Do you know any ‘You’s?’ Are they different from the ‘Me’s?’ What makes them different, or appear to be different? What do you know about these different people? In what ways can people be different? (physical attributes—skin, eye, hair color; height; gender; age;
religion; language; diet; clothing; capabilities; interests; ideas; values)

Introduce the term prejudice. What does this big word mean? Prejudice means to prejudge, to judge ahead, to form an opinion or make up your mind before knowing enough or anything about someone or something. What about the ‘Me’ with the blue nose and hippo voice? Did you make your decision after meeting and getting acquainted? What if the blue-nosed, hippo-voiced ‘Me’ is just like you and wishing for a friend? Would your decision regarding friendship cause loneliness or pain for ‘Me?’

The following scenario will be told to the group:

There was a child running down the hallway, banging on the walls, throwing papers and crayons around, even yelling out foolish things. What a ruckus! I realized that children don’t behave very well. I see that they are not nice people. I figure that I should not be friends with children. It would not be good at all if any of them moved next door to me!

Allow the students, the children, to react to this situation. Discuss the conclusion. Do they have a problem with it? What is this type of thinking called? It’s another big word—stereotype. Explain the meaning—making assumptions about a group of people based on the belief that they are all the same. (The word is derived from the process of printing from stereotype plates that were made from a mold with a raised surface similar to type.) What about the child in the hallway? Do you suppose it was a boy or a girl? Do you know children like that? Would you be friends with a child like that? Are you a child like that? Was that stereotyping—determining that all children are like that child? Was I being fair? How did it feel? Did I take the time to get to know that child? Do you think that child always behaves like that? Is it possible that I could behave like that child? Do you think that was a true story and that I really feel that way? Why did I tell you that story? Could I work with young children and enjoy my job if I felt that way? "...I am a you and you are an I” making us the same even though different states Mary Ann Hoberman in her poem ‘You and I.’

At this very moment people, children, all around the world are going about their lives. Do you know the names of any of the countries of the world? Do you know where these countries are on the globe? On the map? Do you know any people that are from other countries? Do you know any people that live in other countries? Are the people from these other countries different from people in our country, the United States? What do you know about other cultures? What would you like to learn about other cultures?

Ann Morris’ Bread Bread Bread reveals through a simple text and full-colored photographs the many forms bread takes all around the world. Included are pictures of the people who partake of this universal food. Following the reading and discussion of this book the students will sample an assortment of breads. Do they know the names of the breads? Do they know the countries of origin? Prior to sampling the students will determine which ones ‘look good,’ which ones they will like.

Perhaps we can get to know ourselves, the ‘Me’s’ and the ‘You’s’, by learning about other people. A good way to do this is through literature and art. We will read stories written especially for children by writers who are also illustrators in artists’ perceptions. This means that they wrote the stories and made the pictures for their books. A children’s book illustrator must combine visual arts skills with the ability to communicate with children.

Joey is feeling very anxious about the prospect of his friend, Eugene, meeting his old-fashioned Italian grandmother in Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup by Tomie de Paola. New foods, customs and foreign words are a treat for “Eugeney.” The visit is a success with Joey’s friend thrilled with the experience.
Italian bread dolls will be made using the recipe on the last page of the book.

I will discuss my connections with this story. The similarities as well as areas that do not relate. The chicken feet in my mother’s first chicken soup, my father’s surprised reaction, her embarrassment at not realizing the need to remove them. Of course, there was my Italian grandmother, Nonny, and the foreign (to me) language she spoke and the egg biscuits, pepper biscuits, molasses cookies, anginettes. . . .

Italy is known for its famous painters. One of the greatest in history was Leonardo da Vinci. Besides his artistic achievements, he was an inventor, a scientist, a mathematician, an architect, a musician—a brilliant thinker and one of the most gifted creators of all time. The students will study the life of Leonardo with special attention to the childhood of this universal genius. Since note taking is an important aspect of Maskerade, Leonardo’s unusual mirror writing will be examined and attempted. The students will make self-portraits painted on canvas boards. There will also be a trip to the Yale University Art Gallery.

The Mexican-American artist, Carmen Lomas Garza, introduces readers to her childhood rich in Spanish tradition when the children read Family Pictures. Cuadros de familia. The ‘Fair in Reynosa’ conjures up every good memory about the booths with food and crafts and games. Beautifully decorated pottery is offered for sale in one of these booths. The students will make a folk art clay candleholder called a Tree of Life. Shaped in the form of a tree and embellished with colorful patterns and figures (usually biblical stories). Trees of Life are used in Mexican villages for decorations, ceremonies, and carried in festival processions.

Another folk craft originating in Mexico is papel picado, or pierced paper. Intricate designs are cut into thin materials, usually tissue paper, glued to long pieces of string and hung high across the streets. Each page of Family Pictures includes one of these images. The students will learn how to make these colorful paper banners.

Faith Ringgold remembers her Harlem childhood in Tar Beach. Originally depicted in a painted five-quilt series, “Woman on a Bridge,” the story and pictures were adapted to a book published for children. Sleeping on the tar roof, “tar beach,” of her apartment building afforded eight-year-old Cassie opportunities to devise magical dreams of flight (an African American metaphor for freedom predominant in many folktales and songs from the time of slavery). The flight represents setting a goal and working toward its achievement. The students will write a dream fantasy in their notebooks and illustrate their plan to be executed on small individual personal fabric quilts.

Adinkra are symbols with special meanings. These symbols are carved into dried gourds and used as stamps to transfer the inked designs onto fabric.

The Asante of western Africa created this method of decorating cloth with repeating shapes and patterns. The borders of the fantasy quilts will be printed with Adinkra stamps made by the students.

The very small, shy Japanese boy named Chibi, tiny boy, is the subject of Taro Yashima’s Crow Boy. Afraid of the teacher and the other children he was unable to learn or make friends. Teased by his classmates because he behaves differently he retreats into a world full of distractions and daydreams. Chibi’s individualistic tendencies bring about rejection from his peers and isolation from both his classmates and his teachers. In the sixth grade the new teacher is Mr. Isobe. He takes the time to get to know Chibi and discovers his many talents. This is a very sensitive story guiding the reader to develop a sense of empathy for Chibi, for others. Crow Boy reveals basic human characteristics existent in all cultures.
Despite the children’s treatment of Chibi he continued to go to school. Why do you think he did that? Have you ever been treated as he was? If so how did it feel? What did you do? How do you think Chibi felt? What did he do about his problem? What do you think he should have done? Should people have to change themselves in order to affect the attitudes and behavior of others? Were the children fair to Chibi? If you could have helped him what would you have done? Mr. Isobe did something for Chibi that no one else had ever done before. What did he do? What happened to Chibi? Why is Chibi called Crow Boy at the end of the story? How does this effect him? Why did the artist paint a butterfly and a flowering peach branch on the endpapers of the book? What has this story taught you about our responsibility to one another?

Chibi made many beautiful black-and-white drawings. In keeping with his artistic style the students will learn how to make Sumi-e. This Japanese art form means Sumi, black ink, and e, picture, painting. Employing few calligraphy brush strokes, the idea of the depicted subject is captured. Literal, realistic representation is not the objective. Founded on self-discipline, concentration, detachment and contemplation Sumi-e is a stylized, decorative, philosophical artistic expression.

A personalized seal, a type of signature used by Japanese artists to sign their work, will be designed by each student. Initials, a special symbol, or calligraphy may be incorporated onto the seal. Red ink will be applied and the image will be transferred to the students’ art work, the Sumi-e.

A mask is generally thought of as a form of disguise. How long has the practice of hiding one’s face behind another face been around? Determining when or where or why is probably not possible but it generally is believed that man has been concealing his identity this way since the beginning of time. Why do people cover their faces with masks? In deceptions the children will offer as many reasons as they can imagine to explain this world-wide custom of deception. Besides the desire to disguise ones looks masks are used for transformation, protection, ceremonies, theatrical productions, festivals, and simply for fun. The students will study the history of masks, observe many types from around the world and examine the purposes behind seeking to prevent someone from seeing ones true identity.

Conceptions will be a balance between image and structure as the students create a visual presentation of their answer to the question, “Who are you?” A three-dimensional plaster gauze mask will be planned, designed, constructed, and embellished. This personalized representation will be a symbolic, metaphoric, or realistic interpretation. Each mask will be an embodiment of each individual, a celebration of uniqueness, a statement of belonging.

The goal of Maskerade is to foster self-awareness and self-acceptance in young learners. Children learn to accept and value others if they have learned to accept and value themselves. Children are better equipped to handle the slights of others if they realize and believe that the problem lies within the perpetrator. Children need to be strong enough to hold fast and walk tall despite unfairness and obstacles. After all, if children don’t truly believe in themselves can, will they trust that anyone else could, would, should?

Life may be a masquerade but life shouldn’t be full of pretense. Each individual may go through contortions, distortions, deceptions but through it all each person will still be . . .

“Like a tree.

Like a willow or elder,
An aspen, a thorn,
Or a cypress forlorn.

Like a flower,

For its hour

A primrose, a pink,

Or a violet-
Sunned by the sun,
And with dewdrops wet.
Always just me.”

Walter de la Mare

**OBJECTIVES**

The students will:

- gain cultural/multicultural perspectives through children’s literature and art.
- develop an awareness of the cultural heritage represented by selected writers and artist
- develop more positive attitudes toward diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious groups.
- develop an appreciation for the diversity in themselves, their classrooms, and their communities.
- understand that works of art define an individual or society in a particular place or time and therefore have value.
- express their own creativity through participation in selected art activities.
- develop skills with art techniques peculiar to the art projects.
- acquire a vocabulary specific to the art techniques.
**Lesson Plan One**

**Title:** Tree of Life

**Objective:** To make a clay candleholder in the style of the Mexican culture.

**Materials:**
- self-hardening clay
- sculpting tools
- aluminum foil, plastic wrap or wax paper
- masking tape
- toothpicks or wire
- rulers
- acrylic or tempera paint
- acrylic gloss varnish
- paintbrushes
- paper towels
- small containers or pans (for water and paint)
- candles

**Procedure:**

1. Tape a piece of aluminum foil, plastic wrap or wax paper (about 12”x12”) to the work surface.
2. To make the candleholder base roll a lump of clay into a ball with a 3” diameter. Flatten the bottom portion to enable the base to stand.
3. To make the trunk roll a lump of clay into a cylindrical shape about 5” long and 1” thick.
4. Wet one end of the trunk and the top of the base. Set the trunk onto the base. Press the pieces together. Smooth the joined areas with moistened fingers. If the trunk bends, use the toothpicks or pieces of wire pushed into the structure, to keep it straight.
5. To make the branches roll the clay into two cylindrical shapes 5” long and 3/4” thick. Flatten each end. Bend the branches to form two half circles. Moisten the four flattened ends. Join them to the trunk on opposite sides, one end of each near the top of the trunk, the other end of each near the base.
6. Roll a lump of clay into a 1” ball. Poke a finger into the ball to form a hollow large enough to hold the candle. Moisten the candleholder and set it on top of the trunk.
7. Form small pieces of clay into objects such as shapes, plants, animals, or people, to decorate
the tree. Moisten and attach.
8. Designs may be carved into the tree using the sculpting tools.
9. Allow to dry completely for several days.
10. Paint with bright colors. If tempera paints are used apply acrylic gloss varnish to the dry surface to seal and protect the paint.

Lesson Plan Two

Title: Adinkra Printing

Objectives: To make Adinkra stamps in the tradition of the Asante people of western Africa.
To apply Adinkra patterns to fabric.

Materials:
potatoes
knives (plastic for safety)
stamp pad
stamp pad ink (permanent) or fabric paint
newspapers
masking tape
paper towels
fabric

Procedures:
1. Tape newspapers to the work surface.
2. Cut the potatoes in half width-wise.
3. Carve designs and patterns about 1/4” into the cut, flat surface.

4. Dry the stamp with a paper towel.

5. Press the stamp on a well-inked stamp pad.

6. Transfer the patterns in repeated rows of the same designs to the fabric.

7. Allow printed fabric to dry completely.

Lesson Plan Three

Title: Sumi-e

Objectives:
To introduce the Japanese art form of sumi-e.

To paint a sumi-e employing the three types of lines in Japanese writing and painting.

Materials:
- bamboo brushes #0-#10 (long-haired pointed for calligraphy and wide for bamboo sections and large areas)
- sumi (carbon ink sticks)—black
- suzuri (ink stone)
- white unsized paper
- water
- paper towels

Procedure:

1. Place a small amount of water in the suzuri.
2. Dip the sumi in the water holding it at a ninety degree angle.
3. Rub the sumi, carefully, back and forth over the surface of the suzuri to get a thick, dark ink.
4. Wet the brush to be used thoroughly in water. Remove excess water by stroking the brush on a clean piece of paper.
5. Apply ink to one half of the outside of the brush.
6. Practice using the various brushes to become familiar with the range of widths of lines and intensities of colors.
7. Use the tips and flat sides of the brushes.
8. Compose a simple realistic or abstract sumi. Depict only the most important features. Details, perspective, or color are not included.
9. Allow painting to dry completely.

**Teacher Bibliography**


A comprehensive and detailed analysis of all aspects of the phenomenon of prejudice.


Psychological studies of the forms and functions of art and perceptual thinking.


An analysis of the problems in America’s classrooms—the miscommunication as schools and “other people’s children” struggle with the imbalance of power and the dynamics of inequality.


Intercultural education and the restructuring of schools in the United States.


Drawing techniques and visual, perceptual thinking developed to effect creative problem-solving.


Some of Leonardo da Vinci’s thoughts on anatomy, motions and emotions, historical compositions, draperies, color, and landscapes are presented. Illustrations and text compiled from Leonardo’s notebooks and treatise on painting.


Presents a variety of games and other activities to promote awareness of different cultures around the world.

Cognitive learning in children and constructivism in education.


An anthology of children’s literature promoting multiculturalism as across cultures, against borders and not just defined as people of color.


Discusses the issues surrounding multiculturalism, pluralism, and minorities from a philosophical perspective.

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**Student Bibliography**


Emphasizes common bonds that run through every human culture.


Fourteen distinguished picture book artists talk about their early art experiences, answer questions most frequently asked by children, and offer encouragement to those who would like to become artists.


Embarrassed to introduce his friend to his old-fashioned Italian grandmother, a young boy gains a new appreciation of her when he finds out how well she and his friend get along.


The author describes, in bilingual text and illustrations, her experiences growing up in a Hispanic community in Texas.


Discusses issues of racism and explains how readers can take an informed stand against the myths of racial superiority.


Children from thirty-nine countries, Argentina to Zimbabwe, in all six inhabited continents as well as several Caribbean islands express their wishes to make the world a better place. Poignant answers plus drawings.


Focuses on the childhood of the noted artist Leonardo da Vinci.


Fourteen simple yet resonant poems, each written in the first person, celebrate the power of childhood from the perspective of a rich variety of cultures.

Photographs and text depict the homes, schools, family life, and culture of young people around the world.


The life of the artist from his apprenticeship in Tuscany to his final years.


An introduction to art that uses well-known works of art to illustrate familiar words.


Celebrates the many different kinds of bread and how it may be enjoyed all over the world.


A children's poem about ethnic groups and brotherliness.


A young girl dreams of flying about her Harlem neighborhood, claiming all she sees for herself and her family. Based on the author's quilt painting of the same name.


Emphasizes and celebrates the differences among the people on earth.


Text and map spreads explore the peoples of the world and their culture, continent by continent.


Traditional crafts from all over the world.


Includes background information and instructions for more than one hundred craft projects from African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American cultures.


Visual document showing the diversity which exists in children's environments, education, and cultural life.

Mexico, 1993.

Examines the contributions of African Americans to American Culture.


Presents writings by students on topics of Hispanic culture.


A kids’-eye view of Japanese American history, culture, and the arts.


A shy, tiny Japanese boy, different from his peers, withdraws into a world of daydreams and distractions. Reveals character development during his six years of school.

**Materials**

**Games:**

“Art Lotto”

Safari Limited

P.O. Box 630685

Miami, Florida 33163

“Future Stories”

“Life Stories”

701 Decatur Avenue North

Golden Valley, Minnesota 55427

1-800-232-1873

“In The Picture”

Intempo Toys

P.O. Box 50157

Palo Alto, California 94303

1-800-326-TOYS