



Yale-New Haven  
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1998 Volume III: Art and Artifacts: the Cultural Meaning of Objects

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## **Masks and the Stories behind Them**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.03.07  
by Jeanne Z. Lawrence

All of us are familiar with masks from Halloween, plays, masquerades and ceremonies. There is an element of magic connected with masks.

People of the past wore masks on special ceremonial occasions. Some people today wear invisible masks. C. J. Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist who founded analytical psychology, presented the theory that people possess three parts to their personality. A mask which forms the outer personality is the face shown to the world.

The wearing of masks in children's literature is a universal and fascinating theme. As I present parts of this unit to my Kindergarten through Fifth grade students in our Library Media Center students can relate to the action of wearing a mask and changing behavior along with changing appearance.

The stories lurking behind masks of two cultures will be presented. The fourteen Native American groups studied will include the Algonquian-speaking tribes: Micmac, Pequot, Delaware, Chippewa, and Masochist; the Iroquois-speaking tribes: Mohawk, Cayuga, Oneida, Seneca and Onondaga; and the Pacific Northeast tribes: the Haida, Tlingit, Chinook, and Kwakiutl. Additionally we will learn about masks and the cultures of Central and East Africa, including Uganda, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grades K - 5)

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