

# Masks

Masked Drama from different places and times

# Some Mask Images (all taken from google images)



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HEAVEN

hell fire

HELL

Masks are important in many cultures from different places and times.

- What is a mask?
- Why might people wear masks?
- What purpose might a mask serve?

# **A mask is a form of disguise...**

**It is an object that is frequently worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of a person and by its own features to establish another being. This essential characteristic of hiding and revealing personalities or moods is common to all masks. As cultural objects they have been used throughout the world in all periods since the Stone Age and have been as varied in appearance as in their use and symbolism.**

<http://www.anymask.com/historyofmask.html>

# Masks

Masks have been used for many different purposes over many thousands of years. This is a photo of what is thought to be one of the first ever masks, and it dates from 7000 BC.

[http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?hl=en&biw=1517&bih=714&tbnid=s242AArecOn-WM:&imgrefurl=http://pinterest.com/pattirabbit/masks/&imgurl=http://media-cache-ec4.pinterest.com/upload/140104238377368351\\_7WVnMtuT\\_b.jpg&w=192&h=256&ei=hCNDUIzCOuLB0gXhwIHwBg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=206&vpy=203&dur=451&hovh=195&hovw=145&tx=72&ty=79&sig=107309325716018081674&page=1&tbnh=155&tbnw=115&start=0&ndsp=22&ved=1t:429,r:0,s:0,i:72](http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?hl=en&biw=1517&bih=714&tbnid=s242AArecOn-WM:&imgrefurl=http://pinterest.com/pattirabbit/masks/&imgurl=http://media-cache-ec4.pinterest.com/upload/140104238377368351_7WVnMtuT_b.jpg&w=192&h=256&ei=hCNDUIzCOuLB0gXhwIHwBg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=206&vpy=203&dur=451&hovh=195&hovw=145&tx=72&ty=79&sig=107309325716018081674&page=1&tbnh=155&tbnw=115&start=0&ndsp=22&ved=1t:429,r:0,s:0,i:72)



A mask could be used...

For worship, celebration and ritual, to disguise, to hide behind, to symbolise and signify, to identify, to represent, to intimidate, to indicate social status, for entertainment, to mimic, to make strange..

Can you think of anything to add?

Can a mask transform its wearer?

# Basic Rules for Mask Work

It is important to follow some basic rules for mask work.

- Treat your mask with respect
- Look at your mask before you put it on. What characteristics does it have? How would this affect your physicality etc?
- Don't throw your mask around or drop it on the floor
- Turn your back to the audience when you put your mask on

## Rules continued...

- When you are acting keep the mask facing towards the audience
- Clean your mask after you have used it
- Don't talk whilst wearing a full face mask





# Greek Theatre Masks

It is often said that Theatre grew from religious worship and ritual in Ancient Greece, although many other cultures also held ceremonies and celebrations before then.

One of the gods worshipped in Ancient Greece was Dionysus; the god of festivity and wine. Masks were often used in these festivals, and soon actors began to use them on stage as well.

# Greek Masks

Only men were allowed to act, so when there was a female role a mask was worn.

Masks were also used for multi-role-playing.

The features of the mask were exaggerated and showed a character's emotions.

It is also thought that the shape of the mask's mouth helped amplify the actors voice

Masks were usually made from wood, cloth or leather.

# Images of Greek Theatre Masks

(all taken from google images)



# Roman Theatre Masks

The Romans also used masks in the theatre.

The features were exaggerated

Masks were colour coded, brown for a male character and white for a female.

Masks showed status, personality and emotion.

There were special masks for comedy and also for tragedies.

Again, masks allowed for multi-role-playing.

# Some images of Roman Theatre Masks...

(all taken from google images)



# Mystery Plays

Mystery plays were one of the first formally developed forms of Theatre in Medieval Europe. Travelling players acted out morality tales and bible stories in towns and villages.

Masks were used to represent characters such as devils, demons, dragons and other creatures. The mask makers were very inventive and were able to make smoke and steam come out, which must have been quite scary at the time.



# Masks for traditional and religious stories in other cultures

Many other countries and cultures have used masks in storytelling.

The Ramayana is the story of the Hindu god Vishnu, who comes to earth as the human prince Rama; sent to kill an evil demon named Ravana.

There are also Thai, Cambodian, Nepalese, Burmese, Balinese, Filipino and Indonesian versions of the tale.

# Some Ramayana Masks





# Masks in Asia

Asia has a fantastic tradition of masked theatre. Some of these styles feature very detailed make up which is a form of mask. You may wish to explore some of these genres further...

Kolan (Sri Lanka)

Kathakali (Indian)

Kabuki (Japan)

Chinese Opera

# Masks in Asia continued...

Topeng (Bali)

Lakhon (Cambodia)

Buddhist Mask Theatre (various)

Noh (Japan)



# Noh Theatre

Noh is a famous form of Japanese theatre. It dates from the 14th century and originated from a combination of Chinese performing arts, Buddhist worship and Japanese dance.

There are several different types of mask in Noh.

# Noh Theatre

The following information comes from <http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00717/pages/masks.html>

This is a Hannya mask.



"The person who wears this mask is supposed to play a jealous and evil woman who has turned into a demon. The pointed horns and the metal eyes and teeth are used to show anger and wrath. The coloring of the masks shows how much passion that certain character has in that demon's anger."

## The Ko-omote Mask



This mask represents a young woman who is calm. The Ko-omote mask represents the traditional Heian beauty featuring shaved eyebrows, blackened teeth, and neat hair. Some ko-mote masks have lips that are farther apart and fuller looking cheeks. You can tell how old a character is supposed to be depending on how wide the masks eyes. The ko-mote masks have eyes that are closer together to represent that it is a younger woman.

# The Otoko Mask

Otoko masks are the masks that young men wear. There are many different masks that can be used to represent young men. Just like ko-mote masks, the eyes represent how old and wise that character is.



# The Uba Mask

Uba masks were used to represent old woman. An uba mask is usually used in the Noh play Takasago. Woman that wear uba masks are usually shown with a broom and rake. The wrinkles and the gray hair on the mask show that this character has obviously experienced a lot.



# The Shikami Mask

"The shikami masks are used as the demon masks. The fang teeth and the evil looking mouth show the fear that is portrayed in this mask. There is a red complexion on the mask. This shows the anger in the demon just like in the hannya mask. "





# Commedia del 'Arte

Commedia is a famous form of Italian improvisational comedy that dates from the 16th century. It is very physical, very fast and very funny. Most actors wear half face masks that represent each stock character, including Arlecchino (a cheeky servant), Il Dottore (the boring, pompous doctor) and Il Capitano (a soldier who brags about everything but is really a coward, scared of the smallest things.)

# Some Commedia Masks (all taken from google images)

Arlechinno



Pantalone



# Commedia Masks

Il Dottore



Il Capitano



# Commedia Masks

Zanni

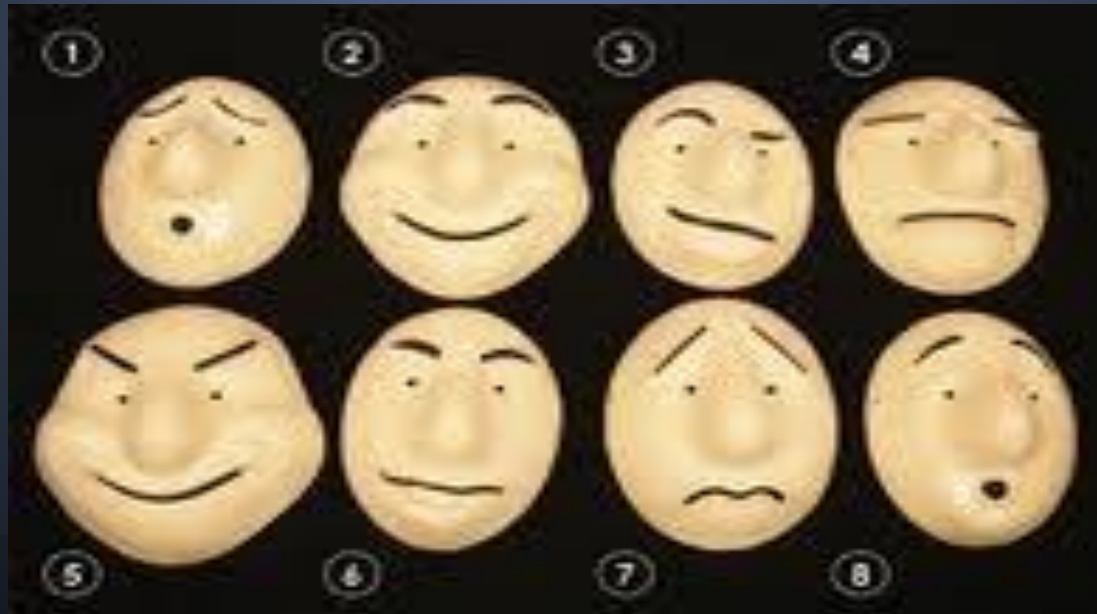


Scaramouche



# Contemporary Masked Theatre

Many companies still perform using masks today. Some of the most famous European companies are Trestle, Vamos and Strangeface.



# Strangeface Theatre Masks



# Trestle Theatre Masks



# Vamos Theatre Company Masks





# Masks in other cultures, countries and times

Masks are also an important part of the heritage of many groups of people around the world. If you are interested you may want to explore the masks of...

Africa



## North America



## South America



# Australia



# New Zealand



# Useful websites and bibliography

<http://www.anymask.com/historyofmask.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mask>

<http://www.trestle.org.uk/>

<http://www.strangeface.co.uk/>

<http://www.mask-and-more-masks.com/greek-masks.htm>

<http://www.roman-colosseum.info/roman-life/roman-masks.html>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/367906/mask/9063/Theatrical-uses>

<http://www.mitchellteachers.org/WorldHistory/IndiaUnit/UnderstandingHinduBeliefsRamayana.html>

<http://www.mask-and-more-masks.com/Asian-Masks.html>

<http://www.squidoo.com/Ethnicmasks#module1809173>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00717/pages/masks.html>

<http://www.ravenwoodmasks.com/commedia-mask.htm>