

Mardi Gras Masks

K-5

Objective: Create and decorate a Mardi Gras Mask in the style of prominent African American artist Lois Mailou Jones.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion: Mardi Gras, mask, shading, fine art, textile.

Materials: Black or brightly colored card stock paper, colored pencils & oil pastels, sequins, glue, paintbrush or q-tips.

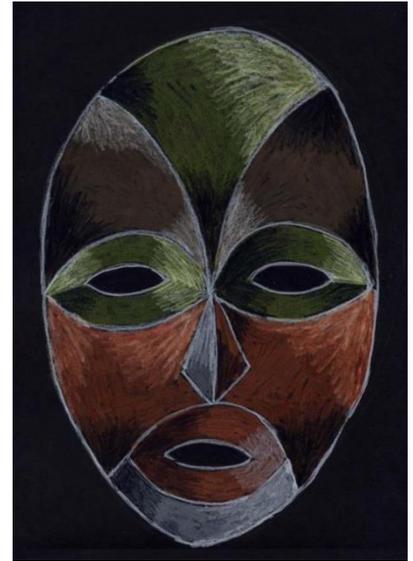
Opening Activity: Mardi Gras or Carnivale is a holiday celebrated in February in a number of countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. In the US, the city of New Orleans is known for their Mardi Gras celebrations which are well known throughout the world. One aspect of the Mardi Gras holiday is to wear beautiful, fantasy masks. Masks have been worn by different societies for centuries. Some groups wear them for rituals, some for celebrations, and still others for the performing arts. Mardi Gras masks in particular originated in ritual celebrations. New Orleans has been celebrating Mardi Gras for hundreds of years, and is the largest masked party in North America.

In the beginning, masks worn during Mardi Gras allowed wearers to escape society and class constraints. When wearing a mask, carnival goers were free to be whomever they wanted to be, and mingle with whatever class they desired to mingle with.

Core Activity: We are going to make Mardi Gras/Carnivale masks in the style of Lois Mailou Jones. Lois Mailou Jones was an prominent artist and the only African-American female painter of the 1930s and 1940s to achieve fame abroad. Lois Mailou Jones (1905 – 1998) had an impressive career, but do you know how she got started? She had been working as a textile designer and often sold her bold fabric creations to department stores. One day a decorator told her that a colored girl wasn't capable of producing such beautiful designs. This prompted Jones to shift her artistic focus to the fine arts so she could sign her name to her work.

Follow the directions on the sample provided for support.

Reflection: What is the MOOD of your mask? Is it dark, or silly? Is it angry or happy? Think about how your culture and family express or experience feelings- are feelings a BIG deal or not a big deal? Does art give you space to show feeling? What tools do artists use to make feelings come alive in their artwork?



Making Mardi Gras Masks in the Style of Lois Mailou Jones



DIRECTIONS-

1. Starting with a black sheet of paper, the students draw a large oval face that fills the paper. Small lemon-shape eyes are drawn in the middle of the face, along with one for the mouth.



2. The students place a dot that is centered between the eyes, and then draw large lemon shapes that go around the eyes, and touch the outside edge of the face. (The goal is to make lots of closed shapes.) The same shape is drawn around the mouth.



3. Students draw a simple nose that touches the center of the eyes and top of the mouth. Two eyebrow-like curves are added to the forehead.



4. All of the closed shapes on the face are completely colored in with colored pencil.

5. A white colored pencil is used to go over selected corners to brighten (or tint) them, and a black colored pencil is used to go over selected corners to darken (or shade) them. For the most dramatic results, all the corners should be either tinted or shaded.

6. Use the paintbrush stick or q-tips to dab glue on the mask and attach sequins to add a shiny dimension to your mask.

