

Purim Mask - Making



Topic

Purim, art projects

Grade Level(s)

All ages

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will be able to:

- Create masks for Purim
- Learn why we wear masks on Purim

Materials needed

- Reclaimed and repurposed cardboard, including thin, thick and corrugated varieties
- Scissors or exacto knives (for older students)
- Large popsicle sticks - plain or colored
- Pipe cleaners - plain and/or glitter
- Beads
- Foam sheets - glitter and/or assorted colors
- Felt sheets
- Hole punchers
- White or lace fabric
- Paper and pencils (for planning out their designs)
- Oil pastels
- Markers and sharpies
- Embellishments such as pompoms, glitter, jewels...



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- Egg cartons, cloth pins, yarn and any other recycled objects
- Duct tape or masking tape

Background for Teachers

Wearing masks is a nod to all of the hidden twists and turns that happen in the story of Purim.

God's name does not appear in *Megillat Esther*. While this might seem to indicate that the Jewish People's victory over Haman was accomplished through purely human means, close reading of the narrative might indicate otherwise.

We read in *Megillat Esther* that Mordechai's niece is "Hadassah, that is Esther..." (*Megillat Esther* 2:7). Hadassah is the Hebrew name. However, אֶסְתֵּר is also a pun on the words אֶסְתֵּר, meaning "I will be hidden," and הַסֵּתֵר, meaning "secret" or "hidden." Consequently, Esther represents something hidden, which could be God's presence in this narrative (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Chullin* 139b).*

Later in the scroll, Mordechai informs Esther that the Jewish People will be saved with or without her help implying that God will save the Jewish People regardless of Esther's involvement (*Megillat Esther* 4:14). Esther, though, has the opportunity to be the person through whom God acts to save the Jewish People.

Specific events in the narrative that could be seen as God acting in the background within the story include: Vashti refusing her husband's invitation to attend the royal party thus leading to Esther being chosen to be queen, Mordechai overhearing the guards' plotting's thus enabling him to be written down for future reward from the king, Haman approaching the king just as Mordechai's heroic deeds are being read to the king.

* Note that this hiddenness could also be understood as referring to how Esther hides her Jewish identity from King Ahasuerus.

Prepare in Advance

- Collect art supplies
- For younger students, precut cardboard and foam into shapes for them to use
- To provide inspiration, consider displaying pictures of the different Purim characters

Description of Activities



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1. Review the significance of wearing masks on Purim.
2. Discuss different identifying characteristics of the people in the Purim story and their possible body traits – Queen Esther wears a crown and a wedding veil, Haman has a mustache and wears a triangle hat, Mordecai might be portrayed with a beard and wearing a kippah, and so on.
3. Have students cut a piece of cardboard in the shape of a face. Encourage students to be creative; their cardboard face might be rectangular, triangular, circular, or any other interesting shape.
 - Younger kids may need help cutting or have the shapes precut.
 - 3rd to 6th grade students might use larger scissors.
 - Older students might be able to use exacto knives with supervision.
4. Have students sketch their mask on a piece of paper, keeping in mind the overall face shape they have prepared.
5. Once students sketched-out their designs, they can begin creating their 3D masks. Start by cutting shapes from different materials and placing them on top of their cardboard face base. Encourage them to layer unconventional cardboard shapes on top of one another to create depth and interest (no gluing yet).
6. After students have finalized the placement of their shapes and materials on top of their mask, they can color the layered pieces of cardboard with oil pastels. If they will be attaching a popsicle stick handle to the back of the mask, they can decorate the stick as well.
7. Finally, students can start gluing their pieces together. Use tape to attach extra embellishments, such as a veil, to the backside of the mask. If desired, punch holes and lace pipe cleaners around the masks as added decoration. Remember to also attach the popsicle stick handle.
8. Have a masked parade around the building!