

Bringing Animal Issues Into the Classroom

Lesson Plan: Animal Masks Art Project Grades 1–2



Teacher's Guide

Appropriate Age/Subject

- 2nd Grade
- Art

Standards Addressed

- Create artwork from imagination
- Demonstrate the appropriate use of materials, techniques, and tools
- Demonstrate multiple motor skills through artmaking, including coloring, drawing, cutting, and assembling
- Investigate and understand animals and their needs

General Goal

To teach students to create 3-dimensional art while demonstrating multiple motor skills through artmaking

Specific Objectives

To use art to educate students about exotic animals in their natural environments as well as to show students how animals look, act, and behave

Required Materials

- Paper to print out masks (designs provided)
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Books with pictures of chimpanzees, elephants, tigers, and dolphins
- Popsicle sticks or elastic
- Glue or a staple gun

Overview

Children are naturally fond of animals, so educators often take students to zoos, circuses, and aquariums to teach them more about exotic animals. Though these facilities

claim to provide educational opportunities, most animal enclosures are very small and are not representative of animals' natural habitats. Animals' normal behavior cannot be observed in these environments because their natural needs are rarely met—so the experience is not truly educational for students. When students see animals who are trapped in cages or are forced to perform silly and uncomfortable acts, they can get the dangerous message that it is acceptable for people to bully weaker beings.

Luckily, there are ways to teach young children about animals' natural behavior in an exciting way, without ever leaving the classroom!

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Give students the opportunity to pick their favorite animal mask from the following options we have provided: a chimpanzee, an elephant, a tiger, or a dolphin.
2. Provide students with colored pencils, markers, or crayons, and let them color in their animal mask. It's a good idea visit your school library to check out books about these animals in case any students are interested in looking at pictures and mimicking the colors of the animals they see in the books.
3. Have students cut out the masks.
4. Demonstrate to students how to attach the masks to a Popsicle stick, or you should use a stapler to attach elastic to the masks so that the students can wear them.
5. Ask students to get into groups with the others who chose the same animal. Ask each group of students to go to the front of the classroom and read one of the following passages about their animal's natural habitat and behavior:

- a. **Chimpanzees:** “Chimpanzees are very smart animals who live in large communities with other chimpanzees. In the wild, baby chimpanzees stay with their mothers for seven years and sleep with their mothers in a nest at night. During the day, young chimpanzees play together by swinging around in the trees.”
 - b. **Elephants:** “Elephants are very large animals who weigh even more than a car! In the wild, they live in big family groups and walk up to 30 miles every single day.”
 - c. **Tigers:** “Most tigers have more than 100 stripes—and no two tigers look exactly the same. Tigers hunt for their food, and their roar can be heard more than a mile away.”
 - d. **Dolphins:** “Dolphins swim in the ocean up to 100 miles per day. They live with their families in groups called ‘pods.’ They find their way around using ‘echolocation’—which means that they bounce sound waves off objects to determine their shape, distance, and location.”
6. After the students speak about their animal, give them the chance to demonstrate the behavior of their animal in front of the rest of the class.
 7. Ask students what they learned about their animal and give them the chance to raise their hands and speak about their favorite things about the animal they chose.
 8. At the end of this discussion, ask the students the following questions:
 - a. Do you think that your animals would want to live in a cage for their entire life?
 - b. If your animal was separated from his or her family, how do you think your animal would feel?
 - c. How would you feel if you were locked in a cage all the time?
 9. Allow students to answer the questions and discuss how they would feel, and then make the connection with animals who are used in zoos, circuses, and aquariums. Explain that the animals belong in the wild and that the best way to help animals who are trapped in cages is never to go to zoos, circuses, or aquariums.









