

Bringing Animal Issues Into the Classroom

Lesson Plan: Papier-Mâché Great Ape Masks Grades 5–6

Appropriate Age/Subject

- 6th Grade
- Art

Standards Addressed

- Create a 3-dimensional sculpture
- Question the role of the artist in society
- Research careers in art
- Appreciate the artistic decisions of others
- Understand the various functions of art

General Goal

To teach students how to create 3-dimensional sculptures using papier-mâché

Specific Objectives

To educate students about the abuse endured by great apes who are forced to perform in the entertainment industry and how artists can help protect them from this abuse

Required Materials

- Flour, water, salt
- Newspaper
- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Images of chimpanzees, orangutans, and gorillas
- Paint
- Faux fur, cotton balls, and other decorations

Overview

Great apes who are forced into the entertainment industry are treated cruelly. Trainers forcibly remove them from their mothers when the animals are just infants. A primatologist who worked at a popular



Hollywood training facility witnessed frequent beatings of young chimpanzees who were being trained to perform in the film and television industries. The animals were punched, kicked, and beaten with sticks as part of the training process in order to ensure that they performed their scenes correctly and in as few takes as possible.

Great apes can live to be more than 60 years old, but when they are about 8 years old, they become too strong to handle safely and are often sent to substandard roadside zoos or are simply warehoused. PETA investigations revealed that former “celebrity” apes were living in small cages littered with weeks’ worth of garbage and feces and that they were underfed, were given unwholesome food, and were denied basic necessities such as adequate veterinary care. The sad reality is that a brief stint in show business usually means a lifetime of misery for exotic animals. Modern filmmakers can

use alternatives to live animals, such as puppets, costumes, and computer-generated imagery. Challenge your class to create an alternative by creating papier-mâché great-ape masks using the steps below.

Step-by-Step Procedures

1. Before class, prepare a papier-mâché paste mixture according to the following instructions:
 - a. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil.
 - b. In a separate bowl, mix 2 cups of water and 1 cup of flour. Once the water is boiling, add the water and flour mixture.
 - c. Let the mixture simmer for 2 minutes, stirring continuously. The mixture should thicken.
 - d. Turn off the stove. Remove the mixture from the heat, and let it cool. Once cool, add 1 Tbsp. of salt.
2. Introduce this project to your class by explaining the plight of endangered great apes who are forced to perform in the entertainment industry. Explain to students that artists can use puppets, costumes, and computer-generated images to provide filmmakers with alternatives to live animals.
3. Show students images of chimpanzees, orangutans, and gorillas. Instruct students to mold wads of newspaper into a form of a great ape's head. They can use masking tape to make the newspaper hold its form. This will be the base on which the students will construct their masks.
4. Ask students to tear strips of newspaper. They will wet the strips with the paste mixture and use them to cover the base. Students should use several layers of papier-mâché for the mask.
5. After the mask has dried, peel it off the base. Help each student cut eyes out of their mask and trim the edges.
6. Finally, the students can paint and decorate the masks to look like the great ape they have chosen.

