

# Unmasking Poetry— Using Art as Inspiration

Written by Sixth-Grade Class 622 of  
P.S./I.S. 218 Rafael Hernandez Dual Language Magnet School



Fall 2016  
Writer-in-Residence--Samantha Facciolo  
Teachers & Writers Collaborative  
Mary Agramonte

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1220 Gerard Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10452

Writer in Residence--Samantha Facciolo  
Teachers & Writers Collaborative  
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Principal--Sergio Caceres  
Art Teacher--Mary Agramonte

## Introduction

This poetry project originated with art teacher Mary Agramonte's desire to teach her students about mask making. Drawing on the ancient masks of the native peoples of the Pacific Northwest as models, she encouraged students to reach back into their own cultural and familial backgrounds to create masks that held some unique cultural significance. Some students incorporated the colors of the flag of their families' homelands into their masks, whereas others incorporated different elements of design or animal representation.

As a class, we traveled to the American Museum of Natural History to study the masks of the native tribes of the Pacific Northwest in the context of other artifacts in the Hall of the Northwest Coast Indians. There, surrounded by tapestries, totem poles, and other reminders of this rich history, we considered the significance and uses of the masks for these native peoples and how, by translation, students saw masks in their own family histories. The students drew sketches of masks that represented eagles, wolves, bears, and other elements of Northwest life, and they reflected on the masks they had created.

Back in the classroom, we read poetry by the Kwaikiutl people as well as poems by Lorna Dee Cervantes, Richard Blanco, Lewis Carroll, Jacqueline Bouvier, Langston Hughes, Alberto Ríos, and others. It was here, surrounded by multiple mediums of art, that students were able to synthesize what they'd learned through mask making and their field trip into written form. Students were free to interpret their definition of "mask" in many forms, and we discussed the many visions the students had. Some wrote poetry that reflected the masks they'd made, others imagined the lives of their favorite masks from the museum exhibit, and still others explored the mask as a celebration of heritage or commentary on society.

The final unique element in this project was the inclusion of Spanish language. The students who wrote the poems in this anthology attend a Spanish-English magnet school in the Bronx, and many of them are dual-language speakers in their own lives. Therefore, many of the poems in this book are written in Spanish as well as in English. Overall, this project was a mixture of not only mediums but also of experiences, of writing and visual art, of cultures familiar and new, and of poetry that blends both forms and languages. I hope you enjoy reading the enclosed poems as much as I enjoyed working with the students on creating them.

~ Writer-in-Residence

Samantha Facciolo

## Máscara de transformación

Roja, verde, blanca

Me gusta la máscara

La cara me asustó

Me gusta cómo funciona

Me hizo sentir salir

La máscara es mi favorita

Está hecha de madera

Se veía bien

Era una bonita máscara

Dos puertas que abren

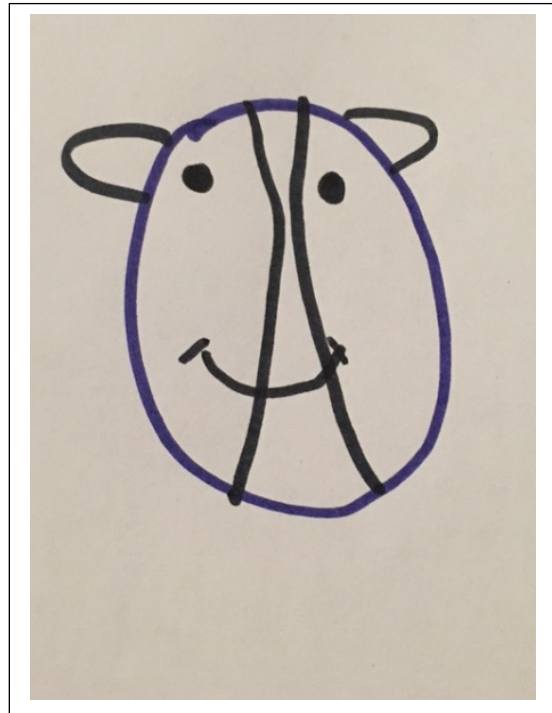
La cara era grande

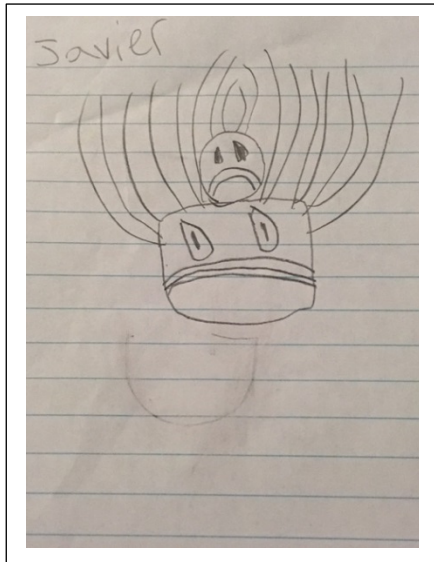
Ojos realmente grandes

La sonrisa era de miedo

Los dientes eran grandes.

- Isabel H.





## La máscara de calamar

Muchos tentáculos  
Dos cabezas  
Una pequeña cabeza  
Encima de  
Una cabeza grande  
El rostro pequeño parecía confundido  
Calamar es mi máscara favorita.

- Javier B.H.

## Wolf Head

Yo soy gris. Con mi excelente  
grita. Mientras tanto el trueno  
retumba yo soy el líder de mi  
grupo yo como primero muévete  
ahhwoo!!

No toques mi comida.

Yo te voy a comer mientras cazamos.

- Benny J.



## **Máscara del oso**

Increíble

Marrón

Anaranjada

Bonita

Buena

Colores

Amistosa.

- Siara M.

## **El demonio de madera**

Cara redonda

Ojos rojos

Nariz blanca

Cara oscura

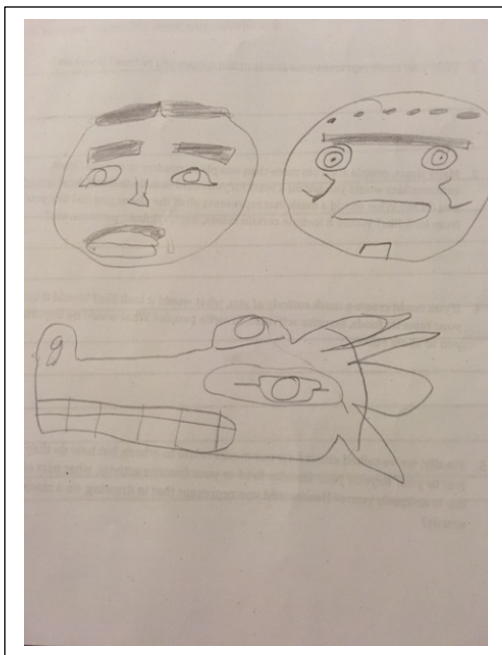
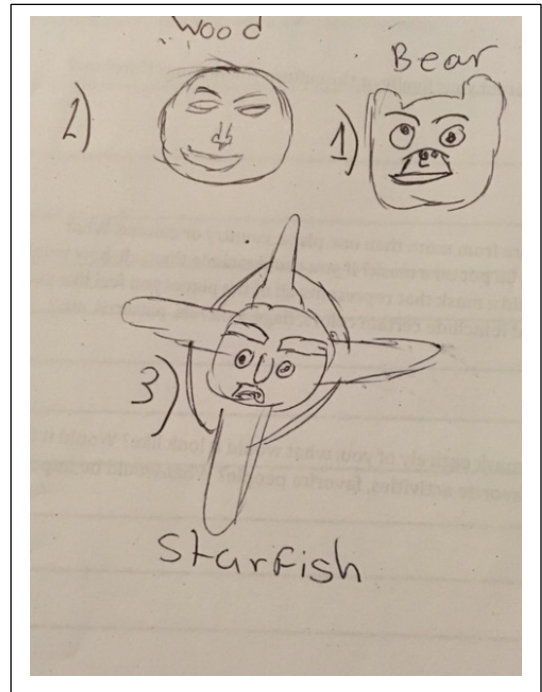
Me asusta

Mirar vivo

- Jaily R.

Estoy sentada  
Cuando una niña  
Camina y desea  
“¿Estamos amigas?”  
Yo le dije si pero  
Ella me miró con una  
Cara mala y dice  
“Um, estas segura  
Porque no parece que tú escoges lados  
Entre tus amigos y tus mejores amigos.”  
Y yo digo, “¡Yo nunca escojo lados!”

- Naomi B.



### La máscara del guerrero

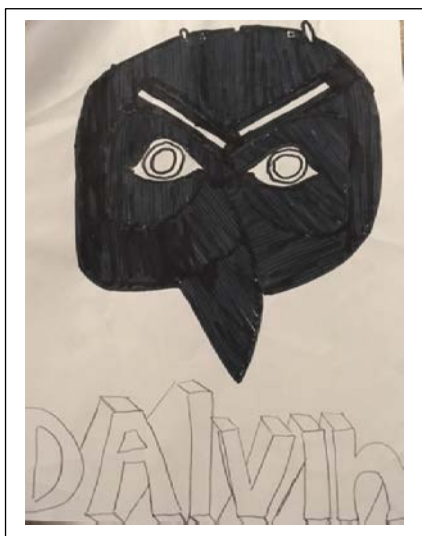
Grandes colores  
Azul, Roja, Verde  
Azul para la curación  
Roja para la sangre  
Verde para la victoria  
Me sentí libre  
Asombrado  
Como un guerrero.

- Yamil H.



The mask that I saw was really colorful. Things that I was learning about masks from my teachers were really helpful. There are bad struggles like in the DR they're running out of water, but here there is struggle related and real like gangs. There's good like happier and healthier people and better stores. These masks got me thinking en el colegio como cuando pienso en los problemas matemáticas.

- Dalvin G.



## Head of the Beaver

I am the head of the Beaver

I am a predator

Yo soy el protector.

In battle I win

I scare with my face.

- Christopher J.



Yo tengo puntos negros yo soy el color durazno

Me gusta correr donde vivo hay mucho

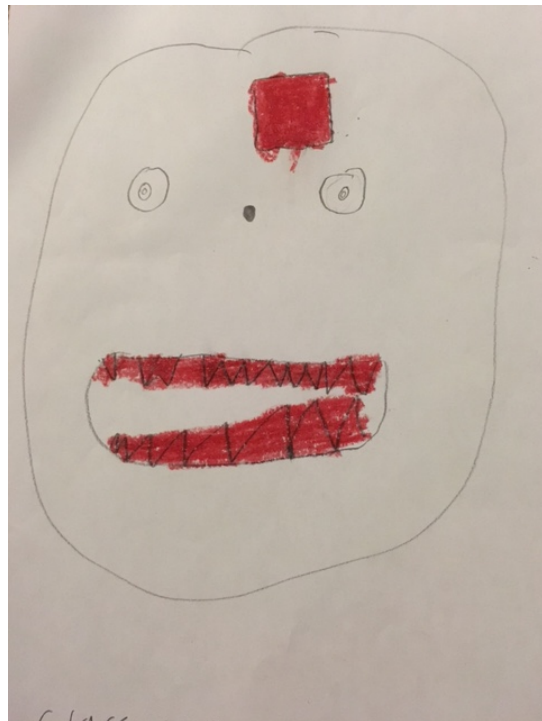
Calor yo no tengo mucho tiempo para jugar.

Corro rápido.

- Michael J.

Yo soy el príncipe  
De mi máscara  
Porque yo fui el que  
Hizo la máscara. Y mi  
Máscara vino de Santo  
Domingo y se usa mi máscara  
En Santo Domingo en las fiestas y otras celebraciones  
Y porque yo soy de ese país la máscara es diferente de las de los Estados Unidos  
Y tiene más colores.

- Michael T.



Mi máscara es muy grande

Mi máscara es muy bonita

Mi máscara es de la RD

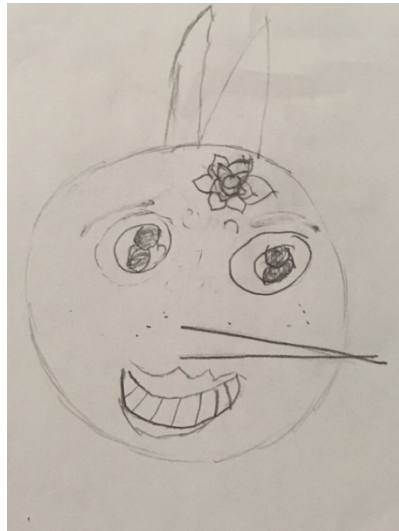
Mi máscara es de muchos colores

Mi máscara es muy importante porque es de

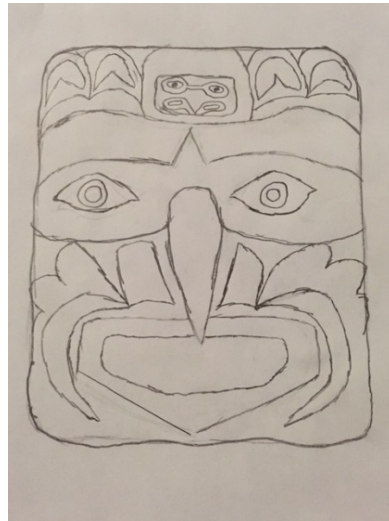
La República Dominicana y es mi religión.

Y aunque la gente no le gusta mi máscara porque soy de la República Dominicana, yo lo creo que a mí, me gusta mi máscara.

- Ciara G.



Ciara G.



Jonathan P.

My mask I created because I wanted to make something that was very helpful to our state. And also, I did this mask because there are many people that have masks in their states or countries. If you don't know about a country, then I think the mask will help you with learning about different countries or states.

- Jonathan P.

## La máscara del pulpo

Cara blanca

Puntos negros

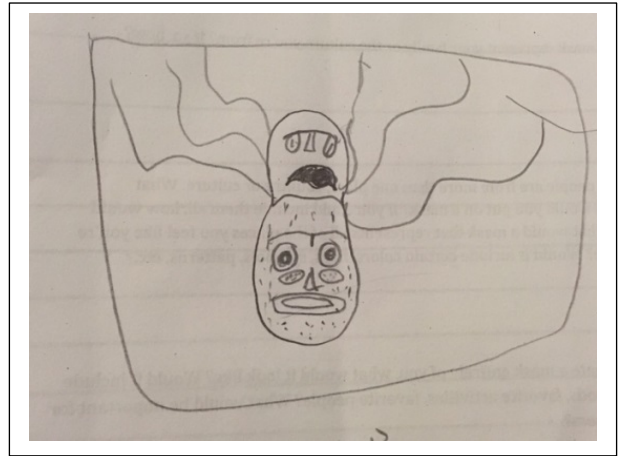
Ojos grandes,

Cabeza grande

Cara feliz

Máscara de cazar.

- Jonathan R.



## El pescador y la estrella del mar

Un día estaba el pescador por el mar

Duro horas que algo viniera

Hasta que oía la estrella del mar cantando

La estrella era bella con tantos colores.

En el mar tan negro la estrella que brilla

El pescador lo atrapa

Y se la lleva por la colina

Y la vive feliz con el pescador por el resto de su vida.

- Justin B.



I am a legend

I protect many people

Yo soy una leyenda

I am very important

People might make fun

Of him but he never

Gives up.

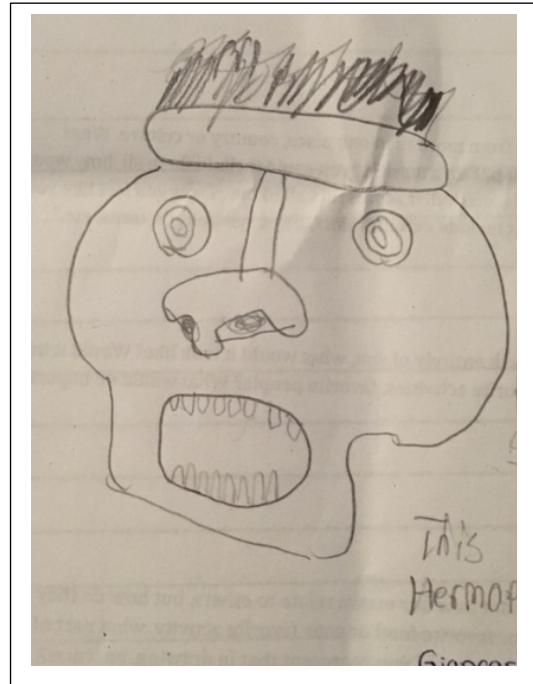
He gets bullied every day

But he doesn't care

He has a long nose

But he doesn't care.

- Giancarlo S.



Yo soy la reina de mi máscara.

Yo soy el color de mi máscara.

Yo soy el trueno de mi máscara.

Yo soy la amiga de mi máscara.

Yo soy la persona de mi máscara.

Yo soy el pájara de mi máscara.

Yo soy la casa de mi máscara.

Yo soy la familia de mi máscara.

- Kaylee F.

## Las máscaras

Vemos una máscara y una niña  
Dice “Ewww.” Pero yo digo “Wow.”  
Ella me mira con una cara de asco y se voltea a la  
Máscara y se fue caminando con una cara  
De miedo y De asco  
Y se va caminando  
Y dice “Voy  
A tener pesadillas  
En mis sueños.”

- Tanisha C.

Mi máscara es del Santo Domingo

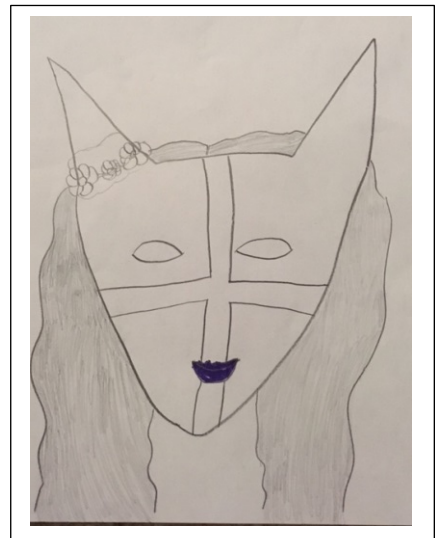
Es un animal

Es un delfín.

Mi máscara tiene muchos detalles de la cultura dominicana.

La bandera dominicana tiene muchos detalles como mi máscara, como el color  
Azul.

- Caroline E.



## **Mi máscara**

Una máscara

¿Qué es una máscara?

Una máscara tiene colores

Una máscara tiene diseños

Una máscara se puede usar para festivales

Una máscara puede representar nuestra cultura

Una máscara se puede hacer con un proyecto de mache de papel.

Una máscara tiene colores que representan mi cultura.

Yo hice mi propia máscara

Mi máscara es de mi cultura

¡Mi cultura es México!

Mi máscara parece esqueleto

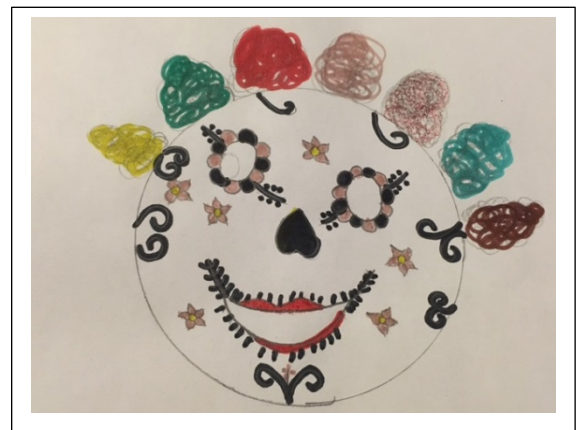
Mi máscara es un esqueleto con diseños

Mi máscara es un esqueleto con diseños y flores

Mi máscara es un esqueleto con diseños, flores, y colores.

Eso es cómo parece mi máscara.

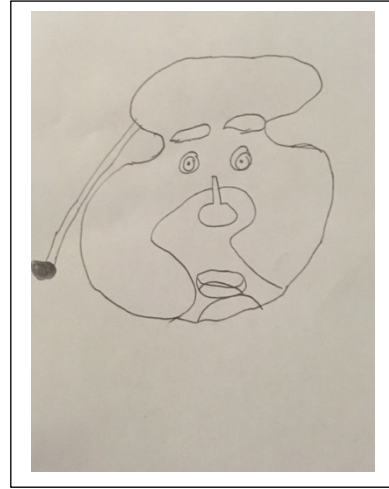
- Daisy D.





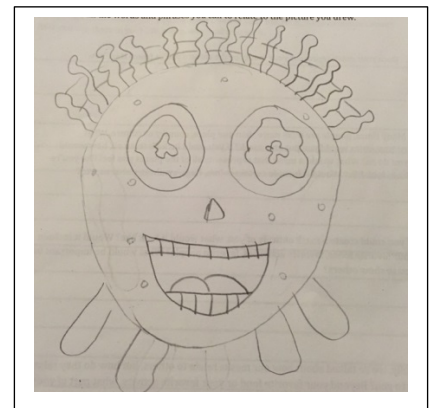
My mask is the chief's sun,  
The chief's sun is respected  
It is an eagle that flies so pretty  
It is the strongest of all birds.  
Its feathers look like the big  
Blue sky, you try to catch them, they disappear  
He is the strongest of them all  
Strongest of them all, No mask  
Is better and none will be better.

- Evan R.



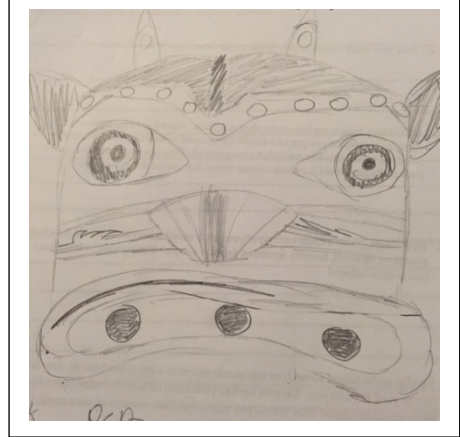
El sol se pone mejor.  
Los árboles sienten el dolor.  
Y los árboles se ponen peor.  
Y el aire se pone de olor.  
Y el tigre viene afuera  
Y la máscara representa a un tigre de muchos colores.

- Elizabeth M.



My mask has flowers  
It even smells like sunflowers  
It is pretty as a garden  
And it looks like the grave we are buried in  
It shows happiness and sadness  
If my mask was a flower  
It would be a rose  
It will grow with the  
Sun and water.

- Ashley F.



Yo tengo un punto negro y corro  
Muy rápido y donde yo vivo hay mucho  
Calor. Yo me gusta correr y también como  
Mucho carne. Yo soy el color del durazno  
Yo soy un predador. Me gusta comer los venados y carne. ¿Quién soy yo?

- Michael J.

## The Lion

My mask is a lion

It is a lion

It can roar like it's hurt

It gets more and more

Things.



Lions are smart but they are crazy

They can get their food

But must protect their family.

- Samira B.

I am Thunder

I am a Storm

I am a Queen

I am the one who will stand out

I am myself

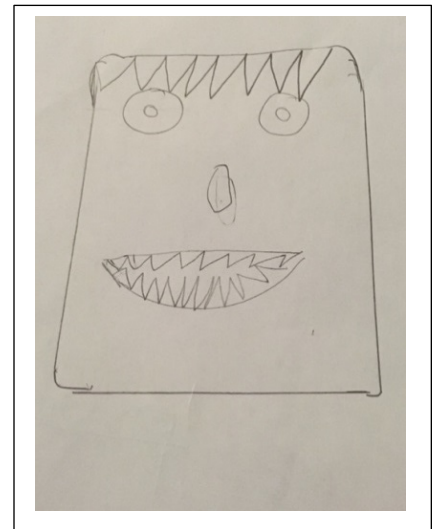
I am my inspiration.

My mask expresses who I am,

How I got inspiration, I got it from

Myself.

- Chelsea D.

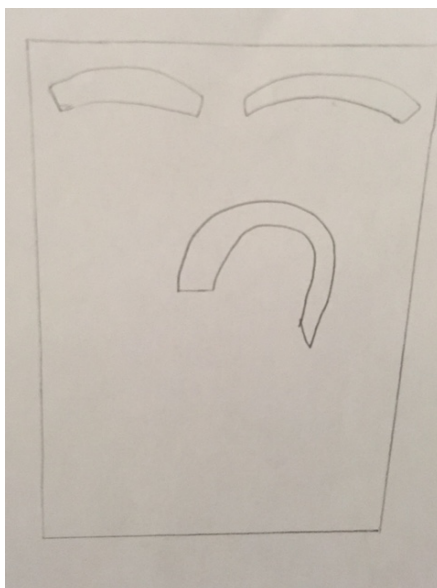


Mi máscara es muy grande  
Tiene una raíz muy grande  
Tiene unos ojos como si estuviera triste  
Su cara está como si estuviera triste.

Es como si estuviera triste  
Pero yo sé que es dulce  
Pero es extraña y es café  
Pareces me asusta.

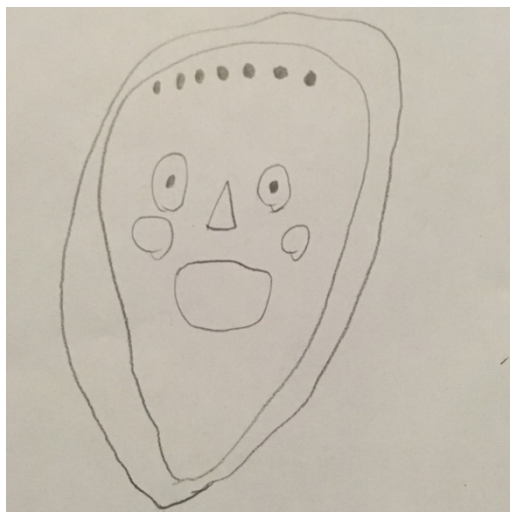
Si mi máscara fuera una persona le gustara comer mucho  
Ella le gusta comer coco  
Obvio no puede faltar durazno  
Ella le gusta las frutas y pastelitos.  
Y su vida completa es la pasta y también café.

- Citlali M.



Las máscaras son muy bonitas  
Son como unas maripositas  
Tienen muchos colores  
Y son los mejores  
Tienen muchos detalles  
Y los colores son como los animales  
Mi nueva escuela es  
Como mi máscara de la República Dominicana es muy belleza  
Y mi máscara es muy interesante.  
Mi máscara es como un cheetah  
Yo quiero correr muy rápido y parecer azul y rojo como mi máscara tan bonita yo  
quiero que mi máscara que grite ruidoso y que la gente tiene miedo a mi máscara.

- Hidauri M.



## **The Mask**

They love the mask  
But i can't breathe through its lies  
They love the mask  
But i can't see through its eyes  
They love the mask  
But i can't speak with its tongue  
They love the mask  
But i can't hear when it's on  
They love the mask  
But i can't live with its heart  
They love the mask  
But i won't be the same if it's torn apart.  
They love the mask  
But it acts up once in a while this i can condone  
They love the mask  
Because it has a life of its own.

- Kevin R.

