

Introduction

This year, the sixth graders in Mary Agramonte's art class studied mask making. They explored a variety of masks from ancient and modern cultures, including those of Japan, Central and South America, and the native peoples of North America. Then, drawing on these models and their own cultural backgrounds, students created masks that reflected their own unique heritage and family story. Some of these masks included elements of national flags, while others reflected the colors, textures and patterns of their countries of origin.

Along with the exploration into mask design, students developed skills of observation and reflection. We studied photographs of ancient ceremonial masks and wrote down whatever we saw or felt when viewing the masks. Translating visual observation into written word is a challenging endeavor, so we utilized writing exercises that helped us capture the experiences of the senses. We also studied poetry by Pablo Neruda, Mary Oliver, and the Kwakiutl people. Many of these poems focused on a single object such as a stew, a hermit crab, or a salmon. As a class, we discussed how word choice and sensory description lead to a fuller description of the particular object and a richer reading experience.

One component of this learning experience was a trip to the American Museum of Natural History and the Hall of Northwest Coast Indians. Here, among other artifacts of the Pacific Northwest native peoples, students studied masks used for festivities, religious ceremonies, coming of age celebrations, and other rites of passage. They imagined who might have created these masks, how they were used, and what the lives of the people who wore them might have been. They took time to draw their favorite masks and note what materials went into making each one. Many of the masks used natural elements like bark and shells and represented animals native to the Pacific Northwest.

Back in the classroom, students reflected on the exercises they'd completed, the poetry we'd read, and the art they'd observed and began crafting poetry of their own. They asked questions, both about their own work and the work of others, and they engaged in peer editing and revision. Some students wrote poems inspired by something they'd seen on their field trip, and some wrote poems that reflected on the masks they'd made. Because P.S. 218 is a dual language school, students were free to write either in Spanish, in English, or in both languages. The result is a dynamic blend of languages, cultures, and mediums of expressions. I hope you enjoy the creative mix of written and visual art in the pages to come.

~ Writer-in-Residence
Samantha Facciolo

A Class Poem

Animal ancient carved from wood
Decorative, monstrous, warring

Eagle

Bear

Killer Whale

Soaring

Flying

Diving

Watchful as an archer

Its stare drawn from the stars and sea

A secret concealed behind eyes black as pitch
Behind a face green and yellow and red

An old man, a young warrior, a wolf with a curved beak,

Pieces of all, part of none

Emerge from the ceremonial smoke

Gold sparks flying from the flames,

The tribe gathers round,

What power and mystery linger there-

In that ancient, brilliant face

Cleaved in two

Half by land, half by sea

Wings spread wide, teeth bared

Bird fish-eagle bear

Brave, strong, proud

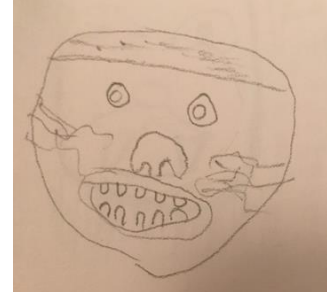
A symbol of fear, a symbol of peace

What do you see?

During our initial writing exercises, students wrote phrases and lines that described the masks we saw during our trip to the American Museum of Natural History. This poem is a compilation of the words they chose, arranged by the visiting Writer in Residence.

Animal ancient,
monstrous, warrior,
Eagle, bear, killer whale,
an ancient warrior with a curved beak.
So powerful like a beast,
destroyed and put back together,
many layers so colorful,
wide and beautiful in its own way.

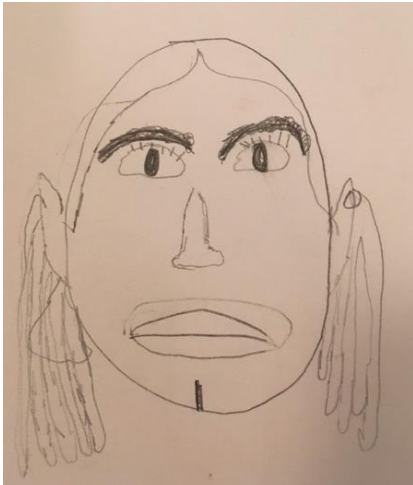
- Imarcy Marmol



Ecuador Mask

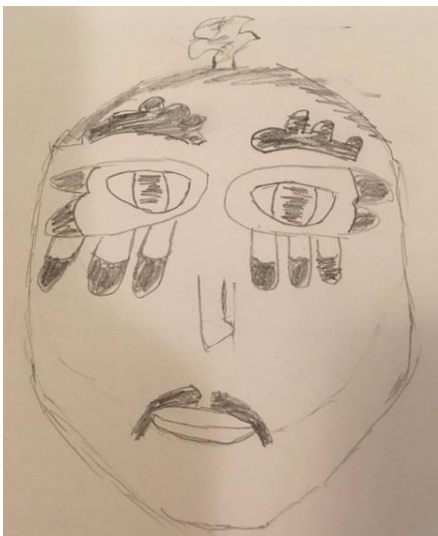
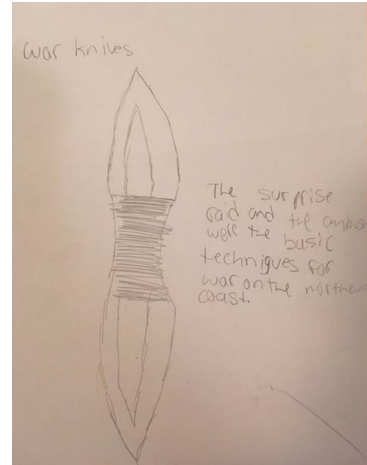
This mask was inspired by Ecuador
With all the red, blue and yellow colors. All these things are facts. Every New Year's
Eve day little children dress up in masks and have fun. People along the Siru River
engage in ceramics and use them to make simple solid human and animal figurines.
Life size masks of hammered gold are buried in tombs of leaders by the llama people
of the Upper Calima River of southwest Colombia. Flat and roller seals and spindle
whorls made of ceramic are produced.

- Jean Angamarca



Mask we make in
Class red and blue
Tape, paper, balloon
Glue, paint, triangle
In the ears it
Makes me feel
Like I'm in the DR.

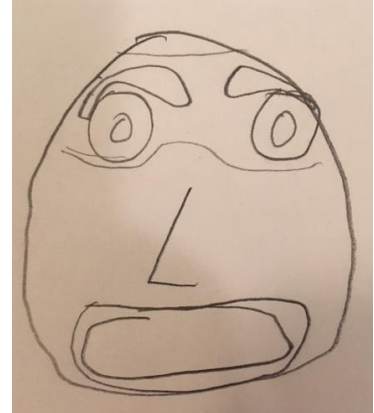
- Mark Smith



Color, colors are shining
Bright as a star I like it
Just like I eat a chocolate
Bar. Colors, colors are shining
Just like a mask it tickles my back
Colors, colors are shining
Just as bright like half by the land
By the sea. Colors, colors are shining
Like if I was playing and if I'm swimming and diving.
- Jessie Jacobo

My mask represents
A war cry when the war
Starts their chieftain does
Something to intimidate us, so
Will I.
They might run away as cowards
Or they will fight with all
Of their might.

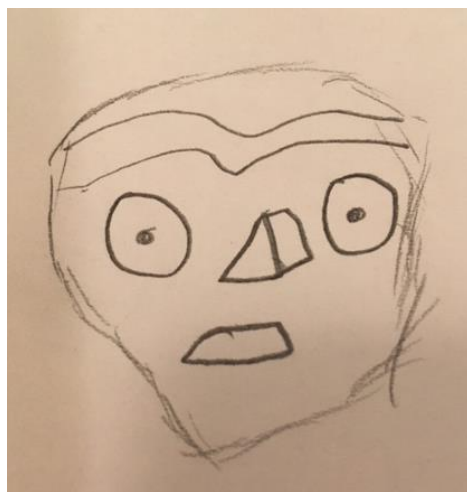
- Jael Perez



Bird Mask

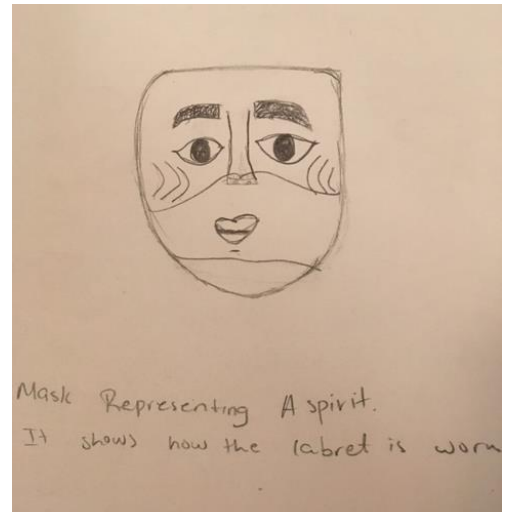
I wanted the bird mask
So I can ask
When was it made
But there is something that looks like a blade
The mask is used for dancing or to scare
With that I can fight a bear
The mask is great
This mask was used millions of years ago.

- Edwin Duran

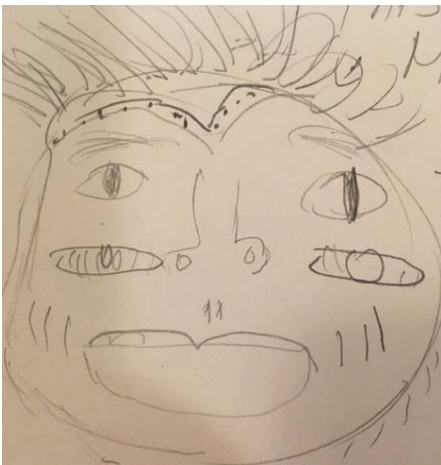


Masks, Masks, Masks
 are all over me
 with big eyes
 crooked faces that
 frighten me.
 Masks, Masks, Masks
 handmade before the 9th century
 Painted with a hint of red, blue, black
 For all souls to see.
 Making little children scared indeed.
 Masks looking like savage critters
 with sharp teeth.
 Spirits lurking away from the
 people in need.
 Running away from droughts and sickness
 spreading like coco seeds.
 Masks Masks Masks.

- Atia Rayta



Mask Representing A spirit.
 It shows how the tabret is worn



- Denisse Perez

Masks are Masks
 I love the color that you have,
 Mask where are you
 Mask lives in a Box.
 Mask, Mask, there you are
 You have beautiful colors. You
 Have eyes, mouth, nose.
 I could see you, I was
 There, but now, I disappeared.
 Good bye, be safe.

Birds

My bird mask,
Can scare people
But never scare
The love that it
Has for itself.
It uses its mask
To scare his predators. And
He does this to
Protect himself. Because
He loves himself.



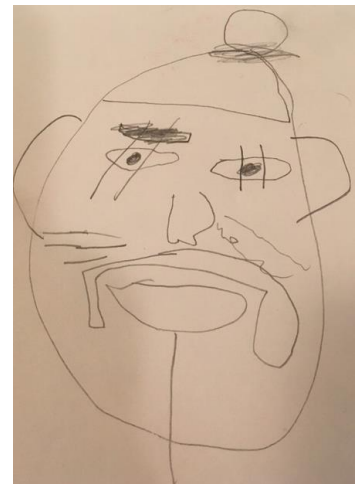
Pájaros

Mi mascara de pájaro
Puede asustar a gente
Pero nunca asusta el
Corazón que tiene para
Mis mismo. Usa su
Mascara para asustar
Sus predadores. Y el
Ase esto para protegerse
Porque se a mismito.

- Rachell Salazar

Mask mask mask
The beautiful mask
Beautiful colors
Beautiful shape
Mask.

- Helmsley Baez



The Healing Bird

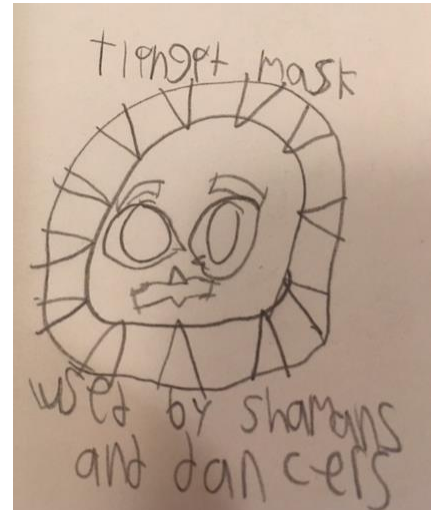
The Tlingit
Its dance of revelation
Heals the joy
Of people
Far and wide.
Its staff
Graceful light
Healing the curses
Of many.
It may look freaky
And smell stinky
Yet it's happily
Helping all.

- Victor Quiñones

Birds of a Feather

The blue jay
Colored
with a great blue
like the ocean
Oh, and the robins!
gracefully flying
like a dance
over the roses
under the rainbow
The predatory howls
and it is brother
the bald eagle
racing
for the cat
The hummingbird
racing a cheetah
Which is faster?
Wings
or
claws?
These birds
and many more
fly together
like siblings
as they say
Birds of a feather.

- Victor Quiñones



I see my imagination

I see shadows in the wall, laughing at me
while I cry.

I see a girl looking through my soul, black
as her hair.

I hear someone calling my name it is fading
away.

I realized that everything I saw
was my imagination.

Veo mi imaginación

Yo veo sombras en el pared, riendo de mi
mientras yo lloro

Yo veo a una niña mirando a través de mi
alma negra.

Escucho alguien que dice mi nombre se esta
Desvaneciendo.

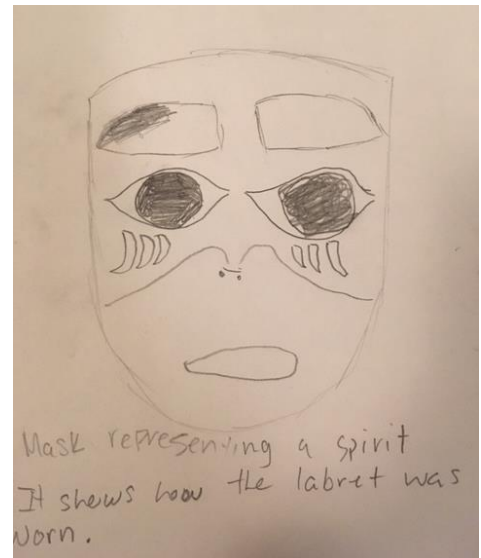
Mi de cuenta de que todo lo que veía era
mi imaginación.

- Jarely Rosales

Colors

A mask bursting with colors
As bright as a rainbow
Its eyes staring at your dark soul
The colors are low
Colors everywhere in the class.

- Jasmine Molina

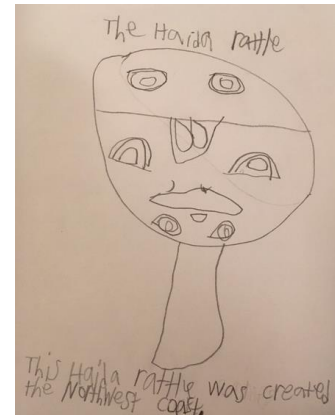
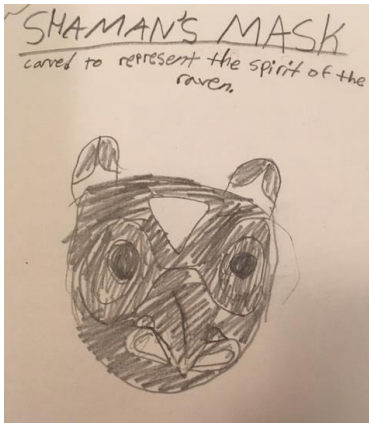


The Two Different Eagles' Lives

An eagle can fly
An eagle is strong
An eagle is powerful and wonderful for all
An eagle is the very one creature that is always brave in the sky
It is a great creature
It always, always tries its best
No matter the problem it wouldn't ever give up.

I can tell all eagles are like this
But if there ever existed a lazy eagle
I'm sure the eagle would be very different
That eagle would be fragile
That eagle would be frightened
That eagle would always give up
And that eagle would be the worst eagle that was ever born.

- Florelena Flores Gonzalez



The mask is a maraca
Called the Haida rattle.

It is from a coast
The Northwest Coast.

It is rare
And special.

I will shake with this rattle.

- Daniel Alvarado Ortiz

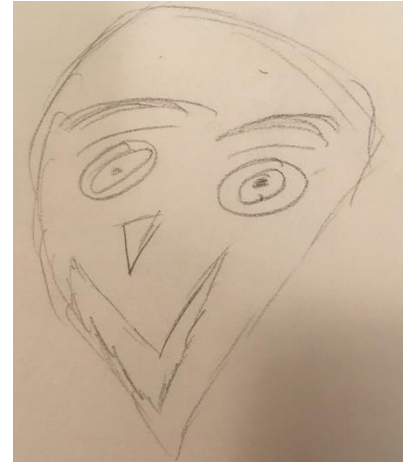
Mask, mask, mask, masks
Are cool so are you!

Masks are awesome like the
Earth the earth is great
Just like you!

Yo amo las mascararas.
Son bonitas, como tu.

Me gustan las mascararas
Me gusta el mundo el
Mundo es bonito como
Tu!

- Isaac Aquino



The mask can be big, small, colorful
it can be red like a building
it can be under water
it is always
under a ceiling and I like the
mask and you should too.
- Alyson Colon

La mascara es brillante, la mascara es muy bonita, la mascara es una cara,
La mascara es mía y también tuyo,
La mascara es dinero,
La mascara es para mis papas.

- Rudy Gutierrez



Yo soy aquí para hacer un mascara,
Yo soy aquí para representar mi país,
Yo soy aquí para representa mi familia
Me voy a lograr mi objetivo.
El mascara es azul
El mascara es blanco
Ahora es un bonito mascara
Va ser famoso
Yo viene a representar mi familia.

I am here to make a mask,
I am here to represent my country,
I am here to make my family proud,
And I will achieve my goal,
The mask was blue
The mask was white
Now it's a beautiful design
That will be world wide
So I represent my country.

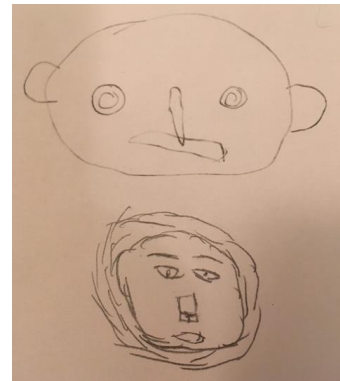
- Joel Larreinaga

Mi mascara es
Bonita como yo
Se ve como tu
Te duerme con
Los angelitos
Que viene.

Las mascaras tienen
Muchos colores como
Un arbolito de la Navidad.

The mask is
So blue it makes
Me think of the
Sky just like the
Red mask.

The colorful masks
Are so pretty because
They come from
The rainbow masks.
- Mannely Lebron



My mask is made for my boo,
Even though she can't see it
That's my cue
Listen my baby girl is cute
My mask is white and blue.

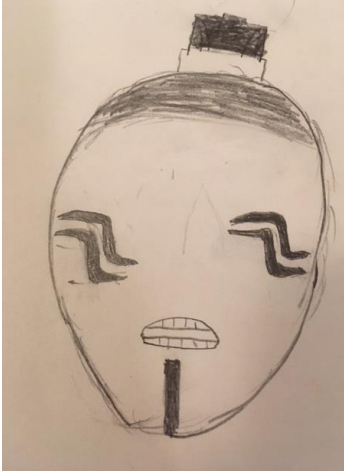
- Yhordalys Matos

It looks like some Demon
It has red,
blue,
yellow,
Colorful
Many different colors
How did they use these masks
It was war
A lot of culture, I see it now.

Se parece como un demonio
Es rojo,
Azul,
Amarillo,
Colorado
Muchos colores distintos
Como lo hicieron
Era una Guerra?
Mucha cultura
Lo veo ahora.

- Richeiny Pimentel





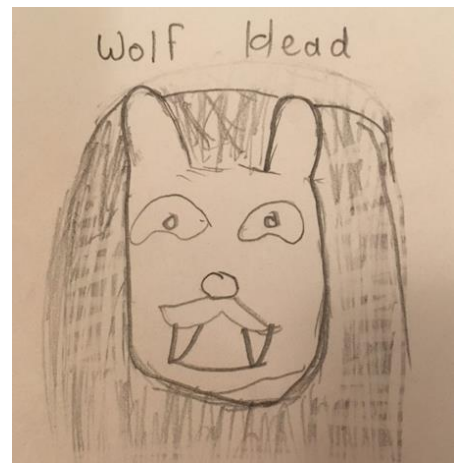
Mexico
My mask is of
Día de los muertos
I make you food
And I'm in a bad mood
Because I miss you
I know you don't hear
Me but do you too?
- Alan Ramirez

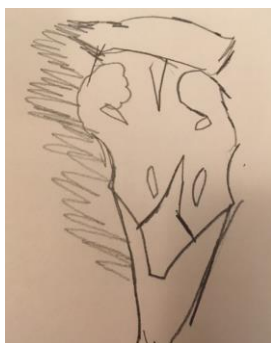
Mi mascara

Mi mascara es bonita como el mar
Mi mascara es colorado como un flor
Rojo, Morado, Azul
Pintura todo lados como fuego
Decoraciones aquí y allí
Decoraciones es un desastre
Y eso es parte de la arte.

My Mask

My mask is beautiful as the sea
My mask is colorful as a flower.
Paint, red, blue, purple
Paint everywhere as fire
Decoration here and there
Decoration is a mess
And that's the purpose of art.
- Jennifer Torres





Student Contributors

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