Greek theatre

Part 3 - Masks

Duration: 1 week

Driving question

How and why were masks used in ancient Greek theatre?

Overview

Through theoretical and practical tasks students develop an understanding of the purpose of masks in ancient Greek theatre, an understanding of masks as a tool to amplify character and emotions and a foundational knowledge of the rules of masked performance.

| Stage 4 outcomes | Stage 5 outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| A student: | A student: |
| 4.2.2 experiments with performance spaces and production elements appropriate to purpose and audience | 5.2.2 selects and uses performance spaces, theatre conventions and production elements appropriate to purpose and audience |
| 4.2.3 explores and uses aspects of dramatic forms, performance styles, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning | 5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning |
| 4.3.1 identifies and describes elements of drama, dramatic forms, performance styles, techniques and conventions in drama | 5.3.1 responds to, reflects on and evaluates elements of drama, dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques and theatrical conventions |

[Drama 7-10 Syllabus](http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/drama-7-10-syllabus) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003.

Content

This lesson sequence provides an introduction to, and practical exploration of, masked performance in the context of Greek theatre. Masks were used to amplify characters and emotions and enabled performers to move between characters with ease.

Students review the elements of design and principles of composition to guide their understanding of the design process. They are guided practically through the process of ‘masking up’.

|  |
| --- |
| Cross-curriculum content and key competencies |
| Information and communication technology |
| Gender |
| Literacy |

Embedded elements of drama

* Role & Character
* Symbol
* Dramatic Meaning
* Audience Engagement

Assessment

All activities require students to demonstrate their learning and are all assessment for learning activities.

Teaching and learning activities

Reading task

Students will:

1. review slides 2-3 of the Greek theatre – masks PowerPoint and summarise the key points in their logbooks.
2. as a class, discuss why the masks might have been made from all natural materials and the impacts this had on the environment.

Montage mash-up

Students will:

* review slides 4-5 and discuss the origins of the Greek word ‘persona’ meaning mask. Identify the link to the contemporary meaning of the word persona and personae
* review the images of masks provide and discuss how character is communicated within these masks. Highlight the following:
  + lines
  + shapes (eyes, mouth, nose)
  + facial expression
  + the intricacy of work (high status versus low status)
  + angle of eyes (angled up or down to communicate status)
* summarise how masks communicate character.

Four emotions activity

1. Students work in pairs and experiment with how their facial expression and facial features communicate characters and emotions. They might choose to take photos of their face expressing a specific emotion (anger, happiness, sadness) and analyse the lines and shapes their face makes
2. Students then decide upon four facial expressions that will provide the basis for their masks design
3. Students create four designs based on four emotions using the Four Emotions handout.

Creating masks

1. As per slide 7, students draw bigger versions of two of their masks on cardboard and create wearable masks that will be used in the remaining tasks.
2. Students are encouraged to consider how they can exaggerate line, colour and shape to make their character/emotion clearer for the audience.
3. To extend students’ skills, introduce them to the [Elements of Design and Principles of Composition](http://prezi.com/ckjqdrjvvkz7/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy) using the Prezi provided and ask them to justify their choices using this framework.

Read and summarise

Students will:

* review slide eight and summarise the key information
* discuss as a class, why these rules are in place and the impact they have for audience engagement.

Masking-up

The teacher guides students through the process of ‘masking up’ by outlined on slide nine. Through this process it is beneficial to segment instructions, asking students to consider how the masks changes different parts of their body. During this process they might ask the following questions:

* how does the ask change the way your head is sitting on your shoulders?
* how does the mask change the shape of your shoulder?
* how does the mask change the shape of your spine?
* how does the mask change the position of your pelvis in relation to the rest of your body?

It is beneficial to provide prompting questions that guide student’s physicality from head-to-toe as students are encouraged to let the character *bleed* down their body. When unmasking, students reverse this process and return to a neutral state.

Reflection

Students will:

* respond to the reflective tasks in their logbooks:
  + what went well?
  + what did not work?
  + how could you improve it next time?
* encourage students to use their workshop experiences to support their findings.

Differentiation

Extension

Students could:

* understand the Elements of Design and Principles of Composition and use them to justify the design choices made when designing their mask
* select and create one mask using the Paper-Mache
* create and design masks for Beauty and the Beast chorus performance outlined in the KASCA lesson sequence Greek Theatre - Chorus.

Life skills

| Life skills Outcomes |
| --- |
| A student: |
| LS 2.1 explores dramatic forms and theatrical conventions |
| LS 3.2 identifies and responds to the elements of drama or theatre in performances. |

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Students could:

* create masks using the mask scaffold provided that focus on binary emotions such as happy and sad
* students verbally discuss how masks are used to communicate feelings.

Evaluate

Feedback is formative during the lessons.

Reference list and resources

Access to the Elements of Design and Principles of Composition Prezi

Access to the KASCA lesson sequence Greek Theatre - Chorus

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Four Emotions handout

Greek Theatre – Masks PowerPoint