

Running the Personality Mask Project

1. When you hand out the masks to your students, indicate to them that they may put anything they want on the front of the mask that describes them. Things about them which are private may be put on the inside of the mask.

2. Water color paints don't take very well to the surface of the plastic masks. If students want to use them, advise them to spray the mask with lacquer first.

3. Acrylic paints work well on the masks.

4. Permanent Magic Markers work well on the masks.

5. White glue works well to adhere things like feathers, sequins and glitter.

6. Most spray paints work well on the masks.

7. Most teachers tell their students to go and buy paints in groups. By doing this they can share their paints.

8. Some teachers orchestrate this by putting students in groups of three or four.

9. When students are done with their masks, many teachers have them sit in a chair in the front of the room and explain what they have put on their mask.

10. Most teachers have each student write up a summary of what they have put on their mask.

Kara Frost Clapp of Charles O'Dickerson High School displayed her student's masks in the following way:

In a showcase in the library Kara put all the finished masks on display. Next to each mask she placed a number. Viewers could then get a matching card from the librarian to see if they could match up the names with the masks. The librarian had the answer key.

Please Hear What I am not Saying

(Author Unknown)
(Laboriously typed by Ilyse Lifton- idl2@Lehigh.edu),

Don't be fooled by me.
Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
For I wear a mask, a thousand
masks, masks that I'm afraid to
takeoff,
 and none of them is me.
Pretending is an art that's second nature with, me,
But don't be fooled.
I give you the impression that I'm secure,
that all is sunny and unruffled with me,
 within as well as without,
that confidence is my name and
coolness my game,
that the water's calm and I'm in
command, and that I need no one.
 But don't believe me.
My surface may seem smooth but my surface is my mask,
ever-varying and ever-concealing.
 Beneath lies no complacency.
 Beneath lies confusion and fear and
aloneness. But I hide this. I don't want
anybody to know it.

I panic at the thought of my weakness
And fear being exposed.
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind,
a nonchalant sophisticated facade,
to help me pretend,
to shield me from the glance that knows:
But such a glance is precisely my salvation.
My only hope and I know it.
That is, if it's followed by acceptance,
if it's followed by love.
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself,
from my own self- built prison walls,
from the barriers I so painstakingly erect.
It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't assure
myself that I'm really worth something.

But I don't tell you this. I don't dare. I'm afraid to.
I'm afraid your glance will not be followed by acceptance,
will not be followed by love,
I'm afraid you'll think less of me, that you'll laugh,
and your laugh would kill me.
I'm afraid that deep-down I'm nothing, that I'm just no
good.
and that you will see this and reject me.

So I play my game, my desperate pretending game, with
a facade of assurance without
and a trembling child within.
So begins the glittering but empty parade of masks,
and my life becomes a front.
I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk. I tell
you everything that's really nothing,
and nothing of what's really everything,
of what's crying within me.
So when I'm going through my routine, do
not be fooled by what I'm saying.

Please listen carefully and try to hear what I'm not
saying, what I'd like to be able to say,
what for survival I need to say ,
but what I can't say.

I don't like to hide.
I don't like to play superficial phony games.
I want to stop playing them.
I want to be genuine, and spontaneous and me,
but you've got to help me.
You've got to hold out your hand,
even when that's the last thing I seem to want.
Only you can wipe away from my eyes
the blank stare of the breathing dead.
Only you can call me into aliveness.
Each time you're kind and gentle and encouraging,
each time you try to understand! because you really care,
my heart begins to grow wings,
very small wings, very feeble wings,
but wings!
With your power to touch me into feeling.
You can breathe life into me.
I want you to know that.

I want you to know how important you are to me, how you
can be a creator-an honest- to God creator of the person
that is me,

if you choose to.
You alone can break down the wall behind which I
tremble,
You alone can release me from my shadow-world of panic
and uncertainty, from my lonely prison,
if you choose to.
Please choose to. Do not pass me by.
It will not be easy for you.

A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.
The nearer you approach to me
The blinder I may strike back.
It's irrational, but despite what the books say about man,
Often I am irrational.
I fight against the very thing that I cry out for.
But I am told that love is stronger than strong walls,
And in this lies my hope.
Please try to beat down those walls
With firm hands,
But with gentle hands,
For a child is sensitive.

Who am I, you may wonder?
I am someone you know very well.
For I am every man you meet
And I am every woman you meet.

Both Erikson and Marcia indicated that the most important issue in adolescence is the search for identity. Adolescents spend great amounts of time trying to figure out who they are. They all have lots of different identities: vocational, familial, relational, political, religious, sexual and others. The personality mask project allows them to examine their various identities. Teachers who have run this project have reported to us that it is the most popular thing they do in their courses. In fact, teachers have said that some kids sign up for their course simply because they know they will be involved in the mask project!!

Here is what Brenda Harrison @ Phillips High School in Phillips, Wisconsin does with the masks.

I use this project in my Child & Adolescent Psychology class. Attached is the information on Marcia's four Identity Status' and my grade sheet. I use this with Erikson's developmental theory on identity development. I have the students complete the mask and then write a short paper on which of the four identity status' they are at and the symbolism they used on their mask and why. I then have them make a short presentation to the class. I have had great feedback from this project! it is actually the final activity for the class.

Marcia's Adolescent Identity Status Categories

Identity Status	Characteristics	Example
Identity Moratorium	<p>Searching for identity</p> <p>Exploring various alternatives</p> <p>Delay making commitments</p>	<p>"I don't know what I want to do when I graduate, so I'm happy to apply to college and for jobs. Then I'll decide which would be best for me."</p>
Identity Foreclosure	<p>Conforming</p> <p>Accepting identity and values from childhood</p> <p>Choosing to identify with others rather than self</p> <p>Making commitments and adopting plans without self-examination</p> <p>Becoming inflexible</p>	<p>"Everyone in my family goes into military after high school, so that's what I'm planning to do."</p>
Identity Diffusion	<p>Making no commitment</p> <p>Doing no soul-searching</p> <p>Wandering without goals</p> <p>Becoming angry and rebellious</p>	<p>"I really have no idea what I'll do after graduation. I'll just have to see what happens."</p>
Identity Achievement	<p>Exploring options</p> <p>Committing self to direction in life and occupation</p> <p>Finding own identity</p>	<p>"I'm going to start college in the fall. My parents wanted me to go into the family business after graduation, but I decided that what I really want to do is go to school and become a scientist."</p>

Figure 11.2 By studying the ways in which teenagers handle commitment and cope with adolescent identity crisis, psychologist James Marcia identified four adolescent identity status categories.

Identity Mask
Based on the Four Adolescent Identity Status Categories
Child & Adolescent Psychology

Name

Possible Points

Your Score

Mask (40 points)

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Complete and expressive use of symbolism | 30 pts. |
| 2. Class time spent efficiently | 10 pts. |

Paper (40 points) based on Identity Status Categories

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Style
(Writing, Complete Sentences, Grammar, Spelling & Thoroughness) | 10 pts. |
| 2. How well summarized Explanation of symbolism used | 15 pts. |
| 3. Identity Status clear and explained | 15pts. |

Presentation (20 points)

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Poise of presentation
(Did you speak loud and clearly?) | 10 pts. |
| 2. How well explained
(Symbolism, Identity) | 10 pts. |

Grand Total Possible 100 pts.