The Masks We Wear

in conjunction with “Things Fall Apart” by Chinua Achebe

English 2- World Literature
10th Grade

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Deep Hope for World Literature:

Embracing all God’s people by engaging with diverse literature and communicating with truth.

Deep Hope for The Masks We Wear:

Exploring how we connect with each other and embracing our true identities in Christ.
Essential Learning Targets:

• I can understand the cultural and spiritual significance of masks in *Things Fall Apart*.
• I can analyze the figurative meaning of “putting on a mask” and how this applies to me.
• I can create a visual representation of the mask I put on with symbolism and intentional choices.
• I can utilize Scripture to speak truth to myself and to others.
Habit(s) of Learning:

**Curious Thinker**- We are eager to embrace God’s word and how it applies to us.

**Courageous Designers**- We are brave in our creative choices and how we embrace vulnerability and honesty as a way to connect with others.
See God’s Story:

I want students to see:

- we’re similar more than we’re different, and we are all created in His image.
- the way we conform to the world is not the way God intended us to live.
- what the enemy says of us is not true, but what God says IS.
- there is hope in what God says of us, and in the guidance He gives us.
## See God’s Story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Redemption</th>
<th>Restoration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are all created with different gifts, but by the same God (1 Cor. 12:4-7).</td>
<td>We hide parts of ourselves for multiple reasons, and tell ourselves “lies” (John 10:10).</td>
<td>Christ’s redemption has already freed us from those lies (Isaiah 44:22).</td>
<td>We can be refreshed and strengthened by His word, and rest in His truth (1 Peter 5:10).</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Front of mask: what we show to others)</td>
<td>(Inside of mask: what we do not show others)</td>
<td>(Scripture that speaks against words on the inside of mask)</td>
<td>(Reflection)</td>
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Through this project, students are embracing the journey we are all on together: as people who are fallen, as humans with shared experiences, and as Christ-seekers on a lifelong journey in pursuit of Him.
Throughlines:

Throughline #1: **Idolatry Discerning**

- Students will understand that when other 'things' are more important to us than our relationship with God, they become idols.
- Students will recognize that the some of things they reflect outwardly is a product of their idols.

Throughline #2: **Image Reflectors**

- Through reflection, students will understand their image in Christ and why it is necessary to reflect that image to others.
Formational Learning Experience:

Real needs:
Combatting the lies the enemy tells us

Real people:
Ourselves! and the people in our lives

Real work:
Studying God’s Word so that we are equipped with the right Scripture in the right moment.
I invited students into this activity by highlighting the cultural uses of masks in our anchor text, countries around the world, and figuratively. I displayed an example mask I created for the main character before introducing the project, and they were eager to make their own!

The project timed up really well with that week’s worship chapel, where we attacked the lies of the enemy with God’s Word. I used that chapel as inspiration to begin this project by leading my students in an analysis of Lauren Daigle’s “You Say.” It was an easy connection!

The Masks We Wear

First Five:
Think about a time when you have pretended to be something that you are not, or when you have hidden your true feelings. Why did you choose to hide a part of your identity?

Intro:
In Things Fall Apart, masks are used during spiritual, reflective times. When the egwugwu appear, we know that villagers are behind the masks, but the tribe believes them to be incarnations of the spirits themselves, and so the spirits are respected and their advice is followed carefully. For centuries, various cultures have used masks as a way to express individual and group identity, and to signify hidden sides of people and deities. In some cultures, masks are an important part of spiritual rituals; in other cultures they are part of national traditions such as celebrations of war or independence, or in life-cycle events such as weddings and funerals.

Considering cultural uses, masks provide a way to visually represent an answer to the question, “Who am I?” Figuratively speaking, people wear masks all of the time. We choose what we show to the world, and what to conceal. By reflecting on the parts of ourselves we make known, the parts we keep hidden, and what God says about us, we can acknowledge our true identities in Christ and grow into people who are more likely to share our true selves and Himself with the world. What masks are you putting on?
Although I nurtured students throughout this project by breaking down the project into steps and using warm and cool feedback, they truly nurtured each other. They helped each other recognize their strengths, connected over their shared struggles, and then offered genuine words of encouragement.
My students were empowered to be honest with themselves and use Scripture in their daily lives. God’s Word speaks to us NOW- in this season of life, whatever that may be.
Student Reflections:

**Student #1:**
I split the mouth into two colors to show that I’m not always perfect. Not everything I say will always be nice because I am human and unfortunately that means that I will still judge and not say the nicest things. Pink to show the good things I say, and brown to show the not so good. I believe that the outside of the mask really represents me and the qualities I have.

One word I wrote on the inside is fear. I’m afraid of many things, but the fear of losing someone/something is definitely something I struggle with. I just don’t outwardly share that. Isaiah 41:10 says “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” I should find peace in knowing that.

Overall this mask project has made me learn a lot about myself. It has shown me that it’s okay to be who I am because everyone is different. I learned how all over the place I am, but that it’s okay to be all over the place. I also learned that there are a lot of positives about myself that I didn’t necessarily realize before. Lastly, and most importantly, I learned that it’s okay to show who I really am!

**Student #2:**
I have learned that there are a lot of good traits and characteristics that I possess and can help me do something on this earth. However, I have also learned there are a lot of things I can improve on like anybody, such as my confidence, opinions, and God-focusness. I want to be seen as more intelligent which I feel as though I hide at times and I conform to the modern day culture which can be very ignorant and intelligence depriving. I also want to be seen as a stronger person spiritually, mentally, as well as physically so I am not a pushover that can be very easily influenced and not well rooted in my own views and beliefs.

**Student #3:**
I used the “owuo atwedee” tribal pattern because it represents morality. I decided to use this pattern because I find it important for me to discern what is right and wrong according to the eyes of God even though I am not perfect and fail often.

The words inside my mask represent what I am hiding. One I included is “judgemental.” Matthew 7:3 states, “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” Another word I included is “suffering.” Romans 5:3 says, “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.” My final word is “diligent.” Proverbs 8:17 claims, “(God) I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.”

Through this process of creating a mask that represents me, I have learned a bit more about myself. I have learned that I want to live for Christ and do whatever He has planned for me. I have also learned that I need to start observing when I am judgemental or disobedient. To fight this sin I can pray to God, so that He will help fight my battles with me. Another thing that I have realized is that it is impossible for me to be perfect with all the flaws that I have. This has allowed me to really be thankful for God’s gift of mercy. Something that I want people to know about me is that I truly care about the people around me and that I want them to know Christ. The person I really am is a man in need of a Savior, wanting to do the will of God, not on my own, but through Christ alone.
Teacher Reflections:

I’ve led students through designing a mask before, but never with this assignment. It went tremendously well!

Students were engaged and found it equally challenging and exciting to be vulnerable and honest with themselves through this assignment. Their reflections really helped me recognize how transformative this project was for them—cue the tears!

Through this assignment they have understood Scripture as a tool to help combat obstacles in the lives of themselves and those around them, as well as developed empathy for their peers through their shared experiences.