

No. 52300

## Shakespeare Masks

These fanciful masks, inspired by the classic plays of William Shakespeare, can be the base of any theater production, dramatic play or reenactment! Fashioned in the Elizabethan, Venetian and Carnival styles of Shakespearean literature, these masks will serve as inspiration for writing your own plays and acting them out.

### Masks in Shakespeare's Theater

Masks were worn in many of the plays performed during Shakespeare's time, for practical reasons as well as poetic ones! Theater troupes were quite small, and in the day of Shakespeare, one person typically played many roles. The masks helped the actors change character quickly and believably. Without the mask, it might have been difficult to determine which character an actor was portraying at the time. Another theory is that the theater troupes were often all male, and masks and costumes were required to portray female characters.

From a poetic or literary perspective, masks symbolize mystery or deceit. A few of Shakespeare's plays that incorporate masks include:

**Romeo and Juliet** – Perhaps the most well-known and often studied of his plays, Romeo and Juliet meet by chance at a masquerade ball!

**Much Ado About Nothing** – Also largely staged at a masquerade ball, the masks serve as a metaphor for hiding our identity and our feelings!

**A Midsummer Night's Dream** – This fanciful play is about fairies and animal characters! The 'donkey' masks in your set are a likeness of the character "Bottom" who was transformed by magic into a donkey!

Using Shakespeare Masks with a younger age group is a wonderful way to begin introducing English Literature and this historical era in a fun and light-hearted manner.

Here are some great ideas for your masks:

Decorate and embellish the masks with paint, markers, feathers, glitter, craft papers or a wide array of collage materials. Use string or yarn through the punched holes at the sides of the masks, or attach to a stick decorated with ribbons in the true style of Shakespeare's masquerade balls!

•Invite students to a classroom masquerade ball!  
Encourage the children to choose their design and decorate it with a variety of materials. Wear the masks



at an end-of-the-year celebration.

•Get creative and put on a play! After decorating the masks, ask the children to make up a script and act it out using the masks.

•Use the masks as a creative writing exercise. Help the children improve their written and verbal communication skills by asking them to tell their story while staying in character.

Writing and acting out stories helps meet National Language Arts Standards:

1. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

2. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

