

# Mexican “Tona” Animal Masks

In Mexico, masks are an important part of Folk Art. According to a pre-Columbian legend, each person shares a common destiny with an animal that matches their personality and their life experiences. The animal is called that person’s “Tona”.

Have students select an animal with traits they can identify with and recognize in themselves. Examples: a child who likes to sing could have a bird tona; a fast runner could have a cheetah tona; a basketball player might identify with the leap of a frog or the height of a giraffe. They will create a mask that will retain some human features, but take on the life of the animal. This project will link with personal identification and Mexican Folk Art cultural studies.

## Grade Levels K-4

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

## Process

1. Using a human face form will require the most imagination, as students will be required to add features to a base common throughout the class. Begin by rolling Model Magic out into about 1/8" thickness. Drape over face form and use fingers to gently press it around features. The mask does not need to cover the entire form or mold to the human features exactly. Remind students that their mask will have characteristics of both human and animal features. Use scissors to trim away excess.
2. Use scraps to add features that define the chosen animal: beak, horns, snout, etc. With clay tool set, open small eye and breathing holes. These do not necessarily need to match the openings on the face form. Create holes at



## Materials

Plastic Mask forms, either [Human Face](#) (61152-1004) or [Animal Face](#) (61129-1001), one per student

[Crayola® Model Magic® Naturals](#), 2-lb bucket (33214-1008), each mask will need approximately 2-oz

[Rolling pin, 8"](#) (30345-1008), share one between four students

[Boxwood Clay Tools](#) (30304-1069), share three 10-tool sets across classroom

[Blick Premium Grade Tempera](#) (00011-), assorted colors

[Royal Softgrip Nylon Brushes](#) (06031-0729), share one 72-piece set across classroom

[Blick White School Glue](#), (23872-1065) share an 8-oz bottle between two students

[Acme® Junior Scissors](#) (57058-1015), one per student

Optional Materials for Embellishment  
[Natural Feather Assortment](#) (61432-1005)

[Caron® 4-Ply Acrylic Yarn](#), black (65226-2000), Taupe (65226-8300) and Off-White (65226-1580)

[Beadalon® Elasticity Cord](#), 1.0mm (60631-1010), cut to 14" pieces

## Process, continued

the side of the mask for tie-on. Allow Model Magic to dry while on the form.

3. Remove the mask from the form and paint fur, scales, spots and stripes with tempera colors. Glue on feathers, raffia and yarn. Create paper add-ons such as wings or fins and glue onto the sides of the mask.
4. Knot elastic cord through tie-one holes on the sides of the mask and carefully stretch to fit over head.

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## National Standards

**Content Standard #3** — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

**K-4** Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning

**Content Standard #4** — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

**K-4** Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places

**Content Standard #5** — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

**K-4** Students describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific artworks