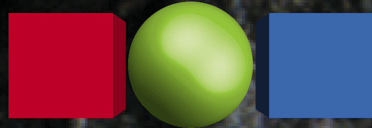

Middle Level Learning™

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A Treasured Island

Human and Geographic Interaction on Cumberland

Robert L. Stevens and Julia A. Celebi

Cumberland Island National Seashore, located off southern Georgia and northern Florida, is one of the southernmost barrier islands along the Atlantic seaboard. Where these barrier islands run along the coast of Georgia, they are known collectively as the Sea Islands. Cumberland Island, eighteen miles long and three miles wide, is composed of five natural ecosystems: (1) fresh water sloughs, (2) salt water marsh, (3) maritime forest, (4) dune system, and (5) the beach.

Cumberland Island has supported human habitation for at least two thousand years. The list of people connected with its history includes its first known inhabitants, the Timucua Indians; Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto; French explorer Jean Ribault; James Oglethorpe, founder of the English settlement at Savannah; General Nathaniel Greene of the American Revolution, and his wife, Caty; Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin; planter Robert Stafford; and members of the Carnegie steel family.

Many eras of development in our nation's history are reflected on Cumberland Island, making it a good model for students to investigate both historical and contemporary human interactions with the environment. This article will use a theme from the National Geography Standards as a framework for understanding the human actions that have combined with geographical factors to shape Cumberland's history. Geography Standard 14, "How Human Activity Modifies the Physical Environment," states:

> Human adaptation to and modification of physical systems are influenced by the geographical context in which people live, their understanding of that context, and their technological ability and inclination to modify their physical environment. To survive, people depend on their physical environment. They adapt to it and modify it to suit their changing need for things such as food, clothing, water, shelter, energy, and recreational facilities. In meeting their needs, they bring knowledge and technology to bear on physical systems.[1]

The history of Cumberland Island can be organized into five eras of human settlement, during which groups modified the landscape in accordance with their different needs and technologies. This article will look at the five eras, with special attention to the development of Cumberland Island as a national seashore. It will also examine a contemporary dilemma of historical and environmental preservation, whose solution will itself become part of the island's history.

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

Library of Congress

Ribault's expedition enters the mouth of St. Jean's River in 1562.

The five eras of settlement are:

- Prehistory to Early European Contact
- European Colonial Occupation
- The Plantation Era
- The Carnegie Era
- Cumberland Island National Seashore

Prehistory to Early European Contact

Archeological evidence shows that Cumberland Island was populated as early as 2,000 B. C. The Atlantic on the east, and estuaries and marshes on the west, provided a rich source of food for island dwellers. The early inhabitants about whom most is known were the Timucua Indians, part of the Muskhogean linguistic group that occupied the region extending north from the St. John's River in Florida to the southern coast of Georgia.

The Saltwater Timucua on Cumberland were a fishing-hunting-gathering society. Artifacts from their middens (oyster refuse heaps) include the bones of raccoons, opossums, mink, rice rat, white tail deer, black bear, gray squirrels, and—most plentiful of all—rabbits. The Timucua also gathered native plants, including oak and hickory nuts, persimmons, grapes, and black cherries that thrived in the forests. And, they grew a number of crops—maize, beans, pumpkins, gourds, cucumbers, citrons, and peas—around their houses. The technology of the Timucua included weirs and spears for fishing, and wooden spades, mattocks (a tool similar to a hoe), and digging sticks for cultivation.

The Timucua made contact with Europeans soon after the arrival of Columbus in the Americas. In 1562, the French explorers Jean Ribault and Rene de Laudonnière colonized the island, followed soon after by the Spanish. Both French explorers and Spanish missionaries kept accounts of these initial contacts and—though their observations are sometimes conflicting and always viewed from a European perspective—they do provide insights into how the Timucua lived. Since the Timucua allied themselves with the French in the emerging competition for the island, French accounts of them are more favorable than those written by Spaniards.

"After we tarried, we entered and viewed the country there about, which is the fairest, fruitfulliest and pleasantest in all the world," wrote Jean Ribault of his explorations.[2] Laudonnière observed about the Timucua "…that the women were as agile as the men and big, of the same color, painted just like the men, and strong swimmers, capable of crossing a large river while holding an infant out of the water with one hand, and equally adapted at climbing the highest trees."[3]

Despite the European incursions, the Timucua culture lasted until 1650, when two events came together to destroy them. One was a "pestilence" that caused thousands of coastal Indians to sicken and die. The other was attack by the Yamasse Indians who, after being displaced by English settlers to the north, pressed southward against the weakened and less aggressive Timucua. Despite many centuries of island occupation, Timucua culture had little lasting impact on the environment of Cumberland.

European Colonial Occupation

From the time of initial contact, both the French and Spanish built forts and missions on the island, but it was the latter who prevailed. Spanish domination of Cumberland Island and East Florida lasted until 1736, when James Oglethorpe—founder of the English colony in Georgia—began launching campaigns against thm.

After Oglethorpe built Fort St. Andrew at the north end of Cumberland, battles see-sawed back and forth until 1742, when the Spanish were driven out and the region became neutral territory. Without the force of either Spanish or English law, the forts fell into disuse and the area became a refuge for criminals and dissidents.

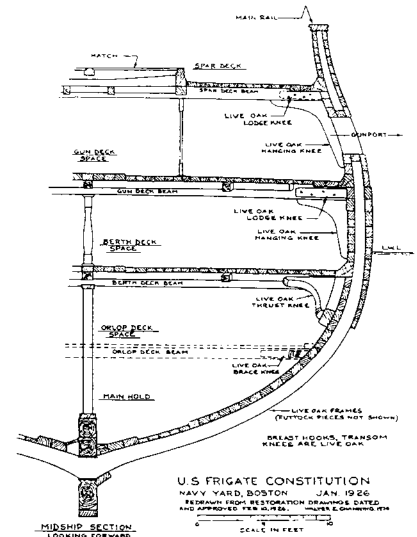
Little archaeological evidence remains from this period of island history. It seems probable that European technology included iron tools and weapons. When Spain ceded East Florida to England in 1763, a new era much more incursive on the environment began.

The Plantation Era

The plantation era on Cumberland Island lasted for nearly a century and can be divided into two distinct periods: (1) live oaking, and (2) the cultivation of Sea Island cotton. Both periods reflect not only human adaptation to the environment, but how people took advantage of geographical elements to modify the environment to suit their needs.

Library of Congress

"Old Ironsides" returning from France in 1835.



Live Oaking

In 1783, Revolutionary war hero Nathaniel Greene secured 11,000 acres on and near Cumberland Island in return for a debt owed him. Greene expected to sell off valuable stands of live oak and pine to the French navy. A contemporary report stated that "…Amelia and Cumberland islands both abound with 'live oak and hickory of the largest growth ever measured,' and several people were cutting ships timber on Cumberland destined for Philadelphia."[4]

Live oak, found from southeastern Virginia to the Texas border, is well suited to the climate of the barrier islands along the southern Atlantic coast. It is tolerant to salt spray and can thrive in a wide range of soil conditions, from rich moist hummocks to dry sand hills. With trunks averaging from forty to seventy feet high, a live oak with a 150 foot crown can shade more than half an acre of ground.

Live oak became prized for shipbuilding because of its density (greater than any other wood in North America) and its longevity (fifty years, compared to ten to twelve years for ships built of other materials). Yet while Greene had excellent timber, he was unable to market it to the French navy, even with the help of the Marquis de LaFayette. It was not until 1801 that Phineas Miller, business advisor to Caty Greene after her husband's death, again tried to sell the oak. Congress had recently voted to form a navy, with a nucleus of six frigates, within the Department of War. Miller signed a contract to supply live oak frames for the six 74-gun ships of the line, one of which was the U.S.S. *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides").

While Miller was exporting timber, Caty Greene—an amateur botanist in her own right—was importing many exotic (non-native) plants to the island. She developed orchards of olive, date, plum, coffee, guava, lime, pomegranate, and orange trees. (Phineas Miller would die from lockjaw in 1806 after being pricked by a thorn while moving orange trees from Florida to Cumberland).

Sea Island Cotton

The cultivation of Sea Island cotton was the second great enterprise during the plantation era on Cumberland. Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin, coupled with the cutting down of the live oak, coincided perfectly to ensure that cotton would become the principal crop for the next half century. In fact, Whitney was employed as tutor to Caty Greene's children at the time he developed the cotton gin.

Sea Island cotton came from the Caribbean island of Angulla by way of the Bahama Islands. The plant—tall with black seeds and long, strong, silky fibers—prospered only in the light sandy soil known as the saltwater lands. The Sea Island cotton region in the antebellum South was a belt of coastal land from twenty to thirty miles wide extending from the Santee River in South Carolina to the Florida Everglades. An 1849 report describes Cumberland as an island with

> soil of a light sandy character adapted to the culture of cotton, corn, and potatoes. Lemons, figs, pomegranates, olives, oranges and melons grow finely. Three thousand oranges have been gathered from one tree on Mrs. Shaw's plantation, formerly General Greene's. Cotton averages two hundred pounds per acre, corn twelve bushels per acre, sweet potatoes seventy bushels per acre…Population, 24 October, 1846, thirteen white men, eight white boys, seven girls, eight women, Negroes, four hundred."[5]

African Americans made up the bulk of the population on Cumberland Island throughout the 19th century. Both the cutting of live oak and the cultivation of Sea Island cotton was the work of slaves. As is well established, the cotton gin—a supposed labor-saving device—actually increased the demand for slaves in the Deep South, helping to re-enforce the plantation system and the

institution of slavery. The most successful planter on Cumberland Island, Robert Stafford, further ensured the profitably of his slaves (numbered at 110 in 1860) by leasing them for construction and lumbering during the off season.

The cotton baled on Cumberland was shipped north to textile mills in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Negro cloth, a mixture of cotton and wool spun exclusively for slaves, constituted nearly a third of Rhode Island textile mill production between 1814 and 1875.[6] When the outbreak of the Civil War caused most plantation owners to leave the Sea Islands, Stafford remained on Cumberland and supported the Union cause—selling livestock, lumber, and small boats to Federal occupation forces, and possibly cotton to northern factories.

Plum Orchard

After the Civil War, most Cumberland plantations lay in ruins and gradually turned back to nature. The live oak not harvested in an earlier era continued to grow and reseed itself, and now thrives in the maritime forest. Many of the former cotton fields became new growth forests. Most African Americans who remained on the island formed a small community of freedmen at its northern end.

The Carnegie Era

Cumberland Island entered the Gilded Age with the purchase of 4,000 acres of land by Thomas Morrison Carnegie (Andrew's younger brother) in 1881. This land was placed in trust for the owner's wife, Lucy Coleman Carnegie, who had acquired 90 percent of the island by the turn of the century. As money was no object, the Carnegies developed the island to suit their recreational needs. They built a mansion on the site of Katy Greene's ruined one (both houses were called Dungeness); restored lawns, gardens, and walks; created a nine-hole golf course; and, "in the spirit of former owners…planted rare bulbs, plants, and trees, some obtained in remote parts of the world."[7] This elegant life rested on the efforts of between 240 and 300 employees—artists, carpenters, blacksmiths, mechanics, and servants—who lived in the "Settlement" on the northern end of the island or sailed to and from the mainland weekly.

After the death of Lucy Carnegie in 1916, Cumberland Island fell into a state of neglect. When the last of her children died in 1962, her trust came to an end, and the estate was divided among individual heirs. Some wanted to sell their shares to titanium mining interests. Others were adamantly opposed to the development of the island, and joined the efforts of various conservation groups and the Department of the Interior to establish Cumberland Island as a national seashore.

Cumberland Island National Seashore

The National Park Service identified Cumberland Island as one of the country's most desirable seashore areas in 1962. Ten years later, President Nixon signed the act creating Cumberland Island National Seashore and charging the National Park Service to act for the public to "preserve the natural resource of the island while making it available for the enjoyment of visitors."

Cumberland Island National Seashore is divided into two parts: a recreational area at its southern end and a designated wilderness at its northern end. The Cumberland Island Wilderness Area (CIWA) is part of the National Wilderness Preservation System created by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Wilderness areas enjoy a special status within the public land system of the United States. A wilderness area stands "in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape" and should be "protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions."[8]

The Cumberland Island Wilderness Area includes some private residences belonging to the Carnegie heirs or their children. All are slated for eventual purchase by the National Park Service in order to fully establish the wilderness. Unlike visitors to the island, residents are allowed the use of vehicles on roads in the wilderness. Also within the wilderness area—but not a designated part of it—is Plum Orchard, a former Carnegie mansion donated to the Park Service and accessible only by water.

For the past several years, the National Park Service has been working with environmentalists and island residents on a management plan for the Cumberland wilderness. Recently, Georgia Congressman Jack Kingston (R-Savannah) proposed an alternative plan in a bill now pending in Congress. This bill would authorize federal funds to restore Plum Orchard and other

Continued on page 8 ▶

Make Your Voice Heard

Feral Horses on Cumberland Island

Objectives

To use the feral horses on Cumberland Island National Seashore as a case study of: (1) the effects an exotic animal can have on natural ecosystems, and (2) the factors involved in determining how to preserve a wilderness.

Method

Students will take on the roles of various groups concerned about the feral horse population on Cumberland Island. The information they gather will be presented in a town meeting as the basis for adopting a plan for the feral horse population on Cumberland.

Background

The feral horses on Cumberland Island are descendants of horses brought to the island at various times in the past. *Feral* refers to animals that are descended from tame stock and have returned to a wild state (it may also refer to wild plants that were formerly cultivated). Cumberland's horse population is a mixture of work horses, ponies, polo horses, and breeds such as mustangs and appaloosas. Its number is currently estimated at 200 to 260.

Cumberland Island consists of five natural ecosystems, or communities of plants and animals that are interrelated with each other and the physical environment. They are:

(1) freshwater sloughs
(2) saltwater marsh
(3) maritime forest
(4) dune system
(5) the beach

Concern over the effects that horses are having on the island's ecosystems has raised the issue of how to manage the feral horses on Cumberland. The horses, which now roam the island freely, are an *exotic* (non-native) species. So are the island's feral pigs, which were originally imported as livestock. (The National Park Service manages the feral hog population by allowing hunts four times a year; however, the hogs continue to disrupt native habitats.)

The northern half of Cumberland Island is a designated wilderness area within the Cumberland Island National Seashore. Because exotic species negatively affect any ecosystem, they are normally removed from a wilderness area, which by definition cannot be natural if exotic species are present.

Past studies indicate that horse grazing has a detrimental effect on the dunes and the salt marsh—both sensitive and vital areas of any barrier island. When horses walk on the dunes and eat the sea oats that grow on them, they encourage the dunes to shift. A dune without vegetation can move as much as 60 feet per year, encroaching on the maritime forest and leaving destroyed loggerhead turtle nests in its wake. Horse grazing in the salt marshes crops the grasses to the ground, affecting not only the animals in that area, but other organisms in the coastal wetland food chain.

The horses are only doing what is natural for them: looking for food. Unfortunately, the most abundant food—salt marsh grasses—is not the most nutritional. The grasses around the Dungeness ruins and dock and in the beach field behind the dunes (both on the southern end of the island), have more nutritional value but are less abundant than marsh grasses. As a result, the horses are not in the best of health.

Several management plans have been proposed to control the horse population. They have ranged from no intervention, to culling the herd by one third, to total elimination. Those who favor retaining the horses generally agree on moving them to the southern end of the island outside of the wilderness area.

Procedure

Students will work in five groups to represent different positions on what should be done with the feral horses on Cumberland. Each group will receive one of the following role cards:

Role Card 1: You are a group of tourists who visit Cumberland Island each year to see the horses and other animals found there. The thought of coming to the island and not seeing the horses upsets you. You know they are feral horses, not wild ones, but the idea that they will be either removed or penned up is unpleasant to you. You support allowing the horses to roam free.

Role Card 2: You are a group dedicated to saving the loggerhead sea turtle—a species more than 200 million years old—from threatened extinction. Cumberland Island is a nesting site for loggerhead turtles, which live in the ocean but lay their eggs in cavities they dig in sand dunes. People and vehicles sometimes trample these nests, and raccoons and feral hogs are clever at finding the turtle eggs. Feral horses grazing on sea oats are only one of the dangers to the loggerhead turtles, but it's one you want to eliminate. You support a management plan for the horses.

Role Card 3: You are a group of researchers studying the horses and their relationship to island ecosystems. It doesn't take long to discover that the horses are malnourished. Their average lifespan is 9 or 10 years, their hind quarters are angular (indicating poor health), and a recent study showed that only 3 out of 8 foals survived its first year of life. Each horse eats 10-20 pounds of food per day, most of this diet consisting of lawn and marsh grasses. The lawn grasses are more nutritious but less abundant than the marsh grasses. The horses move two miles a day while foraging, and each horse requires a home range of 140 acres. Cumberland Island has a total of 23,600 acres, not all of which is good grazing land. You support removing some of the horses and adopting a management plan for the rest.

Role Card 4: You represent a historical society. Cumberland Island National Seashore was formed to preserve the historical and ecological resources found on the island. Many exotic species, among them the horses, were brought to the island by past residents and constitute part of its long and varied history. You support a management plan for the horses.

Role Card 5: You are a group of environmentalists defending the wilderness area on Cumberland. The National Park Service is mandated to remove exotics from the island in order to maintain the wilderness its natural state. The horses eat the sea oats, destabilizing the dunes; they eat the marsh grasses, affecting untold numbers of organisms that thrive in the wetlands; they trample the nests of the loggerhead turtle and the endangered least tern. There are too many ecosystems at stake both inside and outside of the wilderness. You support removing the horses from Cumberland.

Each group should research the issue in one or more of the following ways: (1) read the background information provided in this lesson; (2) read the accompanying article on Cumberland Island; and (3) research the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964, which can be found at http://www.fs.fed.us/htnf.

Group members should then develop a 3-minute presentation that explains:

a. its position on the feral horses on Cumberland
b. its plan for managing the horses, if at all
c. its concept of what a wilderness area should be

One or two students from each group should act as spokesmen for their group's position. Once all the presentations have been made, open the floor up for discussion as in a real town meeting.

Follow-up

This activity could be expanded by having students do research on:

1. the issue of feral animals on other barrier islands (e.g., Assateague)
2. the broader question of wilderness preservation on Cumberland
3. other issues involving coastal wetlands
4. wilderness preservation as a global issue
5. an issue of environmental and/or historical preservation in their local community

This activity is adapted from "Make Your Voice Heard" in Cumberland Island National Seashore Teacher Activity Guide: Fifth-Eighth Grade by Charlotte Fries and Pauline Saville, available from Cumberland Island National Seashore, Box 806, St. Mary's, GA 31588.

Also available for teaching about the animal population on Cumberland Island is Ferals, Flippers, and Felines *by Julia A. Celebi. Tel: 912-289-2094. Fax: 912-289-2034. E-mail: jcelebi@egh.peachnet.edu*

historic buildings on Cumberland. At the same time, it would remove Plum Orchard and the main road through the northern end of the island from wilderness designation, allowing visitors to drive vehicles on the road.

Still another provision of the bill in Congress involves a "land swap" by which heirs of Coca Cola founder Asa Candler would buy a piece of land on Cumberland—the Greyfield tract in mid-island—and donate it to the National Park Service. In return, they would receive a 1,000 acre tract on the northern tip of the island that they previously sold to the Park Service.

The Kingston bill raises questions about the very nature of Cumberland Island National Seashore, which is supposed to serve the triple functions of recreation, historical preservation, and environmental protection of coastal wetlands. Kingston says the public has the right to better access to the wilderness on Cumberland. Some island residents who are primarily concerned with historical preservation would welcome the federal funds for restoration. Most environmentalists fear the worst: more development at the north end of the island in what is now a wilderness, and more disruption of all island habitats by increased vehicular and human traffic. Their concerns are reflected in a recent decision by the Wilderness Society to declare Cumberland Island National Seashore one of the nation's fifteen most endangered wild lands.

Conclusion

Throughout Cumberland's history, people have modified the island to suit their needs, with some changes having a greater impact on nature than others. This makes Cumberland a good model for observing the relationship between geography and human interaction. It also poses dilemmas for the National Park Service in its mission to "preserve the natural resource of the island" while allowing for recreational use. Moreover, some problems actually involve contradictory demands of historical and environmental preservation. One of the current dilemmas of preservation on Cumberland is described in the boxed lesson accompanying this article.

While Cumberland Island has its own unique questions of preservation, they mirror environmental concerns both nationally and globally. Like all of the barrier islands on the Atlantic coast, Cumberland Island takes the brunt of ocean winds and waves to provide shelter for the coastal wetlands that lie behind it. These wetlands, which are rich in nutrients, are of fundamental importance to the lives of both marine animals and migratory birds. The preservation of this special environment has implications that go far beyond the pleasure—important in itself—of enjoying nature in a wilderness state.

The Englishwoman Frances Kemble Butler, a 19th century resident of another of the Sea Islands, made this prediction about what would happen to Butler Island after it fell into a ruined state during the Civil War: "It seems to me most probable that…the plantations will be gradually restored to the wild treasury of nature, and the land 'enjoy its Sabbaths' as a wilderness, peopled with snakes, for perhaps a good half century yet."[9] Prescient as this comment was, it did not foresee that—a good full century later—how to preserve the "wild treasury of nature" would become a central question not only on Cumberland Island but all over the globe. ❖

Notes

1. Geography Education Standards Project, *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards 1994* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Research and Exploration, 1994), 92.
2. Louis Torres, Historic Resource Study, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Georgia and Historic Structure Report, Historical Data System of the Dungeness Area (Denver, CO: Dungeness Service Center Historic Preservation. Division National Park Service, 1977).
3. John H. Hahn, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996), 23.
4. Virginia Steele Wood, *Live Oaking: Southern Timber for Tall Ships* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981), 18.
5. Marguerete Reddick, *Camden's Challenge: A History of Camden County, Georgia* (Camden County Historical Commission, 1976), 217.
6. Mary Richardson Bullard, *Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island: Growth of a Planter* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 282.
7. Torres, 167.
8. Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 99-577.
9. Quoted in Joseph J. Thorndike, *The Coast: A Journey Down the Atlantic Shore* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

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Teaching History as Perspective Taking: the Colonial Convention

Mac Duis and Sandra S. Duis

One of the most exciting things about early adolescents is their new-found potential to see the world in more complex ways.[1] Children this age show a growing ability to think abstractly about issues that are not within their immediate realm of experience. Another strong feature of young adolescents is their search for a personal identity—a process that draws on the past and present, along with their expectations for the future.[2] A third characteristic of this age group is the ability to take on the perspectives of others, often gaining new insights about opinions different from their own.

One good way to teach history to adolescents is through perspective taking. The ability to acquire historical knowledge and grasp the relevance of the past may increase when students can project themselves into former times directly. As Slavin and others have recognized, young adolescents care about how others view them, wonder about the past as it relates to their lives, are prepared to try out different social roles, and enjoy expressing their own opinions.[3] Historical perspective taking can harness these natural inclinations and immerse students in time periods that might otherwise seem distant and unimportant. Such immersion forces students to "construct" their own meanings about the past, and to think more critically about the relationships between the nation's past and their present experiences.[4]

An example of a perspective taking approach is the Colonial Convention, an event I use in teaching early American history to eighth grade students. Set in 1750, this activity calls for each student to adopt the role of a character from the late colonial era, and to present that character's perspectives on issues of the day at a convention involving the thirteen colonies.

It is important for students to understand at the outset both the limitations and the opportunities presented by this activity. No such colonial convention was ever held. Had it been, it would likely have excluded the opinions of women, African American colonists (free or enslaved), and Native Americans. Given these understandings, the Colonial Convention can provide a forum for debating issues of the time from the viewpoints of those with some potential to affect their outcomes.

In preparing for the Colonial Convention, the teacher can ensure some breadth of perspective by assigning (or working out with students) the hometown and occupation of each character. Once students have taken on a role, their job is to provide their character with a background (see Figure 1, Character Development Planner). Their research should focus especially on what opinions this character was likely to hold on certain issues of the time.

The Colonial Convention centers on the discussion of three primary matters—British trade restrictions, the "Indian problem," and the role of religion in public life. Students should adopt these roles early in their study of the colonial period, so that they can consider historical events in light of the character they will later portray. I spend about six weeks on this unit of study, with the convention serving as a final assessment of student understanding.

During the unit, students participate in several other activities that contribute to the development of their roles. One is a visit to the Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation, a working farm where students try out the typical chores of a farm child—for example, combing wool sheared at the farm, cooking sample dishes, and making colonial crafts. Another is the reading and analysis of Conrad Richer's *Light in the Forest*, led by the English teacher on our inter-disciplinary team. This is the story of True Son, a white child raised by the Lenni Lenape after his parents were killed in fighting with Native Americans. The novel explores various attitudes toward Native Americans, and helps students to develop opinions on the "Indian

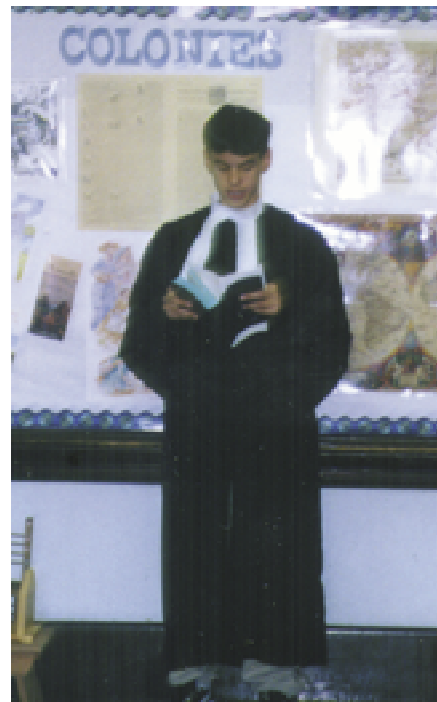

Figure 1

Character Development Planner

Student:

Character's Name:

Character's Hometown:

Character's Occupation:

Character's Gender:

Character's Age:

Character's Education:

Character's Religion:

Character's Family Members:

Character's Family History:

Character's Interests:

Character's Unique Characteristics:

Character's Influential Experiences:

Opinion about Colonial Trade:

Opinion about the "Indian Problem":

Opinion about the Role of Religion:

problem" as it might have been viewed by white colonists.

Most of the historical background comes from work in history class—readings, lectures, activities, and research. Students write and direct plays on the origin of each of the thirteen colonies. They study the theory of mercantilism and the triangular trade, the conflicts between colonists and Native Americans in all regions, and the religious groups prevalent in the colonies in the mid-18th century.

Besides the use of encyclopedias, our best resource materials are *Reasoning with Democratic Values* by Lockwood and Harris, and primary source materials offered in such collections as *Opposing Viewpoints* by O'Neill and *Ordinary Americans* by Monk. The primary sources are of particular value in showing what actual colonists thought about the issues and introducing students to the value of original documents. Good information on colonial occupations and religions is also provided by the Colonial Williamsburg website (http://www.history.org). Two days of well-directed library time are usually enough for students to flesh out their characters' backgrounds.

The Three Debates

The Convention debates have raised several interesting points of view. On the issue of British trade restrictions, students role-playing New England and Middle colony merchants have vigorously opposed tariffs on molasses (the Molasses Act of 1733) and other goods. Typically agreeing with them are urban housewives, lumber merchants, coopers, and tavern owners—the latter three groups depending on cheap trade in molasses and rum for their livelihoods. The then-common practice of smuggling is debated in an ethical context.

Perhaps the strongest support for the trade laws comes from Anglicans, who also express the deepest ties to the mother country. Farmers who appreciate a ready English market for their raw products may show a pro-British tendency. However, frustration with higher prices on consumer goods may cause other farmers to oppose tariffs. Frontier colonists who appreciate British protection from Native Americans and the encroaching French also do not generally oppose the tariffs. Regional economic differences in the colonies—with special emphasis on New England shipping—are clearly illustrated in this argument.

The "Indian problem" raises perhaps the most heated arguments at the convention. Frontiersmen and other landowners whose economic interests are most directly at stake are most vocal in their call for fighting the Indians. Colonists who have had family members killed in previous fighting also tend to want retaliation. On the other hand, Quaker colonists oppose violent solutions (just as they increasingly oppose the violence of slavery during the same period). Colonists from other religious persuasions—Puritans and Catholics especially—often promote the teaching and conversion of Native Americans for the purposes of salvation. Both regional and religious differences are highlighted in this debate.

The final issue is the role of religion in society. This debate involves not only religious beliefs but some broader repercussions as well. For example, student role-playing has revealed the tension between Quakers and Puritans over the dividing line between church and state; the story of Mary Dyer in *Reasoning with Democratic Values* is particularly illustrative of this conflict. Catholic and Puritan differences over codes of personal conduct are also illustrated. I have usually begun the Convention with the other two arguments because the religious issue is complex and tends to surface in the earlier debates in any case.

Several forms of analysis can follow the convention. Students might write compositions that compare the three colonial regions (New England, the Middle Colonies, and the South) in terms of the attitudes most likely to predominate on the three issues for debate. Group jigsaw activities can also be used. In this format, each of three groups reviews the perspectives exhibited by colonists from a single region; the groups are then restructured to create new groups including one person from each region to compare viewpoints. In the end, the original groups reconvene to prepare a final report to the class. Graphic organizers—such as a Venn diagram or a concept web—offer another possibility for analysis and review.

Assessing the Convention

Assessing student performance in this complex task is not easy. I have designed a rubric that outlines specific criteria for student work (see Figure 2). There are also some special problems that must be addressed in evaluating this activity.

First, the religious beliefs that characters must represent are complex. In this situation, it is not uncommon for students to lapse into stereotypes of various religious or ethnic groups. In fact, it is probably realistic for their characters to engage in this practice to some extent, since religious toleration was more an enlightened concept than a popular attitude of the period. However, it is important to examine any such stereotypes in the post-convention discussion.

Second, the simplification of complex ideas can result when materials are too abstract for middle schoolers to comprehend fully. For example, primary sources from the time period are often at a higher reading level than many middle schoolers have reached. Clear teacher-led lectures are needed to clarify these complexities.

Third, many middle school students do not have mature research abilities, and close collaboration with the English teacher and the school librarian is crucial to helping students make the best use of their library time. Some characters will be harder to research than others. I try to assign the more difficult roles to students with higher reading levels and proven academic skills.

Finally, if a student offers an individual viewpoint that differs from a predictable response for his or her character, he or she should be challenged to explain the discrepancy with historically legitimate reasons. This allows for the expression of unique perspectives while ensuring student understanding of general trends.

Assessment can be difficult when there is little to measure. I encourage all students to participate actively in the discussion of issues, but shy or less confident students will obviously be at a disadvantage here. It is essential to provide other ways for these students to exhibit their knowledge and understanding, while still maintaining the expectation of vocal participation.

The Colonial Convention activity can include having students create costumes and artifacts of their trade. They might prepare broadsides (posters) as propaganda for their viewpoints, or newspaper

Figure 2

Scoring Rubric for the Colonial Convention

Criterion 1. Thoroughness of Character Development Planner

1	2	3
• Several sections blank	• Incomplete information given	• All sections complete

Criterion 2. Historical Accuracy of Character Attributes

1	2	3
• Several anachronisms • Character does not fit into a realistic historical trend	• Minor anachronisms • Character fits somewhat into a realistic historical trend	• No anachronisms • Character readily fits a realistic historical trend

Criterion 3. Historical Appropriateness of Stands on Issues

1	2	3
• Character's opinions are not logically defended from the character's perspective • Religious beliefs and regional tendencies are not appropriate for the character	• Some inconsistencies exist between character and his/her stands on issues	• Opinions are logically defended from character's perspective • Religious beliefs and regional tendencies are clearly appropriate for the character

GRADE:

Criterion 1-______ Criterion 2-______ Criterion 3-______ TOTAL ______/9

COMMENTS:

articles that either report or editorialize on an issue. The activity can also include a colonial fair with students preparing foods and craft items of the period. With suitable supplementary activities, the Colonial Convention challenges students to learn important historical concepts in a developmentally appropriate way. ❖

Notes

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The Community as a Laboratory for Student Learning

Joseph Ciaccio

The eighth graders from Suzanne Middle School are lined up in pairs in front of their school. They wait eagerly for the policemen to stop a driver who is not wearing his seat belt. When they do, two students approach the bewildered driver, who finds himself the recipient of a well-rehearsed speech about the virtues of seat belt use. A small child in the back seat is offered cookies donated by a parent who owns a bakery, and toys donated by local merchants.

The children involved in this activity, who have prepared a pamphlet on seat belt safety in four languages (English, Spanish, Japanese, and Tagalog), hand their written words of wisdom to each amazed driver. They had written three requests to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (N.H.T.S.A.) to get enough bumper stickers to pass one out to each stopped driver. It was the kids who went to the sheriff's office to get permission for this activity. It was the kids who acted as "spokespeople" when local TV cameras appeared on the scene.

What a wonderful experience for these youngsters! These students went back into school pumped up and enthusiastic about their important contribution to the community. They felt good about themselves because they came face to face with the realization that they can accomplish something of significance. Fisk maintains that children should be actively involved in the education process.[1] This seat belt activity certainly accomplished that goal. They tested their inner resources and were victorious in their attempt to give "a practical lesson in safety" to sixty drivers.[2]

Service learning is an exciting concept in education. Teachers can help their students learn by using the community as "a laboratory for the classroom where students can test and apply their curriculum to real life situations."[3] Yet, far too many schools employ community service only as a sporadic activity when it should be an ongoing commitment from kindergarten through high school.

Students in Williamsburg, Virginia, conduct a landscaping project.

Photo by Renee Bouchard, Close Up Foundation

Service Learning Helps Students

The benefits of service learning for students are wide ranging. Students feel useful and may experience a sense of personal growth and enhanced self-esteem by becoming more aware of their positive inner resources. Social skills may improve because so much of the process is a group effort. Critical thinking skills too may benefit from being employed to solve real life problems.

Service learning also tends to be an interdisciplinary activity—a whole experience that is greater than the sum of its parts. This is in sharp contrast to the fragmented, isolated, single subject orientation that comprises the learning process in most secondary schools.

Many students become more interested in social studies when they better understand its relevance to the real world. Community involvement thus results in enhanced learning.

Among the many positive outcomes of service learning, one of the most meaningful is improving students' social skills. The students of Suzanne Middle School turned the school property into a "xeriscape," or drought-resistant landscape, as a demonstration project. They raised $4,000 in bake sales to send representatives to Sacramento to testify in favor of a water conservation bill "that called for planting drought-tolerant shrubs and flowers as landscaping for public roads and buildings."[4] The team effort put forth by these kids resulted in another terrific sense of achievement when the bill became law.

What about critical thinking skills? Service learning confronts students with community problems that require kids to analyze, hypothesize, and synthesize information in order to solve a problem. Social studies teachers have available to them the A.C.T. (Active Citizenship Today) program, a joint project of the Close Up Foundation and the Constitutional Rights Foundation,[5] which uses public policy issues to satisfy various content and critical thinking aspects of the social studies curriculum. A.C.T. prepares

lesson plans on such topics as homelessness, crime, drugs, and violence.

The A.C.T. project on crime was the focus of students in the Northside district of Texas. According to Stephens, these students gathered information about teenage violence, and

> interviewed legislators, politicians, and other community residents to assess the reasons for the increase in crime; noted the conflict of values among different groups; examined constitutional issues such as gun control; and identified pending bills that they wanted to support. They also prepared and presented education programs on the topic for younger kids at their school.[6]

Students don't always find schoolwork to be relevant. I was surprised when I asked my honors class what satisfaction they received from their school work, and most indicated that it wasn't meaningful to them. Rich maintains that "motivation needs replenishment."[7] Service learning projects can enrich the social studies curriculum when students see the projects they are engaged in as genuinely productive.[8]

An essential part of service learning projects is recognition and positive attention for participating students. I was the advisor to the Social Studies Club when students decided to "beautify" the school by attacking graffiti and cleaning up the courtyard. When the kids' achievements in "beautification" appeared in the local newspaper, they received the recognition they had earned through their hard work and eager spirits.

Benefits to the Teacher

Teachers can find a lot to like about service learning. Community action programs can be fun and a nice change of pace from classroom learning. The master teacher will use service learning to entice non-academically minded students into the education process. When all children are moving in the same direction, as part of the marvelous mainstream, teaching becomes a pleasure.

Service learning provided one of the genuine highs of my teaching career when the children in my school were asked to bring in food for the homeless. Since my class brought in the most, the principal selected them to deliver the 22 boxes of food to the Interfaith Nutrition Network. Upon arrival at the homeless shelter, the kids opened the boxes and stacked the food on the pantry shelves. On the bus trip home, one of my most difficult students jumped to his feet and yelled, "give me a C." The kids responded enthusiastically. "Give me an I," he yelled. He continued until all the letters of my name were spelled out.

What a great feeling! This kind of activity allows teachers to relate to their students on a different level. You work with the students. You're on the same side. There is likely to be more trust, less tension, and greater cooperation on the part of the students. Most of all, you as the teacher will cherish these "golden moments" as an anchor of personal satisfaction for the rest of your life.

Service Learning and the Community

Traditionally, schools function as isolated entities. The school is part of the community, but kids rarely experience a sense of community while "going through the motions" from home room to the final bell that delivers them back to the world outside. Hopefully, service learning can bridge that gap.

The students of Great Neck North Middle School on Long Island are involved in a "Dare to Care" community program. Since 1993, they have collected clothes, food, and toys for families in need. They have also taken part in a campaign instituted by the mayor to clean up litter in the downtown area of Great Neck.

The Dare to Care program teaches children compassion and concern for human dignity. Kids who learn these bedrock values on a systematic basis may some day be better parents, friends, and members of their communities.

In describing schools of the future, Sanderlin expresses her feeling that they will prepare students for "not only a satisfying career, but enjoyment of family and friends, recreation, intellectual stimulation, physical and mental health, and ethical conduct."[8] I didn't see any reference to being an active and involved citizen. Could it be that this human endeavor is so rare that it doesn't even come to mind? Are our children destined to live their civic lives feeling as helpless and politically insignificant as many members of the older generation appear to feel? After all, what can one person do?

We are moving in the direction of government by the very few, for the rich and wealthy (sorry, Abe). One solution is to teach our children how to become active and caring citizens.

Community involvement through service learning can affect students, teachers, and the community in profoundly positive ways. Its impact is emphatic and decisive and makes our immediate world a better place to live in. It has an essential role to play in preparing students for that time when the future of the world will be in their hands. ❖

Notes

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3. Lillian Stephens, *The Complete Guide To Learning Through Community Service* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995), 10.
4. Martz, 120.
5. Stephens, 60, 208-9. For information, contact the Constitutional Rights Foundation, 601 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90005 or the Close Up Foundation, 44 Canal Center Plaza, Alexandria, VA 22314.
6. *Ibid,* 60.
7. Dorothy Rich, *What Do We Say? What Do We Do?* (New York: Forge, 1997), 67.
8. Owenita Sanderlin, *Creative Teaching* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Corp., 1971), 170.

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Coming of Age Ceremonies: A Mask Project

Alan Singer, Laura Gurton, Aimee Horowitz, Stephanie Hunte, Paula Broomfield, and Joanne Thomas

Many cultures have coming of age ceremonies that celebrate a young man or woman's entry into adulthood and the assumption of greater responsibility within the community. Frequently they include special gifts from family and community elders that acknowledge puberty and the new possibility of reproduction. Gifts may also be related to the acquisition of knowledge and expertise. Sometimes a coming of age ceremony includes taking a new name that symbolizes changed social status and spiritual transformation.

In the contemporary United States, birthday parties and school commencements mark transformations in the lives of young people. Other coming of age ceremonies are religious in nature. They include Roman Catholic confirmation, teenage (or adult) baptism among certain Protestant church groups, and the Jewish Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Mask making can also have religious or spiritual significance, a usage that extends far back in time and across many cultures. In the ancient Mediterranean world, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations all had mask making traditions. Until a 13th century papal order forbade the practice, Roman Catholic clergy in Europe wore masks during some ceremonies and while dramatizing Bible stories.

In many traditional cultures, masks are part of the way people tell stories and pass along knowledge of tribal customs. Masks can represent spirits that either protect or threaten a tribe, and they are often integral to dances and dramatic performances. For example, the Barong dance of the island of Bali in Indonesia, and similar dances in India and Sri Lanka, use masks to tell the story of the struggle between good and evil.

In an example of cultural diffusion, mask dances also became an integral part of Buddhist religious ceremonies, and spread with Buddhism into Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Thailand, and Tibet. In Tibetan Buddhism, masks are used in sacred mystery plays aimed at exorcising malignant demons, and the masks are believed to possess the qualities of the characters they depict. These masks are generally made of paper mache and brightly painted.

In China and Japan, mask dances celebrate national history. The earliest known Japanese masks are made of clay and shell and are over 2,000 years old. More than one hundred different masks were used in traditional Japanese Noh dramas to represent gods, demons, animals, and human beings. In Korea, masks have a more local focus and often have political overtones. In the past, dancers used masks to hide their identities as they ridiculed the local elite.

Student made masks on display at Edward R. Murrow High.

In Africa, masks honoring ancestors are used in ceremonies to evoke their support for difficult personal or community decisions. They also play an important role in initiation ceremonies for adolescents—as among the Ibo and Yoruba people of contemporary Nigeria, and the Bambara of Mali. In these West African cultures, wood carvers try to envision the spirit hidden within a piece of wood, and then carve a mask that liberates it. This is in contrast to beginning with an image and then constructing it out of a material such as paper maché.

As examples of parallel cultural development, masks play a role in adolescent initiation rites among the people of Papua New Guinea in Oceania. As described in Carol Batdorfs' *Spirit Quest*—a "based on fact" fictional work for middle school students—they were also prominent in an early eighteenth century initiation ceremony for adolescent boys among the Lunni Salish people living near Puget Sound.

Today, mask making remains important throughout Africa, among Native American peoples, and in the Pacific rim areas of Asia. Masks are also part of carnival celebrations in many European, Latin, and Caribbean societies. By focusing on similarities and differences among cultural practices, cultural diffusion, and parallel cultural development, this project helps middle school students understand National Council for the Social Studies' Thematic Strands Ⓘ Culture; Ⓘⓘ Time, Continuity, and Change; Ⓘⓘⓘ People, Places, and Environments; Ⓘⓥ Individual Development and Identity; and Ⓘⓧ Global Connections.

Mask Making Activity

The interdisciplinary activity outlined on the back cover is designed for grades 6 through 9. It combines mask making with aspects of a coming of age ceremony. Rather than creating inauthentic versions of traditional masks, it asks students to create their own spirit masks using modern materials. The masks will represent their hopes for their teenage years and adulthood.

Sixth graders at Intermediate School 292 K in Brooklyn, New York, completed the project as part of their study of Asian

Describing the Mask Spirit

Stephanie Hunte's sixth grade students (PS 292 K, Brooklyn, NY) wrote these descriptions of their "coming of age" masks.

This mask shows what I like. Writing is my favorite thing to do since I was six years old. Now I am eleven and it is my favorite thing to do in school. The symbols I use to show what I like about writing are paper and a pencil because they are the tools you use to write.—*Maria Nunez*

Once upon a time an eleven year old girl dreamed of being a lawyer. She grew up into a lovely lady and remembered that dream. She followed her dream and became very successful. The symbols I use on my mask to represent a lawyer are a briefcase, a gavel used by judges in court, a law book, and a witness stand.—*Isis Solis*

There are people in my class that give me no respect. Summer is about to start. Some kids will have fun. However some kids will go to summer school. If I pass my reading test then I'll get respect. Then I'll take off my mask.—*Anthony Robinson*

The mask has two horns. One horn is black and the other horn is white. The colors symbolize good and evil. My mask shows the battle between good and bad because I am going to have to make choices between good and bad my whole life.—*David Acuria*

This mask is shaped like a heart. The symbol of the heart means love, peace, and happiness. It shows that I want love, peace, and happiness for my teachers, family, and friends and the rest of the world.—*Sheddean Mullings*

This mask shows a girl who wants to be a pediatrician. She likes to help kids and teenagers when they are sick so they feel better. She tells them to stay in bed and gives them medicine. The symbols for being a pediatrician are bottles, a stethoscope, a baby's crib, and a baby carriage. The two happy faces show how the pediatrician will make the kids feel.

This mask is about a kid who was riding his bicycle to the park. All of a sudden a tiger jumped out from the woods and attacked the boy. The boy was injured and had to go to the hospital. On the way to the hospital bumps started to come out of his skin. Then a minute later he turned into a tiger and everybody ran away.—*Brandon Bracey*

Societies. Ninth graders at Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn explored mask making while studying Africa. Students and teachers from both schools were able to take advantage of exhibits and printed materials from the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. This project can also be adapted for classes studying Native American cultures.

The activity calls for students to describe the masks they create on an index card. Examples of such descriptions by sixth grade students in Intermediate School at 292 K are included in the box above.

There are many possibilities for expanding the activity, either before or after students complete their masks.

1. Have the class visit a mask collection in a local museum if available.
2. Have students use library resources (print and Internet) to create a class gallery of masks.
3. Have students write first person stories about their spirit mask and an imagined coming of age ceremony. (This was done in IS 292 K, which is an inner city school with a heavy emphasis on literacy.)
4. Have students do research on: (a) a particular society's use of masks in a coming of age ceremony, or (b) a particular society's use of masks for some purpose other than adolescent initiation rites. This could be an individual, group, or whole class project. ❖

Teaching Resources

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Video

Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World, The Art of Living (PBS Video, 1992, 60 minutes). Includes footage of funeral masks and dances of the Dogon people of Mali.

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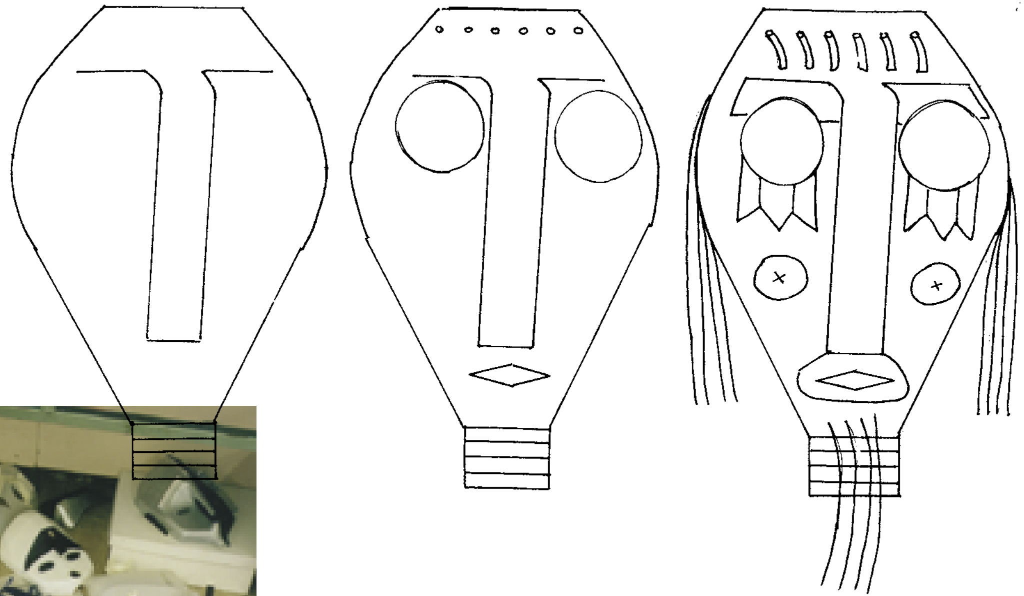
Make a Mask

Mask Making Activity for a Coming of Age Ceremony

What You'll Need

Clean plastic gallon jugs of any color (milk, water, paint, cooking oil, laundry soap, etc.); hammer, nails, and small wood block; retractable knife; latex acrylic paint (black, brown, white, blue, red, yellow, and green); brushes; markers; glue; scissors; construction paper; stapler; yarn; straw; feathers; corn husks; needle and thread; buttons, cloth strips, index cards. (Note: avoid tempera paint, which cracks and peels off plastic jugs).



How to Make Your Mask

1. Close your eyes. Imagine a face that represents your inner spirit as it is transformed at a crucial point in your life. Is the spirit happy or angry, calm or fearful—or something else? Are you just becoming a teenager? Entering a new school or a new grade? Preparing to make a religious commitment? Something else of special importance to you? Think of symbols and colors that describe the image in your mind.
2. Open your eyes. Draw a sketch of the face you saw in your inner vision. Why do you make the choices that you make? Explain them to your neighbor.
3. Think of ways to transform your drawing into a three dimensional mask.
4. Select a plastic jug. Holding it so that the handle faces you (it will become part of the mask face), cut upward from the mouth of the jug until it is divided in half, and then discard the back piece.
5. Use markers to sketch the face on the jug. Use the retractable knife to cut out the eyes and mouth.† Use the hammer, nails, and wood block to punch small holes for when you will later attach yarn, feathers, or buttons.
6. Paint the entire mask with a base coat of paint. Allow to dry overnight.
7. Paint the face and symbols on your mask. Allow it to dry.
8. Add yarn, straw, cloth strips, buttons, corn husks, feathers, and paper designs. With thinner plastic jugs (such as milk and water jugs), it is easy to staple or sew on items. If the plastic is too thick, use paste.
9. On the index card, describe the transformation in life symbolized by your spirit mask. What is the spirit? What role does it play in your life? What special symbols have you used to describe it? ❖

† *With younger students, teachers should do this part, or else the eyes and mouth can be painted on later.*