

Behind the Mask

Cat Mountain

Educational Guide, Grades 1-8



About the Performance

A Japanese folk tale comes to life in this theater performance with original music, masks, and traditional Japanese songs. Listen and experience the story of Sho, a servant girl who journeys to Cat Mountain where she hopes to find her cat and her own freedom.



About the Artist

Master mask-maker and performer Eric Bornstein, owner and founder of Behind The Mask, is much sought after by arts groups throughout Massachusetts and beyond for his craftsmanship and creativity, and by schools for his vibrant performances for school assemblies and inspiring mask-making workshops. Eric has studied with masters Agung Suardana in Bali, and Donato Sartori in Italy. He received his MLA in Fine Arts along with the Thomas Small prize from Harvard University. His masks have appeared most recently in the 31st Cambridge River Festival, Contemporary Theater of Boston's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Performance Lab's *Le Cabaret Grimm*, Underground Railway Theater's *Life of Galileo*, and the Harvard Yiddish Players' *Shulamis*. Over the last 30 years Eric's masked characters have appeared in a variety of venues. They were a highlight of Boston's First Night celebration for 15 years. His masks have also appeared at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Fuller Craft Museum, the Kennedy Library/Museum, the Boston Lyric Opera, the Boston Ballet, the Society of Arts & Crafts (Newbury Street), The Peabody/Essex Museum, King Richard's Faire, and Revels.

Program Learning Goals

1. To experience the art of storytelling.
2. To bring to life the story of *Cat Mountain* through mask theatre.
3. To explore the lessons of traditional folklore in modern society.

Essential Questions

1. What can learning about other cultures teach us?
2. How are Japanese folktales similar to the ones you learn in school?
3. How is hearing a story told out loud with masks different from reading a book or watching a movie?

Japanese Vocabulary

Written in Japanese Alphabet	Written in English Alphabet	Pronunciation	Translation
おやすみなさい	Oyasuminasai	oh-yah-soo-me-nuh-sai	Good night, sweet dreams
すみません	Sumimasen	soo-me-mah-sen	I am sorry, excuse me
こんにちは	Konnichiwa?	kon-nee-chee-wah	Hello
こんばんは みなさん	Konbanwa minasan	kon-ban-wah me-nah-san	Good evening, everyone
美味しそ	Oishi-so	oyee-shee-soh	Delicious
気を付けて	Ki o tsukete	key oh tsec-teh	Safe journey, take care
ごめんください	Gomenkudasai?	go-men-koo-da-sah-ee	May I come in?



Key Facts and Context for Students



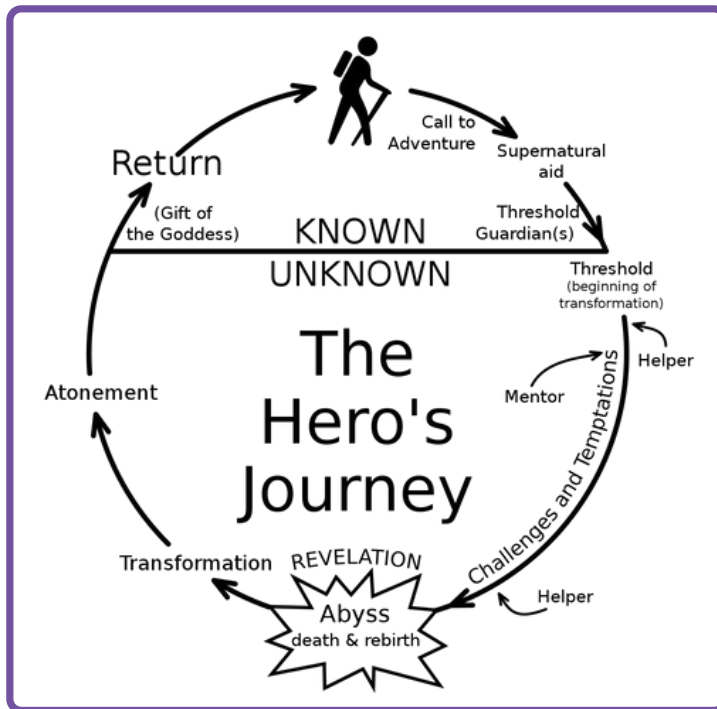
Geology.com

Where is Japan?

Japan is a country in **East Asia** made up of a chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean. It is the 11th most populated country in the world and mountains make up three-quarters of the country's land area.

Masks and Storytelling

Each mask featured in this performance was made by hand. It can take up to 100 hours to make a mask with enough detail to show a character's personality and emotions. Performers must practice how to move with them in order to create the characters in their stories.



The Hero's Journey

Many stories use the format called "The Hero's Journey" or a **monomyth**. In these stories, the main character goes on an adventure, has to overcome challenges, and returns home changed in some way. Often the main character receives help from a magical guide. This structure can be found in folk tales from all over the world.

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Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What is a mask? When do you wear masks? How does it feel to wear a mask?
2. What characters in movies or TV shows wear masks? How does the mask affect their character?
3. What do you know about Japan and Japanese culture? What would you like to know? How could you find out more?

Pre-Performance Activity: The Hero's Journey

Learning Goal:

To understand the structure and elements of a monomyth

Materials:

Plain white paper and drawing supplies

Directions:

1. Introduce or reinforce the concept of literary and artistic themes and motifs. Ask students for examples of patterns in familiar works of literature and visual art, including the hero's journey (see page 3).
2. Discuss examples of the hero's journey in literature and film (e.g. Star Wars, Lord of the Rings). Consider stating place, tests, and lessons learned in each story.
3. Outline each story's journey and pinpoint key symbols in the work. Which elements are shared by multiple stories?
4. In small groups, brainstorm ideas for a new hero's journey story based on a culture of the students' choice or by changing one of the major elements from the stories discussed.



Extension:

Use the ideas from the brainstorming session in class to compose original stories. Have students share their stories with the class.

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What did you notice in the performance? What did you see and hear?
2. What questions do you have after viewing the performance? What are you wondering about?
3. How did Sho's opinion of her master and herself change as her journey progressed?

Post-Performance Activity: What Do Masks Reveal About Characters?

Learning Goal:

To explore the ways that masks can reveal personalities

Materials:

Images of masks

- <https://facesofnoh.weebly.com/different-types-of-masks.html>
- <https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/files/nohmaskspdf>



Facesofnoh.weebly.com

Directions:

1. Choose 3-4 images of masks from the websites above.
2. Present the images to the class, either in a handout or projected on the wall, without any accompanying text.
3. Discuss with students what they notice about the masks. Focus on small details at first and then move on to comparisons and contrasts among the masks and feelings, ideas, or questions inspired by the masks.
4. Pose the question to the class: What do masks reveal about characters? Discuss what they might guess about the characters based on these masks.
5. Choose a mask either from *Cat Mountain* or the images viewed as the class. Write a character sketch and a monologues based on the mask.
6. Read the monologues aloud to the rest of the class.

Extensions:

1. Choose characters from literature and design a mask. Write an explanation of design choices to accompany the mask.
2. Explore the multiple meanings of the word 'mask' and the ways that people use masks. How do we hide our faces? What might we find 'behind the mask'?

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Further Resources

- [Behind the Mask website](#)
- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Japanese Arts Collection](#)
- Mack, John: *Masks: The Art of Expression*, British Museum Press (2013)
- Sakade, Florence: *Folk Tales from Japan*, Tuttle Publishing (2020)
- Waley, Arthur: *The Noh Plays of Japan*, Tuttle Publishing (2009)

Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Music and Theatre

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (M.Cr.01, T.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (M.Cr.02, T.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (M.P.06, T.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (M.R.07, T.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (M.R.08, T.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (M.R.09, T.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (M.Co.10, T.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (M.Co.11, T.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Writing

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

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Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: places to explore (HSS.1.T2)

Grade 2

- Topic 2: Geography and its effects on people (HSS.2.T2)
- Topic 4: Civics in the context of geography: countries and governments (HSS.2.T4)

Grade 6

- Topic 1: Studying complex societies, past and present (HSS.6.T1)

Grade 7

- Topic 2a: Physical and political geography of East Asia (HSS.7.T2a)
- Topic 2c: Ancient Japan and Korea, c. 300 BCE-1300 CE (HSS.7.T2c)

