

MASK AS METAPHOR

Objectives

- Students will activate the idea that an object can represent big ideas/themes
- Students will generate a list of themes that a mask might represent
- Students will connect as they create wishes for one another based on their generated themes

Materials needed

- A paper mask
- A whiteboard or smartboard to notate brainstorm ideas

Activity

In *Kristina Wong, Sweatshop Overlord*, masks are the central objects of the play. Over the course of her story, they transform from things we wear for protection, into symbols of community, caring, and hope. Wong says: “it may not seem like much, but to the person who receives a mask made for them by a complete stranger, I imagine it makes them feel that they matter, that someone cares.” In this activity, we will identify what masks mean to us, and use what we find to connect with one another.

- Explain that the activity is called “Mask as Metaphor” and ask the students to define metaphor: a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, especially something abstract. Students and instructors might come up with examples, such as a rose representing love, or a dog representing loyalty.
- Explain that in *Kristina Wong, Sweatshop Overlord*, masks become symbolic for many of the large ideas of the play: care, community, purpose, and hope.
- Write these words on the board, and brainstorm with students about what else a mask might represent for them, notating as they generate ideas.
- Ask the students to stand (or sit) and make a circle.
- Explain to the group:
 - We’re going to pass a mask around the circle, and as you hand it to your neighbor, you’re going to give it to them with eye contact and with a one or two word wish for them, based on what the object means for you. It can be something that’s on the board, or something that you come up with yourself. So you might give them the mask and say “I wish you good health,” or “I wish that you will be shielded from danger.”
 - Rules:
 - The wish must be positive. No curses. 😊
 - You can’t repeat anybody else’s wish – we’re going to see how many things one object can represent.
 - Nobody can question anybody else’s wish – whatever it means to them is just right.
- Write the wishes shared on the board so they are visible to all.

Post-Activity Reflection

- Thanks so much for sharing those wishes with each other. Let's take a moment to look at all the wishes we generated.
- Take a moment to think about an object that is important to you. What does that object represent to you? Would anyone like to share?

While you watch the play, notice the object featured in the show: thread, hand sanitizer, a Hello Kitty sewing machine. In what way do some of these objects become symbolic?

Extensions and Variations

Select other objects from the play to explore: thread, hand sanitizer, etc.

Ask students to bring in an object that they feel represented their 2020 lockdown experience.