

**HOME Story Time Art Activity | December 2020**  
**Lynden Sculpture Garden**

HOME program: [www.home-at-lynden.org](http://www.home-at-lynden.org)

Recordings and downloads: [www.lydensculpturegarden.org/calendar/home-story-time](http://www.lydensculpturegarden.org/calendar/home-story-time)

**Book, English & French:** The Lord of the Dance: An African Retelling/Le Seigneur de la Danse by Véronique Tadjó

**HOME Story Time Readers:** Liliane McFarlane [English reader] & Clay Prather [French reader]

**Art activity by Lynden art educator:** Claudia Orjuela

**Activity 3: Parent-child art activity**

**Celebrate identity and culture: Create a paper bag mask**

The book we read is a celebration of the Senufo mask tradition. Also, the book is an invitation for us to celebrate our own traditions and to learn about new traditions.

Today we will create a mask out of paper bags. Like the Senufo, we will be the chosen person that wears and performs the mask. Masks hide our appearance. Hiding our face behind a mask can free us and allow us to show hidden parts of ourselves or to change into something different. What do you want to become when you wear your mask? Let's make our mask and find out!

In the north of the Ivory Coast, in the continent of Africa, lives the Senufo tribe. They are farmers and strongly believe that everything in nature is alive and it has a spirit - plants, rocks, trees, mountains are alive. This is why every part of nature must be honored and treated with respect.

Senufo masks are carved out of wood by a sculptor. The masks reach their full potential and special power when used and performed during community gatherings like celebrations or funerals. The masks represent the Senufo spirits -the hunter, the protector, the dancer. Senufo masks combine features of humans and animals like human-panther, human-bird. The Senufo don't only wear the mask but also perform it, and dance with it.

**Materials:**

1. 2 Paper bags (grocery store bags or slightly smaller). One is the mask and one for extra paper.
2. Scissors.
3. Glue or tape.
4. Paper scraps to collage like construction paper, cardstock, tissue paper, magazines.
5. Markers, crayons, pastels to draw and decorate.
6. Embellishments: yarn, pom-poms, glitter.

### **Art Making Process:**

We will make a mask out of paper bags and use the Senufo mask tradition, patterns, and animals as inspiration. The steps offered are directed to parents or teachers.

Prepare the bag:

1. Cut off bag handles.
2. Cut out shoulder holes on the sides of the bag so the top of the bag rests on the child's head. This will keep the mask from floating and keep the eyeholes in the right position. Adaptation: If your child is 4 or younger a grocery store bag may be too big to work with. You can cut the bag to make it smaller or work with a smaller sized bag. If your child is hesitant to put a bag over their head, they can use a paper plate as an alternative to make the mask. They can make a puppet using lunch size paper bag as well.
3. Cut out eyes and mouth holes. Have your child wear the bag and point to the center of both eyes and draw a dot on the bag. Do the same with the mouth. Mouth holes are helpful for ventilation in the paper bag mask. Next, cut out the eye and mouth holes. Assist with the cutting as needed.

Make the mask:

4. Brainstorm ideas. Prompts for children: What do you want to become when you wear your mask? Let's think of an animal that we find interesting. During the making process your idea may change into something different but it's good to have a starting point. Is there a part of the face you want to highlight by making it bigger or brighter? How will the eyes, nose, ears, mouth, whiskers, hair look like? What are some special powers of your animal? Can your animal hear distant sounds, see well at night, or has very sharp teeth?
5. Making the mask. Offer a variety of collage items such as colored paper, color pencils, yarn, pom poms. Allow child to play around with materials and experiment with different options until they find the right configuration and are ready to glue the parts down. Making art with children is more about the process than the end product, let's make the process enjoyable and playful. Allow your child to take the lead in decorating their mask.
6. Coloring. Invite your child to draw directly on the paper bag (4-6 yrs) or collage (6-8 yrs) their mask features. To collage, sketch the different parts of the mask on a separate paper. I started drawing big eyes, eyebrows, tiny nose, and a bird mouth. Use simple shapes like circles, triangles, and squares. Cut out the parts, test different options, and glue them down.

7. Add Patterns. Color the mask parts using the patterns from the book as inspiration (Look at pattern examples in Activity 2). Invite your child to use repetition of shapes in their mask - triangles, circles, squares, lines-. Patterns will make the mask appealing, vibrant, and fun.
8. Perform with the mask. Wear the mask, look in the mirror, and step into your character. Is your mask expressing an emotion? What's your animal's name? How old is it? Develop a movement your animal character will make and repeat it several times. Play a song and dance with the mask on!

**Useful Links:**

- African masks examples: <https://www.artfactory.com/africanmasks/masks/african-masks.pdf>
- Art and Life in Africa: <https://africa.uiowa.edu/media/index?People=87&MediaType=Image&action=Use+Filter>
- Sculpture from West Africa: [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/smpa/hd\\_smpa.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/smpa/hd_smpa.htm)