

# Make your own Roman theatre mask

## Method

1. Take your cereal box, undo any glued edges and open it out so that you can use the plain inside surface.
2. Draw an oval for a face shape on a large flat rectangular part of the box. Don't worry if it is a little uneven but remember, if you want to create a mask that will be wearable make sure it is large enough. A good guide is to draw an oval at least 16cm across at the widest part and at least 21cm long. **DON'T** cut the mask out yet as you might need extra room to add additional details like hair.
3. About a third of the way down from the top of the head mark 2 eyes by drawing 2 dots approximately 7cm apart. Make a little circle around the dot, about 1-1.5cm in diameter. These are the pupils, if you want to wear the mask you will need to carefully cut these and the mouth out.



4. Now look at some of the images of Roman mask (bottom right) and pick one to inspire your design. Remember, the features and expression are meant to be exaggerated so really go for it!
5. At this stage you need to choose. You can either carry on with your simple mask and add colour with pens, pencils and paints OR...
6. You can use your drawing as the base for a 3D mask and build up some of the features with papier mache. **WARNING:** This will take several days to do properly.
7. Scrunch up small pieces of newspaper and tape them to the card mask to build up some of the features such as the nose, prominent eyebrows, hair, beard etc.
8. Once the features are taped to the card mask, cover them with a thin layer of papier mache to smooth out and secure the features. You will need to let each layer of papier mache dry overnight, 3 thin layers should be plenty. For the final layer, perhaps use white paper to leave a nice plain surface which you can paint.
9. When thoroughly dry colour in the mask using pens and paint. **REMEMBER:** if you are using paints don't dilute them with water. Acrylic paints are best.
10. Finally, if you want to wear the mask you will need to fix elastic or string to the mask to either side of the eyes.



Mask-making images courtesy of The University of Nottingham Museum.

## Materials needed for a simple card mask

- Cardboard that you can cut with normal scissors – a cereal box is perfect!
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Coloured pens, pencils or paints

## Additional materials needed for a 3D mask (this will take several days)

- Newspaper and other scrap paper
- Masking tape
- Papier mache glue mix. Either:
  - 2-parts PVA glue and 1-part water mixed well, or
  - Equal parts of flour and water with some salt added to prevent mould, mixed well.
- Container for soaking papier mache pieces – try using a clean plastic container which otherwise would go for recycling.

## Optional

- Elastic, ribbons or string to tie to allow you to wear the mask.

