

# Native American Horse Mask (art + history)

Horses were an integral part of the culture of many western and Plains tribes such as the Nez Perce, Blackfeet, Kiowa, Crow, Comanche, Cheyenne and Sioux. The honor and value the Plains people gave to their horses was evident in the way they adorned them with woven blankets, beaded harnesses and painted symbols indicating ownership, bloodline and accomplishments. Some tribes even made masks for their horses as a way to give them a look of intimidating power and fierceness.

Many historical examples of Native American horse masks are made of woven straw adorned with bright colors, patterns and symbols, colored porcupine quills and feathers.

In this lesson plan, students make a horse-shaped form with woven-texture paper, then decorate their masks with ancient cultural symbols, feathers, beads etc. The finished mask can be worn or hung for display.



## Grade Levels K-6

*Instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

## Preparation

1. If working with K-2, pre-cut waffle paper according to pattern. Older ages can trace the pattern or measure and draw it themselves.

If using patterns, prepare in advance by transferring the template on page 3 to a piece of posterboard, paper or scrap cardboard.

Note: pattern on page 3 is not to scale, use the measurements provided.

## Materials

[Waffle Paper](#), natural kraft color (11212-8336), 36"W x 8-ft roll, cut to 18" x 16" for 12 pieces per roll, need one piece per student

[Blick Economy Construction Paper](#), 9" x 12" assorted colors (11420-1003), need approximately one sheet per student

[Fiskars® Scissors for Kids](#), blunt (57010-1005), need one per student

[Blick Washable Glue](#) 4-oz, (23872-1044), share one bottle between two students

[Swingline 747 Stapler](#) (57231-2050), 4 to share

[Blick Tempera Cakes](#), (00001-0069), share one 6-color set between six students

[Blick Water-Based Markers](#), (21224-0089), share one 8-color set between eight students

**Optional Materials that may be used for Decorating:**

[Roylco® Native American Designs Paper](#), (11262-1090), pack of 32 pre-printed sheets, size 8-1/2" x 11", need one pack per class

[Imitation Eagle Feathers](#) (60906-1004), package of four, need one per student

[Duck Quills](#) (61199-1003), 3-oz bag, need one bag per class

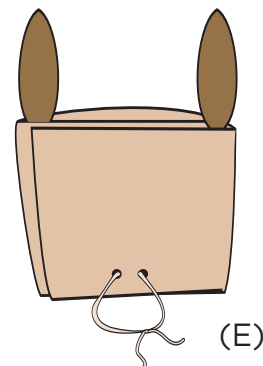
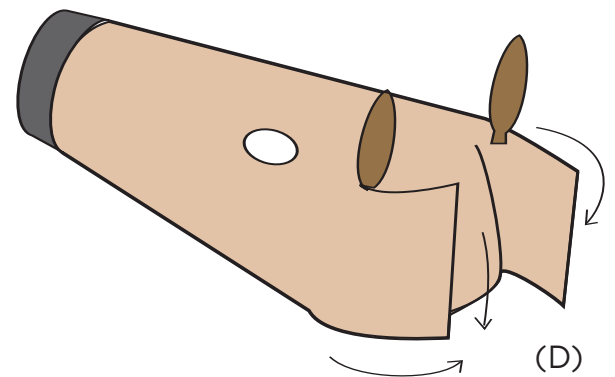
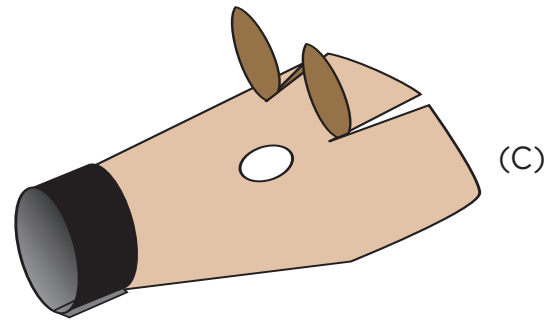
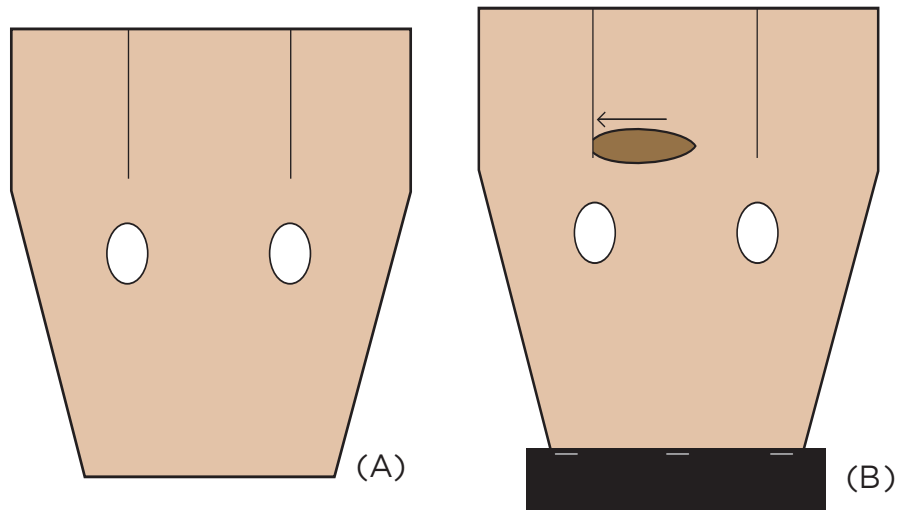
[Indian Seed Beads](#), multicolor (60725-1000), 3-oz bag, need one bag per class

[Raffia](#), natural (60908-1375), 6-oz bag, need one bag per class

[Pony Beads](#), multicolor opaque (60772-1020), package of 1000 beads, need one package per class

## Process

1. Copy the pattern on page 3 onto the waffle paper and cut along the marked lines. Mask will look like illustration (A).
2. Create artwork on the surface of the mask while it is still flat, using various materials and techniques. Some ideas:
  - Use paint or markers to draw Native American symbols.
  - Cut shapes out of construction paper or pre-printed paper with Native American designs and glue in place.
  - Small beads and feathers may be glued onto the paper.
  - Use a punch to create holes along the edges of the paper. Tie raffia through the holes. String pony beads and feathers to the raffia.
3. From a single sheet of construction paper, cut a 12" wide x 3" high strip and 2 ears (refer to the pattern on page 3 for ear shape). Glue or staple the strip to the nose area and the ears at the end of each cut slot, see illustration (B).
4. Roll the strip into a ring and staple it together to form a nose, see illustration (C).
5. Turn the mask around and assemble the back side of the head. Hold the center flap down, then bring each side flap in and staple or glue in place, see illustration (D).
5. The mask can either be worn or hung on the wall for display. A hanging loop can be made by punching two holes in the back of the head and tying a loop of raffia, see illustration (E).

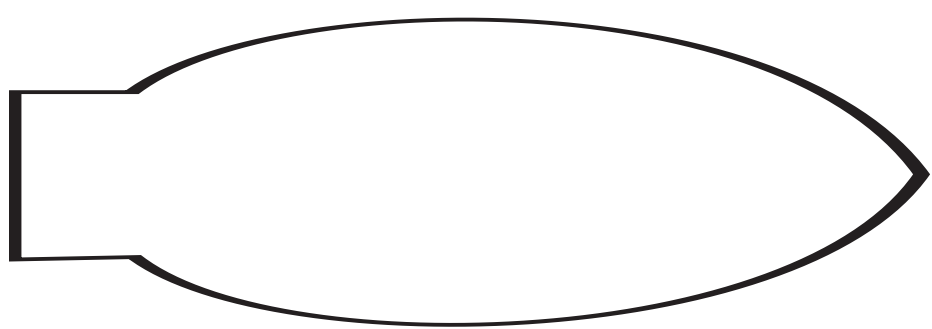
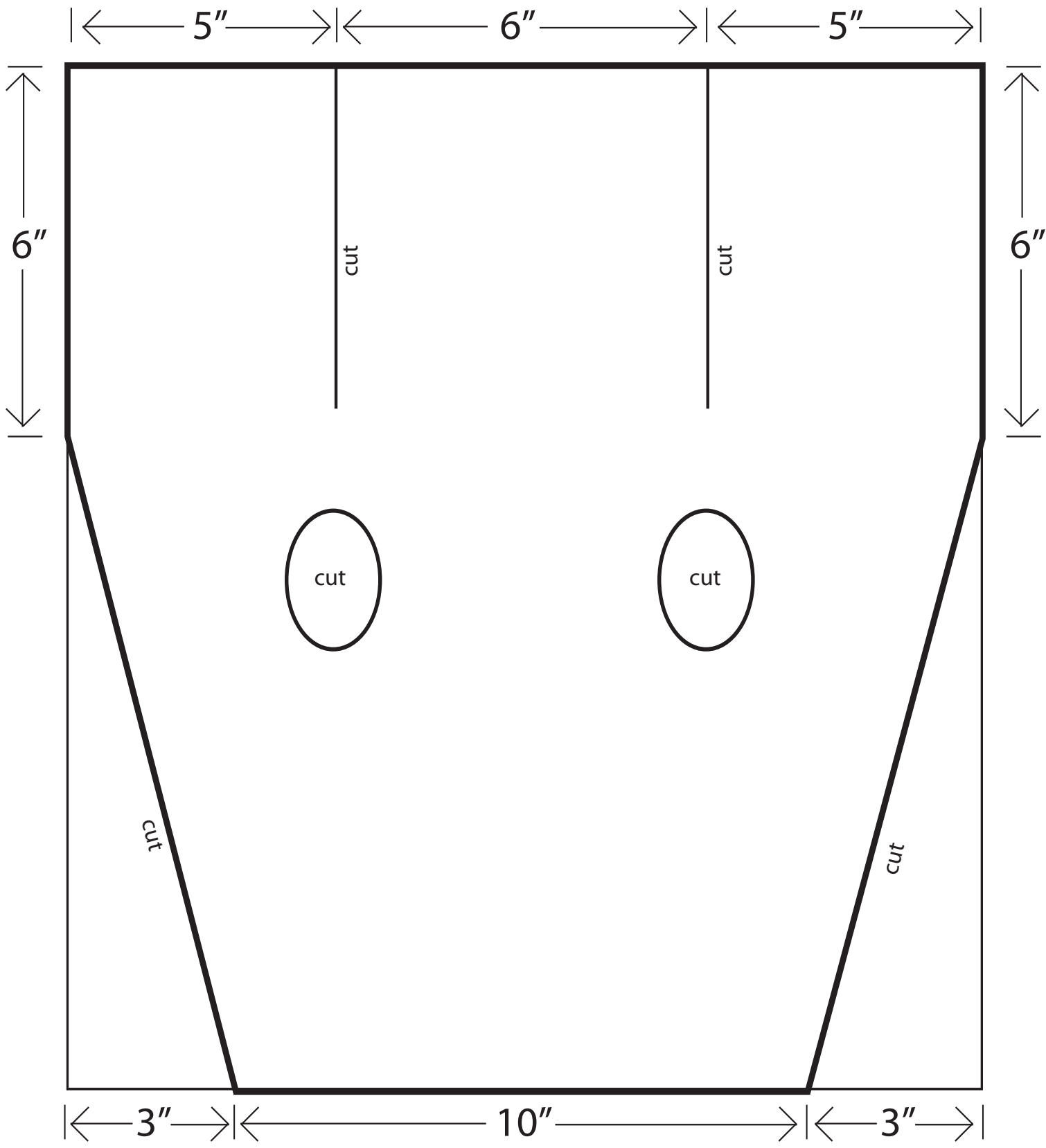


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## National Standards

**Content Standard #4** — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

- K-4** Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places
- 5-8** Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures



**Ear Pattern**  
(cut 2)