

# The Many Faces of

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## Looking Good?

Huge eyes and sharp fangs may not look friendly. But audiences on the Indonesian island of Bali love this beast, called the *barong ket*. In traditional plays about the battle of good and evil, the *barong ket* stands for goodness. It also represents hard work: Getting those rich colors can take 150 coats of paint!



CHARLES & JOSETTE LENARS/CORBIS (ABOVE) WOLFGANG KAHLER/CORBIS (TOP)



BY JACKIE GLASTHAL

**P**ut on a mask, and suddenly you're someone else. You become Harry Potter, Princess Fiona, a cat, a crook, or a clown. Masks change the way you look *and* feel. No wonder people sometimes think that masks have special powers!

For about 15,000 years, humans have created masks to use in storytelling, prayer services, death rituals, and more. This photo-essay brings you face-to-face with masks from around the globe. And it tells some of the stories behind the masks.

# Eyes on the AFTERLIFE

**A**ncient Egyptians designed this mask to look like their young pharaoh, or ruler—Tutankhamun (TOOT on kah mun). You may know him as King Tut. When Tut died in 1323 B.C., priests carefully **mummified** his body. Then they placed this golden mask over his face.

Why bury such a beautiful object? The answer lies in religion. Ancient Egyptians believed that when Tut died, his soul left his body and split into pieces. Some of those pieces returned to the body. The mask might help them find Tut.

The Inca people of South America also made burial masks from gold, wood, or clay.

Ancient Romans sometimes created a wax mask when someone died. They hired an actor to wear it during the funeral march.

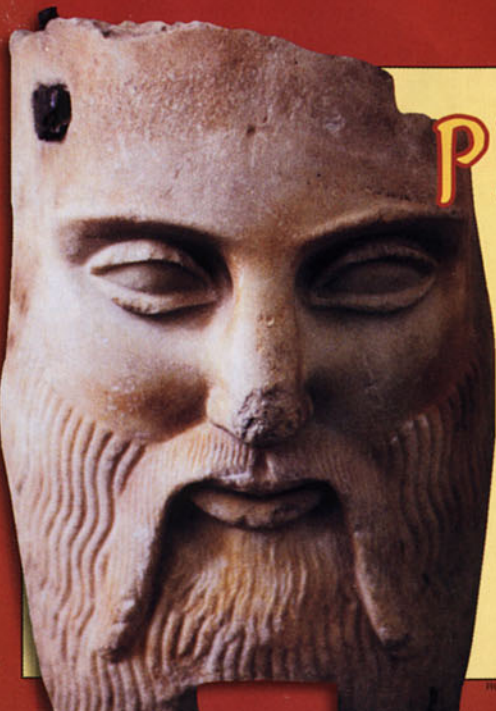


CHARLES GRAHAM/STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY/PICTUREQUEST

# PLAYING Around

**W**hen the ancient Greeks went to the theater 2,500 or so years ago, they never saw the actors' faces. Performers wore masks made of linen. Later they used leather too. The masks helped actors look like Zeus, Athena, and the other gods and goddesses who appeared in Greek plays. This was helpful because men played all the parts—even those of women.

We're not sure exactly what those masks looked like, but this sculpture of the river god Achelous (ak uh LOW us) gives you a rough idea. Some Greek masks had built-in **megaphones** to make the actor's voice louder.



ROGERIO YANNICORIS

# Let It RAIN!

**T**he Nahua people living along the coast of Mexico crafted this mask of a rain god. The god's eyes are blue, like water in a lake. His hair and beard ripple like a stream.

The Nahua's rain gods seemed to sleep through long, dry winters. To wake them up in the spring, Nahua boys put on masks like this and danced on a mountainside. They performed this ritual into the 1800s.

Native peoples use masks in similar **ceremonies** today. The Hopi and Zuni tribes in the Southwest create fancy leather masks that stand for rain, stars, sky, and more.

In the Northeast, Iroquois healers wear wooden "false faces" with bulging eyes and broken noses. They believe the masks scare away illness and evil spirits.

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# FAMILY Reunion

**F**amily gatherings aren't just for the living. That's the view of the Yoruba people in western Africa. Villages hold special ceremonies to honor their ancestors. In exchange, the dead relatives are supposed to protect the living from harm.

For these ceremonies, the Yoruba create elaborate costumes and masks. Dancers wear these outfits to represent the ancestors' spirits. (But the masks are not portraits.) Relatives greet the spirits respectfully, hoping to make them feel like happy members of the family.

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