

Behind the Mask

The Woman Who Outshone the Sun

Educational Guide, Grades 1-12



About the Performance

A beautiful and mysterious woman, connected deeply to the magic of nature, is exiled from a mountain village and takes its water source, the river, with her. Through their suffering for what they have lost, the villagers learn important lessons of tolerance, forgiveness, and their impact on the ecosystem. The layers of teachings hidden in this beautiful folktale attune the audience to the cycles of nature, the messages of water, and the magical life that unfolds with living from the heart. Based on a poem inspired by a Zapotec folktale.



About the Artist

Master mask-maker and performer **Eric Bornstein**, owner and founder of **Behind The Mask**, is much sought after by arts groups throughout Massachusetts and beyond for his craftsmanship and creativity, and by schools for his vibrant performances for school assemblies and inspiring mask-making workshops. Eric has studied with masters Agung Suardana in Bali, and Donato Sartori in Italy. He received his MLA in Fine Arts along with the Thomas Small prize from Harvard University. His masks have appeared most recently in the 31st Cambridge River Festival, Contemporary Theater of Boston's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Performance Lab's *Le Cabaret Grimm*, Underground Railway Theater's *Life of Galileo*, and the Harvard Yiddish Players' *Shulamis*. Over the last 30 years Eric's masked characters have appeared in a variety of venues. They were a highlight of Boston's First Night celebration for 15 years. His masks have also appeared at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Fuller Craft Museum, the Kennedy Library/Museum, the Boston Lyric Opera, the Boston Ballet, the Society of Arts & Crafts (Newbury Street), The Peabody/Essex Museum, King Richard's Faire, and Revels.

Program Learning Goals

1. To experience the art of storytelling.
2. To bring to life the story of *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun* through mask theatre.
3. To explore the lessons of traditional folklore in modern society.

Essential Questions

1. What can learning about other cultures teach us?
2. How are Mexican and Latin American folktales similar to the ones you learn in school?
3. How is hearing a story told out loud with masks different from reading a book or watching a movie?

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Spanish Vocabulary

Spanish	Pronunciation	English Translation
Bruja	broo-ha	Witch
¿Dónde está?	dohn-day ess-tah	Where is it?
¡Perdóneme!	pear-dohn-eh-mey	Excuse me!
Danos el rio, por favor	dahn-ohs ell ree-oh por fah-vohr	Give us the river, please

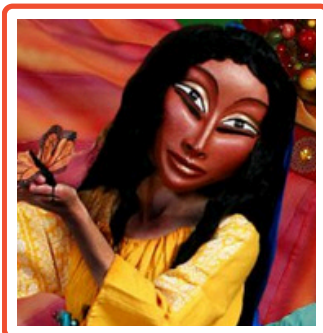
Key Facts and Context for Students

Mexico and the Zapotec People

Mexico is a country in **North America**. It borders the southern United States and is the 10th most populated country in the world. This performance is based on a **Zapotec** folktale. The Zapotec people are an indigenous group in Mexico, with ancestral homeland in Mexico's southern state of Oaxaca. The Zapotecs call themselves **Bën Za**, which means "The People."



Geology.com



Masks and Storytelling

Each mask featured in this performance was made by hand. It can take up to 100 hours to make a mask with enough detail to show a character's personality and emotions. Performers must practice how to move with them in order to create the characters in their stories.

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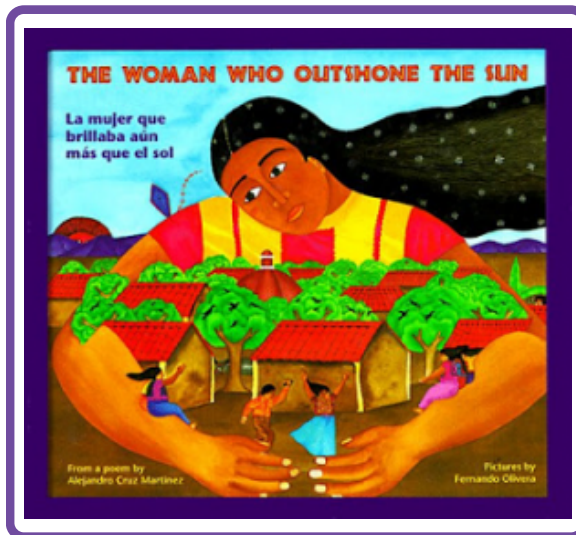
Key Facts and Context for Students, continued

More About *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*

Based on a poem inspired by a Zapotec folktale, the story begins when Lucia Zenteno arrives in a mountain village in central Mexico. Some villagers are afraid that her long, black hair blocks the sun; others say she outshines it. The villagers banish Lucia from their village, but the river follows her. This leaves the villagers without water until they can find Lucia and beg for forgiveness.

Eric Bornstein and **Behind the Mask** have worked with this story since 1999. The performance has grown deeply and has something to offer to every age group.

Audiences will identify with the various characters, particularly the main character who is free, connected to the universe, and full of love. Through an exploration of the changing seasons and the importance of precious natural resources, students will see how they affect their own communities and the world around them. Portrayals of positive leadership teach how to apologize for mistakes and embrace healthier relationships.



"When we are connected, present, and in a state of love walking in tune with nature, we walk a magical path that allows for an interspecies communication and the performing of miracles. It opens the door to infinite possibilities."

- Eric Bornstein

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Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What is a mask? When do you wear masks? How does it feel to wear a mask?
2. What characters in movies or TV shows wear masks? How does the mask affect their character?
3. What do you know about Mexico and Mexican culture? What would you like to know? How could you find out more?

Pre-Performance Activity: Bringing Stories to Life with Masks

Learning Goal:

To understand different points of view by portraying a character through wearing a mask

Materials:

Plain white paper and drawing supplies

Directions:

1. Ask every student to name a favorite book, folk tale, or fairy tale. Name a favorite character from the story (e.g. Goldilocks - baby bear) and share with the class.
2. Have students draw the face of that character on plain white paper and cut it out.
3. Divide the class into groups of four. Have students hold up the masks they made, then walk, talk, and act like the character they chose within their groups.
4. Discuss with students how they felt when they were pretending they were somebody else. Was it easy or difficult for them to feel like a different person?

Extension:

Use a variety of art materials in making the mask (e.g. yarn for hair, large paper bags for structure, pipe cleaners for whiskers, etc.).



Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What did you notice in the performance? What did you see and hear?
2. How did you relate to the different characters in the story? Did you see yourselves in the main character Lucia?
3. What did the villagers learn in the story? How did they change from the beginning to the end?
4. What did you learn about the importance of natural resources and being part of your community?

Post-Performance Activity: *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun Today*

Learning Goal:

To retell and discuss the story of *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun* in a contemporary setting

Directions:

1. Ask students to retell the story of *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*. Have one student begin with one sentence, then go around the room with each student adding one sentence to the tale until it is told in its completion.
2. Discuss ways to update the story to current time in regards to:
 - Setting: where the story takes place
 - Characters: who will be portraying the important characters in the tale and how do they compare in job, age, etc.
 - Plot: how events in the story could be changed to events that could happen now
3. Tell the story again with the updated, modern details.
4. Ask students what they learned from the original version of the tale. Is the modern version easier to understand? Did they learn more from the characters once they were placed in situations the children could better relate to?



Extension:

Create masks to represent the modernized characters and act out the story together.

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Further Resources

- [Behind the Mask website](#)
- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Latin American Arts Collection](#)
- [The Woman Who Outshone the Sun Teacher's Guide from Lee & Low Books](#)
- Mack, John: *Masks: The Art of Expression*, British Museum Press (2013)
- Wolf, Bernard: *Beneath the Stone: A Mexican Zapotec Tale*, Orchard Press (1994)
- Zubizarreta, Rosalma, Harriet Rohmer, and David Schechter: *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun: The Legend of Lucia Zenteno*, Children's Book Press (1991)

Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (M.Cr.01, T.Cr.01, V.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (M.Cr.02, T.Cr.02, V.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (M.P.06, T.P.06, V.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (M.R.07, T.R.07, V.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (M.R.08, T.R.08, V.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (M.R.09, T.R.09, V.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (M.Co.10, T.Co.10, V.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (M.Co.11, T.Co.11, V.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Writing

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

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Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: places to explore (HSS.1.T2)
- Topic 4: Economics: resources and choices (HSS.1.T4)

Grade 2

- Topic 1: Reading and making maps (HSS.2.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography and its effects on people (HSS.2.T2)
- Topic 3: History: migrations and cultures (HSS.2.T3)
- Topic 4: Civics in the context of geography: countries and governments (HSS.2.T4)
- Topic 5a: Resources (HSS.2.T5a)

Grade 4

- Topic 1: North America: geography and map skills (HSS.4.T1)
- Topic 2: Ancient civilizations of North America (HSS.4.T2)

Grade 6

- Topic 1: Studying complex societies, past and present (HSS.6.T1)

Grades 9-12

- World History Topic 1: Dynamic interactions among regions of the world (HSS.WH1.T1)

Science and Technology/Engineering

Earth and Space Sciences

- Earth's Place in the Universe (1.ESS.1.2, 5.ESS.1.2)
- Earth's Systems (2.ESS.2.1-4, 3.ESS.2.2, 5.ESS.2.1-2, 7.ESS.2.4, HS.ESS.2.2,5)
- Earth and Human Activity (3.ESS.3.1, 4.ESS.3.1, 5.ESS.3.1, 7.ESS.3.2,4, 8.ESS.3.5, HS.ESS.3.1-3,5)

Life Science

- Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics (2.LS.2.3, 7.LS.2.1-6)
- From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes (4.LS.1.1, 5.LS.1.1, 8.LS.1.5)

Biology

- Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics (HS.LS.2.6-7)
- Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity (HS.LS.4.5)

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Curricular Connections, continued

World Languages Standards

Communication

- Engage in, negotiate with, and improvise with cultural norms, etiquette, and nonverbal cues. (S.4.e)

Linguistic Cultures

- Analyze and evaluate variations among products and practices and how they relate to perspectives in multiple cultures and communities. (S.5.a)
- Analyze and evaluate the contributions of various cultural influences in the development of identity. (S.5.b)
- Investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of culture through comparisons of diverse target-language cultures and their own (S.6.a)

Lifelong Learning

- Research, analyze, evaluate, and hypothesize about diverse perspectives and distinctive viewpoints found in authentic materials from target-language cultures. (S.7.b)
- Apply cultural and linguistic skills to participate in the school, local, and global community (S.8.a)

