

Papier-mâché plague doctor mask.

This is a multi-day project best done during warm dry weather, and gets messy, so wear old clothes and rubber gloves.

materials:

newspaper

school glue\*

scissors

string, elastic, yarn, shoelaces...

ruler or straightedge

scotch tape

bottle cap large enough to cover your eye

permanent markers

shallow container or bowl for glue mixture

large cylindrical container (gallon jug, pitcher, coffee can etc.) roughly the size of your head

plastic wrap or plastic bag large enough to cover head-sized container

saucer or cylindrical cleaning wipe container, about 4" diameter

rubber gloves

a couple of fist sized rocks or old paperbacks.

something to color the mask—paint, permanent markers, or a few sheets of construction, tissue, or white printer paper

a nail (if your scissors don't have a sharp point)

\*you can also make papier-mâché paste by adding 1 part flour mixed with 1 part water until smooth to 3 parts boiling water and stirring constantly until mixture goes from opaque to translucent, then let cool.

Take one two-page sheet of newspaper and fold it into fourths. Tape the marker to the ruler so the point of the marker just sticks out from the ruler. Holding the ruler at the bottom corner of the folded side of the paper, use the marker to draw a quarter circle from the opposite to the top corner of the paper. Cut along the quarter circle and unfold; you should have a large circle. Cut along one of the folds to the center and stop.



Starting at one flat cut edge, roll the circle up into a cone shape. Hold the wide end of the cone up to your face and adjust it to cover from just above the tip of your nose to just under your chin. Tape the cone so it doesn't unroll.



Cut a few inches of string and measure from the inside corner of one eye, up over the bridge of your nose, and down to the inside corner of your other eye. Mark the distance on the piece of string with the marker.

Take one two-page sheet of newspaper and fold it into fourths. Halfway down the creased side of the paper, mark a straight line in from the crease half the length of the piece of string. Trace around the bottle cap so the circle just touches the line to make the eyehole.



Place the cleaning wipe container a third of the way along the straight line and trace, then draw curved lines up from the bottom and down from the top of the circle. Add about a half inch border—you don't have to be precise; you might end up trimming some away.



Cut along the outside, then snip the middle of the smaller circle and cut out the eyeholes. Unfold; you should have two mask shapes.



Hold the mask and cone up to your face so the mask and cone overlap at the bottom of the mask and the top of the cone, making sure you can see out the eyeholes and the cone covers your nose and mouth. You can trim the outside if it's too large for your face.



Now comes the messy part: time to put on your gloves.

Cover your work area with newspaper. If you want your mask to have a nose ridge, tape a marker halfway down the head-sized container. Put the container in the plastic bag or cover it with plastic wrap and secure at the top and bottom with rubber bands or string.



Lay your head-sized container down on its side on your work surface and wedge rocks or books to either side so it doesn't roll around.

Pour glue into the shallow container and mix with an equal amount of water. Tear a few sheets of newspaper into long strips. Apply a thin layer of glue to the back side of your mask and place it glue side down on the plastic wrap.



Dip a newspaper strip into the glue/water mixture and apply it to upper side of the cone, starting at the point and working towards the mask, smoothing as you go, covering the join between the mask and the cone. Repeat until you can't see the join anymore, about 3 layers. Tear more newspaper into strips about the length of your hand and apply to the mask, making sure to avoid the eyeholes. Apply strips in alternating directions to make your mask stronger; stop at three or four layers of newspaper. Dip the second mask shape in the glue mixture and apply over the strips. Leave overnight to dry.



When your mask is dry, it should come away from the plastic wrap without sticking. Hold it up to your face and make sure it fits.

Flip your mask over so you are looking at the inside of the nose cone. Pour some of the glue/water mixture into the cone and spread it so it covers the whole inside. Apply more newspaper strips to cover the join between mask and cone on the inside. Leave to dry.



Use the scissors to trim any ragged edges from your mask. You can either paint it, color it with permanent markers, or apply more layers of papier mache with white or colored paper. Poke a couple of holes on opposite sides of the mask about an inch in from the edges above your ears and run string, yarn, elastic, or shoelaces through so you can tie the mask on.

