



Nature Faces



Overview:

Children and/or families will create an ephemeral (temporary) portrait, self-portrait, or family portrait using non-traditional art materials.

Collecting, sorting, and arranging materials invites families to use their imaginations in new ways. The medium can allow for creations that are as abstract or representational as participants desire.

Supplies:

- Background material, such as corrugated cardboard from shipping boxes. Other options include paper plates in multiple colors, pie pans, homemade playdough (such as [this recipe](#) from Tinkergarten) or the ground (if doing this activity outdoors).
- Small containers or bags for collecting natural items
- Small mirrors (optional)
- Pre-gathered natural materials such as twigs, leaves, petals, pebbles, etc. (or invite families to collect)
- Index cards and writing implement for titles

Directions:

Setup

- If using mirrors, distribute at tables/workspaces.
- If offering pre-gathered materials, spread out “buffet” style on one or more tables, along with containers for selecting materials. Make sure materials are at a child-friendly height.
- Make sure families have sufficient space to spread out their materials for viewing and selection.
- Because it’s difficult to affix 3-D natural materials, this activity works best for young children as an ephemeral/temporary creation that can be preserved in a photo. However, older children might want to affix natural materials to a very sturdy background using Aleene’s tacky glue, which you can set out in tubes or poured into small cups with inexpensive paintbrushes or craft sticks.

Instructions

- Today we are going to make pictures of our faces. Let’s try name all the different parts of a face. (Consider writing down all the ideas on an easel/board.)
- Our faces look different depending on how we are feeling. Show me how your face looks when you are happy. How about when you are frightened, etc.? Which parts of your face look different when your mood changes?
- We’re going to make our portraits out of things we find in nature. (Model this activity with some of the materials you’ll be using.) What should I use for my eyes? What do you think I should use for my mouth?
- Let’s gather some materials to make our portraits, either by choosing materials from the table, or going on a short nature walk to gather items that we might want to use in our portraits. (Remind families not to damage living things.)
- Give families time to create their self/family portraits. Remind them to refer to the list of features, and to think about what feeling they want to show in their portrait.
- Finished? Create a title and/or a description for your portrait. Tell us how you are feeling in your picture, and why.
- Make sure to give clean-up directions and designate a space for collages to dry if using glue or playdough.

Follow Up:

- Take pictures of self/family portraits for a shared online gallery.
- Use the remaining natural materials for other unique ephemeral creations.

Additional Resources:

- [Nature Faces at the Happy Hooligans Blog](#) (cardboard and glue version)
- [Clay Nature Faces at Messy Little Monster](#) (using homemade playdough)
- [Nature Faces at Make and Take](#) (created directly on the ground)