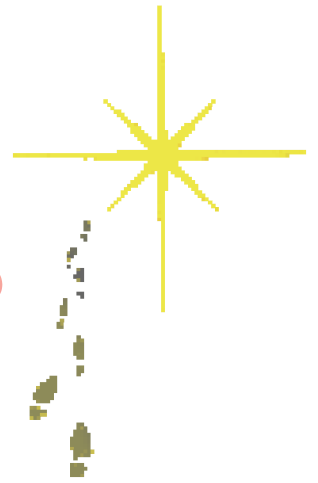




# Freedom Songs



## We Wear The Mask

***We wear the mask that grins and lies  
It hide our cheeks and shades our eyes.***

These are the words that begin a poem written and published in 1895 by Paul Laurence Dunbar, who was the son of a slave who escaped slavery in Kentucky to freedom in Canada.

His poem ends —

***We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
We wear the mask.***

**\*\* Vile means wicked, disgusting or indecent.**

In his poem Paul Laurence Dunbar is saying that his people who were once slaves have learned to hide their true feelings. They did this because it helped them to survive.

One of the ways they hid their feelings was through their facial expressions and body language which told the world something very different than what they felt.

Sometimes their true feeling came out in their music. Listen to the freedom songs again, and try to understand the emotions of the slaves as they sang these songs.

Choose one of the freedom songs. Create a mask that will reflect the true feelings of the slaves as they sang these songs. Your teacher will help you choose appropriate materials to use in making your masks.

