



LEATHER LEARNING

HOW TO MAKE A PLAGUE MASK

Download our lesson plan and
template



History: what is the story behind this very strange mask?



In the 17th, and 18th century Europe was gripped by the Bubonic Plague or Black Death. A deadly virus that caused people to come out in boils and was generally very nasty.

Doctors up to this point were only available to very rich people.

Although there was no NHS these special Plague Doctors were paid by towns to treat the poor. Typically they were second rate doctors or not even doctors at all with little or no experience. In one case a plague doctor had previously been a fruit stall seller with no medical experience!

Plague Doctor Costume

In those days little was known about the transmission of disease but they did understand the need for protection. The 'doctors' wore long full length cloaks made of waxed cotton, boots, hats, gauntlets and most distinctly a long beaked mask made from leather with either glass or wire mesh for the eye sockets.

The believed that bad smells caused disease ('miasma') and to combat this the beak of the mask was stuffed with sweet smelling herbs such as camphor, rosemary, thyme and even spices, all pack in with straw.

Source: edited from Wikipedia

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They also were known for carrying canes. This was used to poke and prod the patient so they did not have to get too close. A version of social distancing!

Other treatments they might use included putting frogs, leeches or even a chicken on the boils!

So not only were you feeling unwell but a strange apparition came to your house and poked you with a cane—it must have been pretty terrifying.

The plague doctors themselves were often quarantined due to their work and were not allowed at public gatherings.

Making your own Plague Mask

For the full tutorial go to [Felt Magnet—Making a Plague Mask](#) an excellent resource sent in by our customer Stephen Jon Cooper (Mask Maker).

The tutorial is illustrated using card, to make in leather follow the same steps but where the card is stapled stitch the leather instead

If you are making from leather then here are the supplies you will need:

- [Firm calf leather piece](#) or [1.2-1.6mm veg tan side](#)
- [Large Eye stitching needles](#)
- [Thread](#)
- [Rivets and setter](#) to attach the back strap
- An [awl](#) to make stitch holes
- Leather scissors

You will also need a mallet for the rivets and some PVA glue.



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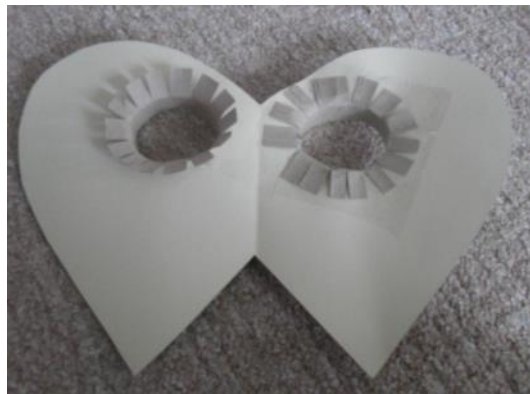


IDENTITY LEATHER CRAFT

for people who make, mend or adapt things out of leather



Source: <https://feltmagnet.com/crafts/How-to-make-a-plague-doctors-mask-Black-death-dead-diseased-middle-ages-Tudor-times>



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