Sustainable Play: Make a Bird Costume with Suzy Ultman

Chapter 1 - Sustainable Play: Make a Bird Costume

Overview

(bright music) - Do you like to use your imagination? Do you love critters and fun characters? Do you have paper bags at home? Well, then make a bird costume with me, Suzy Ultman. I'm an illustrator, toy maker, and storyteller. This class was inspired by my love of going out to my own backyard, and checking out all the critters and wildlife there. I came to realize that birds are everywhere. They're in the city, they're in the country, and they're in places in between. They connect us with nature, and to the bigger planet. For the costume, you get to rummage through your shopping bags. We'll be stapling and cutting, gluing and painting, and at the end of it, you get to fly away as your own bird. This craft is very kid-friendly. I've provided techniques and instructions for every step of the way for the goldfinch, and you can also use your imagination to create birdies from your neck of the woods. (bright music)

Materials

- Materials for this project can be found right in your very own house. For your bird, your main material will be your paper bags. You're gonna need one paper bag for the bird head, and then I would say two to three paper bags for your wings. Then you've got your PDF printout that will have a template for your bird mask and some other fun inspiration for your bird creations. You'll need cutting tools. You definitely need scissors on hand to cut out everything. And then I like to have an X-ACTO blade on hand to cut out things like the eyes, but you can also use scissors for that If you don't have an X-ACTO blade. You'll need a stapler, and you'll need your brushes. You can also use colored pencils, but I like to use paint. For this project, you'll have some big areas to paint, so you wanna make sure you have some bigger brushes for those areas, your water. I've got my paint palette, and then I've got some really fun craft paints. Whatever you have around the house, they'll work beautifully on the paper bags. I've got some pencils and pens, and I always have a paper towel hand to keep things clean, like my hands, my brushes, and then pens. Pencil and eraser, super important for any project. Glue for the wings, and then tape for your template. And that's it. Can't wait to get started.

Prepare and cut the bird mask

- I am super excited about this project. I love birds, and I can't wait to share with you the different birds that we're gonna make out of paper bags. When you print out your PDF, on the first page, you'll find some drawings of birds that I've created for you. They're all backyard birds from North America. If you live in North America, you should be able to spot these birds. There's some information about each one, their habitat, where they're located, and what they eat. The fun thing about this PDF is you can use it for your own backyard bird watching, and you can use it as a coloring sheet. For this class, we're going to be making the goldfinch, and later on we'll be previewing an owl. First things first, we need to make our template for the bird mask. When you print out the template for the mask, it will come in four sheets, so you'll need to cut it and tape it together, one, two, three, and four. The first one I'm gonna trim is number one. I'm gonna do this side. Just cut as straight as you can, just follow the line. And then I'm going to line this up here, and tape that down. Usually when I have to tape something this long, I start with one piece of tape,

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make sure that's lined up here, line up your lines. Start with one piece of tape to hold it down, like that, and get my bigger pieces of tape, and just go like that, so it can move kind of fast. I'm cutting off the border of number three, just the bottom one here. And I'm gonna line that up with number four. Put my little piece of tape to hold it in place, and then put my longer tape down. Next, I'm gonna trim this border off of number two. And then we can lay that right down there, over three and four, and tape that all together. And now we wanna cut around the entire edge of the mask. You've got your bird mask template. The next step will be to cut your paper bag to trace the template onto. I've got a nice big bag, you wanna make sure that your mask is going to fit onto your bag, which it will once we cut it all the way open there. (paper rattling) And you wanna make sure you follow how I cut this, so that you get the most area out of your paper bag. So we're going to cut down the center. And like that. And same thing on the other side. Now we have the full area of your paper bag. Fold the paper bag in half. Lay your template on top of your paper bag. And trace around. Make sure you get a pencil in there, in every corner. You can see the bird head on there. Keep your template, we're gonna be using that again. Next, you're gonna cut out your bird head following the line that you drew. Make sure you cut through both layers of paper. You can see I'm holding the paper bag together as I cut. If this were fabric, we'd have pinned it together, but we have to use our hands since it's paper. It might help at this point to cut off some of the extra paper as you work around the beak. And there you have it. You can flip it over. Oops, there was a little accident there, that flipped up. So if I pull that down, I can trim it off. There we go. It's time to put in the staples. We're gonna start here at the bottom corner. I have a little stapler, but you can use a regular household stapler as well. (stapler clicking) You're in about 1/8 of an inch. For any sewers out there, you are basically sewing with the stapler. Just remember, as you staple, keep the bottom open, since this is a mask, and we're gonna be putting it over our head. I'm gonna continue on the beak, I'm gonna put two staples on the bottom of the beak, and two on the top, since it's a kind of a smallish beak. (stapler clicking) Keep stapling all the way around, until you come down to the other edge. And this is what it looks like when it's all stapled up.

Paint the bird mask

- Now, we get to draw the bird's face onto the mask. We're gonna take our template, and I'm grabbing a pen, just to show you the yellow markings. (pen scratching) Just scribble it in. This whole area on your bird will be yellow. (pen scratching) So what we can do with our handy dandy template now is cut around that area. (scissors snipping) We wanna leave our yellow area intact. (scissors snipping) So we're gonna cut out everything that I did not scribble yellow. That is the yellow part of our bird. Next, we're gonna take our pencil and draw around the template we just created. (pencil scratching) For the beak, you can draw all the way up. Now, you can see right here we've started an eyeball. We're gonna finish off that eyeball. Just close that arc, just like that. Perfect. Now, the next step is we are gonna put our mask on, and draw light circles for where our eyes will be. If you're doing this with a child, put it on their head, and draw the circles for them. So I have to take my glasses off for this part. Put the mask on yourself or your child, (paper rustling) and then gently poke your eyes, and trace around 'em. (pencil scratching) You can see that my eyes are a little askew, so I'm gonna raise this one just a bit. It's hard to do this on yourself. So now, we are going to cut these out. This is where I like to use an X-Acto blade to get them started. If you don't have one, you can use scissors. It's just a little bit easier to get in there with an X-Acto blade, and you'll note that I'm only cutting through one layer, through the front of the mask. And now that I've sliced in with the X-Acto blade, I'm gonna cut my circles with scissors. (scissors snipping) That's

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also why I like to use the X-Acto blade. Sometimes with scissors, you can puncture and go through both layers. (paper rustling) (scissors snipping) Circle number one. (paper rustling) (paper rustling) (scissors snipping) And eye hole number two. You can see the underlayer of the mask peeking through. The next step is to paint the yellow part of the mask. Get my yellow paint, squeeze some out, and my nice big brush. Actually, I'm gonna start with my other big brush, my less big brush, and go around my outline first. I'm from Ohio, and the goldfinch is a pretty popular bird in Ohio. Maybe not as popular as the cardinal, but still a very popular bird. It's always fun to see a bright spot of yellow in the trees. By doing this, you'll give yourselves a nice border, so you can go in with the big paintbrush, and lay down a lot of paint really quickly. I'm gonna put a scrap of paper back here. (paper rustling) There we go. To keep paint from going onto the back of the mask. It's not that anybody would see the paint on the back of the mask, it's just that your mask will start sticking together. All right. Now, I can get my biggest paintbrush, and put down a lot of paint. (art tools rustling) (paint brush scratching) Keep painting the entire area with your yellow. Once your yellow is dry, you can start adding the other fun details. I'm gonna start with the eyeball. Gonna get some white paint. Shake that up. I'll use my big brush for the eyeball. I like to start with the outside border, and work my way in. When you're painting on a paper bag, there are gonna be some folds from the paper bag. Kind of work your brush around those bumps. It's a little tricky getting that corner, so I want to turn the bag to get the best angle from the brush. It's really fun to see how the colors pop off of the paper bag. Next, we're gonna do the eyeball, and the little feathers on the top. We're gonna need to dry that eyeball. You can let it sit and dry, or you can use a blow dryer. I have a heat gun on hand. I'm gonna use my heat gun. (heat gun whirring) Alrighty, now we're gonna do our eyeball. I like to pencil it in before I paint it, and it's right on this bump here, so I'm just taking my time drawing over that. (pencil scratching) So we've got our eyeball, and we're gonna draw some little teeny feathers up there. Got a nice blue color. (paint bottle clicking) (paint squelching) And I'm gonna get my medium brush. Well, that's a big one. Let's get a medium one. That is a super fun, giant eyeball. Birds have really beautiful, fine, little feathers. If you look at a photo of a goldfinch online, you'll see that they have just the cutest little feather pattern. So we're gonna create kind of an abstracted form of a feather pattern on the top and the bottom of the bird. Just sort of having fun with a paintbrush, lightly putting the paint down, and following the direction of the bird's head. Not using a whole lot of water because the paper doesn't really like a ton of water on it. So keep adding your feathers until you fill up the forehead of your birdie. And next, we're gonna do the neck of the bird with yellow. We're gonna go back to our yellow. I need a little bit more on my palette, and I'm gonna keep the medium brush, but I'm gonna press a little bit harder, so that these look kind of bigger. Like that. Birds have different size feathers on their bodies, so we're creating that illusion of different size feathers, and again, following the curve of the bird's head and neck. Perfect. Now, finally, we get to put on the beak, which I'm gonna use... This is not a color from nature, but I think it looks really great. So we're gonna use a really bright pink. (paint bottle clicking) (paint bottle clicking) And I'm gonna use my big brush. We're not going for complete accuracy on this mask. We can tell it's a goldfinch, and also have fun playing with the colors, and there we have our bird head. The next step will be to make the wings and the body.

Make the bird cape

- To start the wings, grab another paper bag. First take off any extra handles or bits from your bag. (paper rustling) This bag happens to have handles. (paper rustling and tearing) Our bird is going to have a feathery collar. We're gonna draw that on first. I've got my bag with the open side down

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here, (paper rustling) and the bottom is up here and I'm gonna draw my feather collar. Draw that in nice and dark so you can see it over any printing that might be there. We're gonna cut the front and the back out of the bag. We're gonna start with the front. (paper rustling) (scissors snipping) First you cut all the way up to your line. (scissors snipping) And the same thing on the other side. I wanna cut out this feathery ruffle. First I'm just gonna cut straight across. (scissors snipping) Now save any extra paper. We're gonna use this to create the feathers of our wings. Now I'm gonna cut my ruffle. (scissors snipping) This is going to be the front of our wing cape. Now we're gonna cut the back of the bag off. (paper rustling) We're just gonna cut up and around. (scissors snipping) Remember to save your extra paper to create feathers. (paper rustling) If I open this up, I've got a little cape that we're gonna be able to put over our head to wear as the wings. So you ask, "How are we gonna get this over our heads?" Well, we have to create a head hole. So what I'd like you to do is gently fold your wings in half. (paper rustling) And we're gonna cut a rectangle out of the center. (paper rustling) (scissors snipping) Cutting all the way through both sides of the bag. (scissors snipping) Depending on the size of your head or your child's head, you might need to increase the size of this hole. I'm a small human adult (laughs) so I can fit this over my head, but I need to put some slits here (scissors snipping) so I don't rip it. It's a helpful hint. Now we're going to put this back on the table and paint our feather ruffle. I kind of ripped this a little bit to get it to lay flat for painting, that's totally okay. Now I wanna put something down to protect the table as I paint. I'm gonna grab a scrap of paper. Put it underneath. And I need my yellow paint. Got my extra big brush. Got a nice crease here that creates a straight line guide. Now you'll notice there's printing on the paper bag from the grocery store. That's fine. Your yellow will cover it right up. And even if some shows through, it'll look like texture and birds have a lot of texture, so it adds some personality to the costume. So now we have the front of our wing cape. We're gonna put this aside and start working on the feathers. Grab the paper that you cut out from your bag and cut it into some strips. (scissors snipping) Cut out some larger pieces for yellow feathers and some smaller pieces for brown feathers and spotted feathers. (paper rustling) With your larger pieces, gonna need more yellow, you wanna paint it yellow. We're creating a piece of yellow paper, essentially, to cut out feathers. So you wanna paint this entire piece of paper with yellow paint and then paint your other piece of paper brown. And I'll show you how to make a dotted pattern. You'll need brown along with your yellow and your medium brush. And first I'm gonna just paint a bunch of little brown blobs. Making feathers out of all these different colors and textures will help give the cape a lot of dimension. Next, you'll wanna add some yellow blobs. You can definitely play around here. It doesn't have to be anything planned. Lay your speckle pattern out to dry and we'll be cutting feathers out from four papers. The yellow, the brown, the speckled and the plain paper bag. This is where you get to have a lot of fun. You can make the feathers smaller or bigger. The smaller you make them, the longer it's gonna take you to glue them on. I like to make my feathers about an inch and a half thick. So like this. (scissors snipping) And then about four inches long. This is something that I eyeball. (paper rustling) But you can see I cut to about here. Look at that. And then I lay them all on top of each other. And I make a (scissors snipping) feathery kind of shape like this. I keep it square at the top and then rounded at the bottom. So you have a whole stack of brown feathers. Let me show you how to do that with the yellow. (paper rustling) This one, I think we can go like this. (scissors snipping) And then again like this. (scissors snipping) I stack them on top. (scissors snipping) Put your shortest ones on the top of the pile. (scissors snipping) And I've got another stack of feathers. Keep making feathers until you have a whole bunch. I have all of my feathers cut. You can see that some are a little bit bigger than others. That won't be noticeable once you start making the wings.

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And also, you might need a second bag to cut more feathers to complete your wing set. You might not know how many you need until you start working, but you can start with a bag that you have and then see how it goes. Grab your wing cape and lay it down in front of you. We will start gluing on the feathers. We're gonna fill this side with feathers and we're gonna fill this side with feathers. This is our head area, so that's staying clean of anything. You can just play with the layering of the feathers to give it a lot of texture and depth. Your fingers will get very gluey. But that is the fun of crafting. (paper rustling) Let's start with a yellow feather. So we are making a goldfinch here. And I find it helpful to sort of smush it in there. The glue will dry and adhere really well, but initially it wants to move around a bit. All right, now for feather number two. I think I'll put another yellow one down there. Just take your gluey finger, put some glue just across the top of your feather. Now I think I'd like to put something a little different next. I'm gonna try one of our spotted feathers. You're gonna be working the feathers across and you're also gonna be working down. I like to work both ways to sort of see how the colors look together. (paper rustling) Next I'm gonna go with some brown. And when you start working down, you wanna kind of lay it under and you can start to see how you're creating that feathery look. Putting our glue on. You can also see I'm not really going in any order. I'm just kind of creating a feathery look. Keep adding feathers until you get to the very bottom. I just have a couple more to finish up here. So exciting! (paper rustling) I don't have a set pattern. I'm just trying to make it varied and layered. I did use a lot more yellow, since we're making a goldfinch, than any other color. I use the least amount of the brown. It does take the glue, you know, a couple minutes to dry. So you wanna make sure, especially if you've got excited kids, that it's fully dry before you put this on. And if you feel like you want it to be flatter or bent, paper bends really easily. Put my glue on. There we go, our wing is finished. Do the other side. And when everything's dry, you get to try the whole costume on. You're ready to fly. I've also created an owl design for you to try. This owl design was based on the screech owl. If you've seen one or if you look one up online, they are very, very cute. They're fairly populous, so you can maybe scout one in your own backyard. I've also given you in your PDF a template for just the eyeball part so that you can easily draw this section here. And we just have a paper bag that you can slip over your head and all you need to do is cut out your eye holes. And if you'd like, you can also cut a scallop at the bottom. The wing cape is the same design as our goldfinch. The colors are different to match the owl. I created a slightly different feather shape that feels more owl-like. Now I get to try it on for you. It's a hoot. It's kind of hard to believe that these fantastical bird costumes were once just paper grocery bags. Thanks for taking the time to learn about birds with me and have a great time creating stories with the new costumes you've made.

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