

Glancy

The Mask Maker

In *The Mask Maker*, Diane Glancy tells the story of Edith Lewis, a recently divorced mixed-blood American Indian, as she travels the state of Oklahoma teaching students the art and custom of mask-making. A complex, subtle tale about flesh-and-blood human beings, this enchanting novel shows how one woman copes with alienation, loss, and questions about identity and, in the end, rediscovers meaning in living. Through Edith's daily life and efforts to teach, Glancy explores the power of the mask and mask-making. When Edith tries reaching out to a listless, alienated student, she knows enough to ask, "Where would you want to go?" He replies, "Nowhere," to which she responds with the advice, "Then make a mask to take you nowhere." For Edith, masks go beyond the limitations of words and surface gloss. "A mask is a face when you have none," she reflects. Yet some stories need to be confronted, so Edith struggles with the question of how to use masks to tell stories without using words. Glancy's Edith is no idealized sage but a very human character struggling as best she can while enduring clueless officials and teachers. When Edith explains to one teacher how the art of mask-making reaches students on a creative, intuitive level, she is chided as impractical: "We're supposed to reach them through math and English." In *The Mask Maker*, Glancy provides the reader with intriguing new ways of looking at identity, at language, at intangible values, and at love. This captivating novel on the human need for self-expression will delight readers of all ages.

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