This mask comes from Sri Lanka. It is a dancer’s mask in the shape of the serpent demon and demonstrates the evil power of snake poisons. The cobra often appears on masks used in dances or healing ceremonies, where the poison is driven out of the person who is ill. These ceremonies still take place in some parts of Sri Lanka.

The Museum has a number of Sri Lankan masks with cobras on them. Some of the masks represent the eighteen disease demons who are believed to cause all sorts of illnesses and misfortunes, from snake poisoning and stomach aches to blindness and even death!

Can you find the mask of Maha Koka Sanni Yaka, the commander of these eighteen disease demons? It is carved to show cobras, sick people and the faces of all the demons.

you will need

- tracing paper
- card
- sticky tape
- scissors

how to make

- hole punch
- elastic
- colouring pencils or crayons
Photocopy or trace the cobra mask template on to card.
Colour it in.
Cut out all three sections. Don’t forget to cut out around the eyes and the mouth!

Fold along the dotted lines, bending back the sides of the mask.

Make two slits by cutting along the black lines on the front of the mask.
Fold along the dotted lines on the two side pieces to make a flap.

Slide the flap into the slot on either side of the mask. Stick down.

Punch holes on either side of the mask, behind the side snakes.
Attach elastic through the holes so you can wear the mask.

Why not design your own mask to keep away illnesses. What would a mask against hayfever look like? Or one to keep away the chicken pox?