

THE TASK OF THE MASK

A PRINTABLE STORY

Per the recommendations of U.S. health officials, many people are wearing masks in public. For children, this precaution can look strange and feel scary. “The Task of the Mask” uses upbeat, reassuring language to address children’s concerns and explain why people are wearing masks.

Written by educator and parent coach [Joan Morgenstern](#) of [Senders Pediatrics](#) and illustrated by Lucy Williams, the printable story provides age-appropriate information about why people are wearing masks. It’s filled with colorful illustrations and written in lyrical language that children will enjoy. The PDF also includes an activity to help children understand that masks are not scary.

When we feel worried ourselves, talking to children about complex and challenging situations can be especially tough. “The Task of the Mask” gives you the information and language you need, along with helpful strategies to carry you and your family through these unusual times.

Remember, too, that reading a story can always represent a precious moment of connection. Be present as you read the story with your child, enjoying your time together. Connection translates into increased cooperation, willingness, and impulse control. During these unprecedented times, connection with our loved ones is more valuable than ever.



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BY JOAN MORGENSTERN

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY LUCY WILLIAMS

A Message to Grown-ups:

U.S. health officials are recommending that people wear face masks in public to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, especially when physical distancing is difficult to maintain. Although this is a reasonable precaution, for many young children this new normal will look strange and might even feel scary.

The book, *The Task of the Mask*, was written to help allay young children's worries, so they can be better prepared for this situation. The language in the story is lyrical and upbeat; its message is clear: the purpose of the mask is to collect nose and mouth germs so they don't spread to other people. It also describes the difference between a face mask and an eye mask, which is something many young children use in pretend play. Most importantly, the story reminds children that although the face mask might look different, the person behind the mask is always the same!

Helpful Tips:

- If possible, read the story before going with your child into public venues, where people will be wearing face masks
- Keep this book available for children to review. They may want to hear the story over and over again. This is a sign that they are working to understand and make meaning of the changes they are experiencing
- Engage your child in conversation as you read the story to them; listen carefully to their questions and respond simply, honestly, and in a matter-of-fact manner
- Cut-out the paper face mask template in the back of the book and invite your child to decorate it. It may be helpful to make a stencil of the mask so this activity can be easily repeated
- Encourage your child to make face masks for a favorite doll or stuffed animal
- If available, add a real face mask to your child's pretend play toys

About the Author:

Educator and Parent Coach Joan Morgenstern is passionate about helping children and their parents. With more than 30 years of professional experience, Joan offers support and assistance to the many families she works with. In her current role as Director of Parent Education and Community Outreach at Senders Pediatrics, a Cleveland based-pediatric medical practice, Joan provides one-on-one parent coaching, parent education classes, and in-service training for educators.

To learn more about Joan visit her at:

www.senderspediatrics.com and www.JoanMorgenstern.com



What are you wearing
that covers your face?
I'm wearing a 'mask'
and it's in the right place.



To stop germs from spreading from a big achoo, that's one of the things that a face mask can do!



It works like a cover
to keep germs inside,
our very own mouth –
where our germs should reside.



A face mask is used
like a protective cape,
so when we are talking
germs cannot escape.



Did you know that germs
are not easy to see?
Although people spread them –
and quite easily!



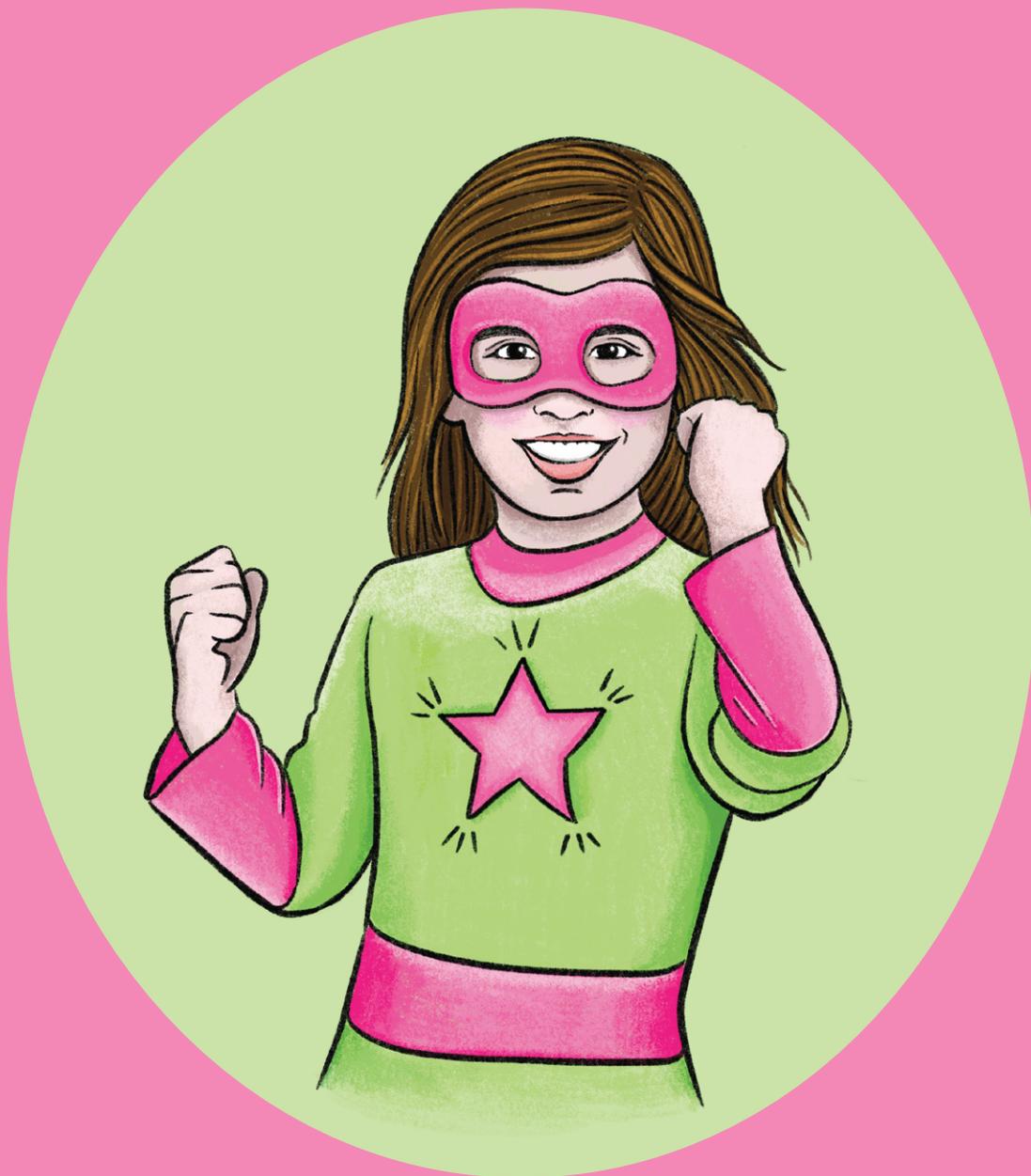
Germs don't have a color,
nor shape that is clear.
We don't have a clue when
the germs are real near.



Germs travel through noses
and mouths – it is true.
That's one of the things
many germs like to do.



Face masks are used –
you may see more each day.
To help folks stay healthy
and keep germs away!



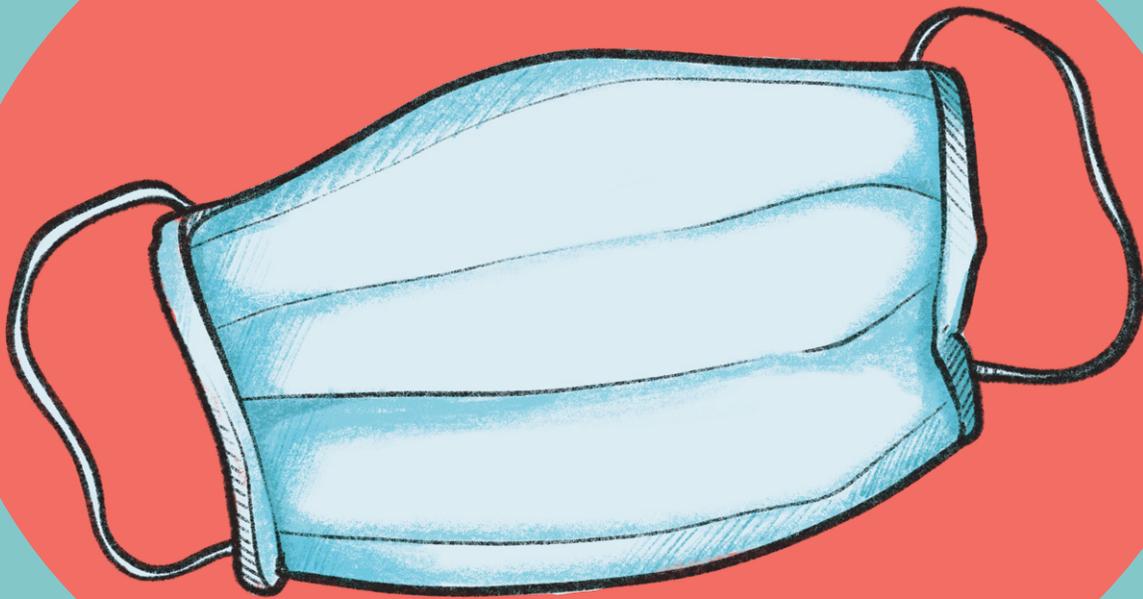
You may have a mask
that can cover your eyes.
When playing pretend –
it's the perfect disguise.



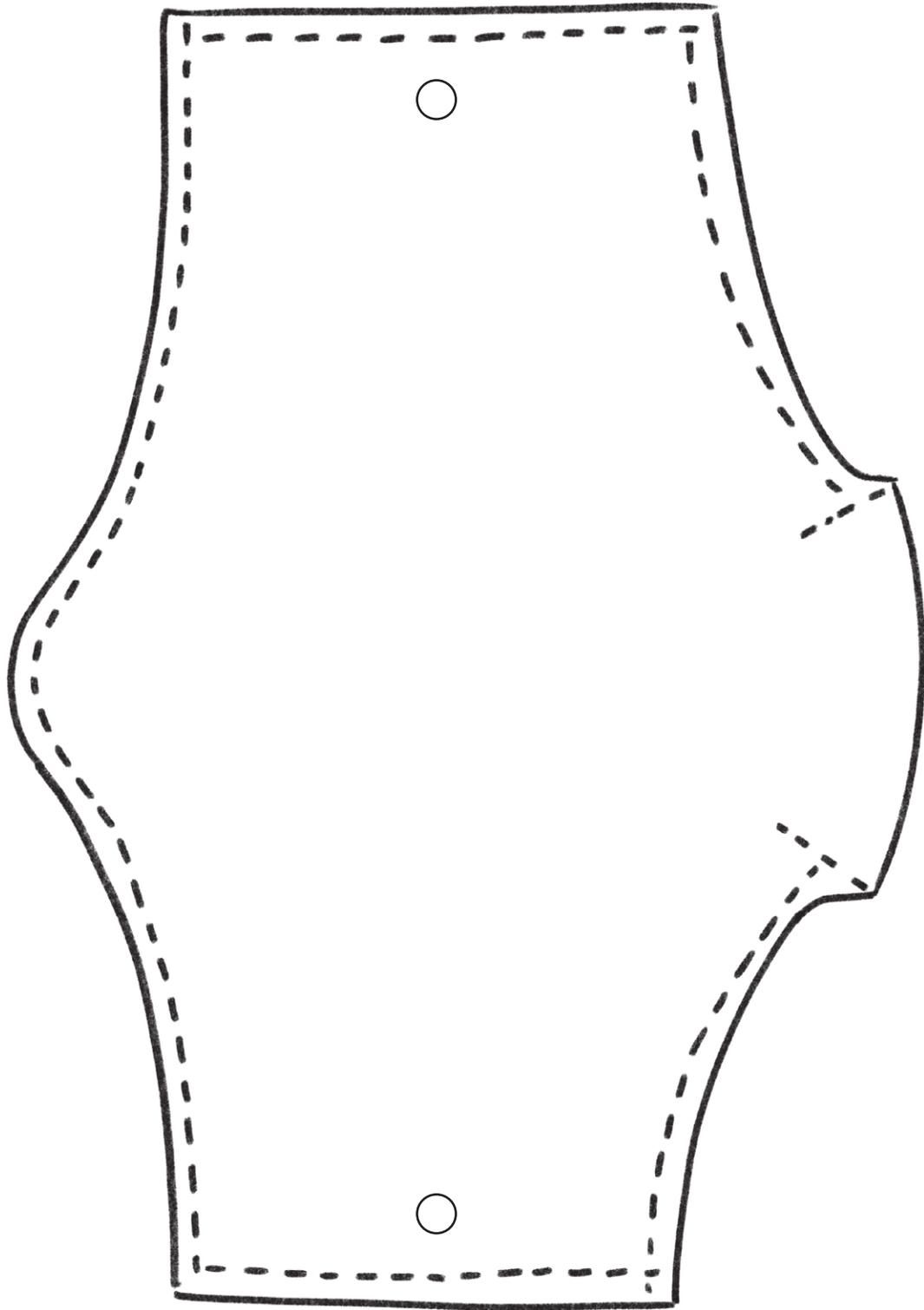
But this one is different –
it has a big task,
to catch nasty germs –
that’s the job of this mask!



There's no need to worry
nor feel less at ease.
A face mask holds germs back
and catches each sneeze.



And always remember -
because it is true,
each person's the same,
it's the mask that is new!



This is a mask for you to color.

An adult can help you cut it out.

Punch holes at both ends and attach elastic or string so it can be tied.

Practice putting it on yourself or on a favorite
doll or stuffed animal.