

Stone Stories

Stone carvings are found throughout Scotland's medieval castles, cathedrals, palaces and churches.

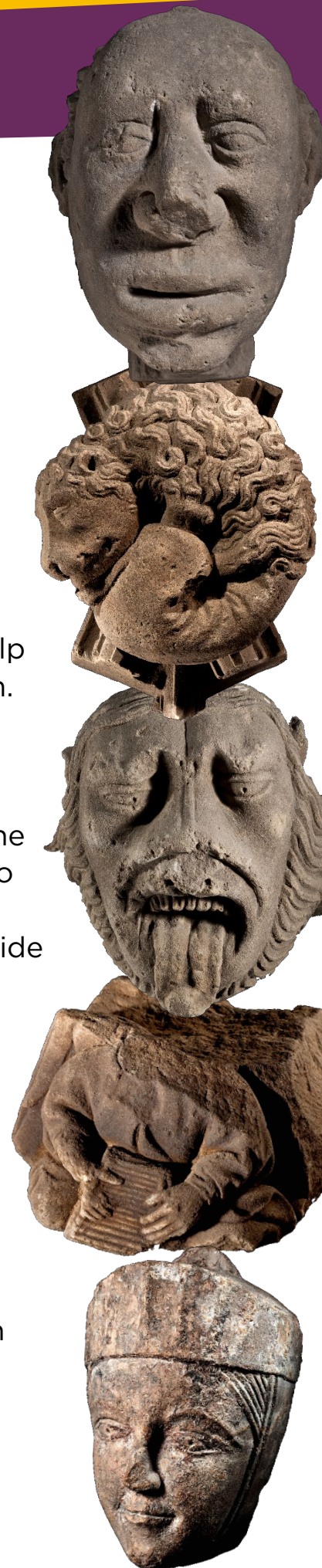
Why did people make them? What did they mean?

During medieval times, most people couldn't read. Carved stones were used by wealthy and powerful people like lords and ladies, and by the church, to help communicate messages to the people who saw them.

The stones we're looking at here are from Elgin Cathedral. From around 1270 - 1560 this was a very important religious place in Scotland. The inside of the cathedral was highly decorated with stones carved to look like people, animals, monsters and plants. They also would have been painted bright colours. The inside of the church is a huge space and all this decoration would have been very impressive and maybe a bit overwhelming.

Symbols in stone

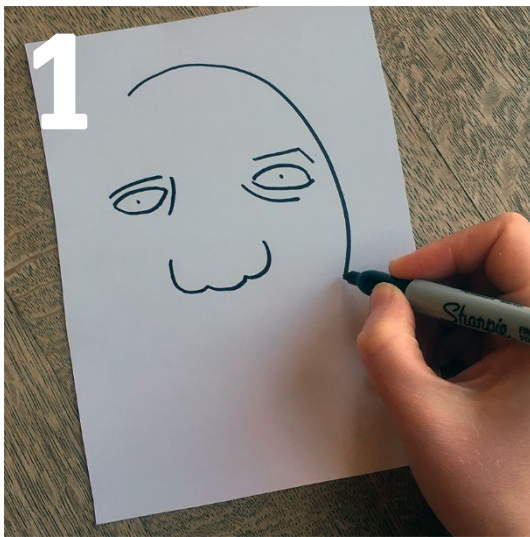
We think that most, if not all, of the carved stones had symbolic meanings. Some of these meanings we think we know - the people pulling faces or screaming were a reminder to churchgoers not to sin - but others we are not sure about. These stones were made a long time ago and people thought about the world differently from the way we do today.



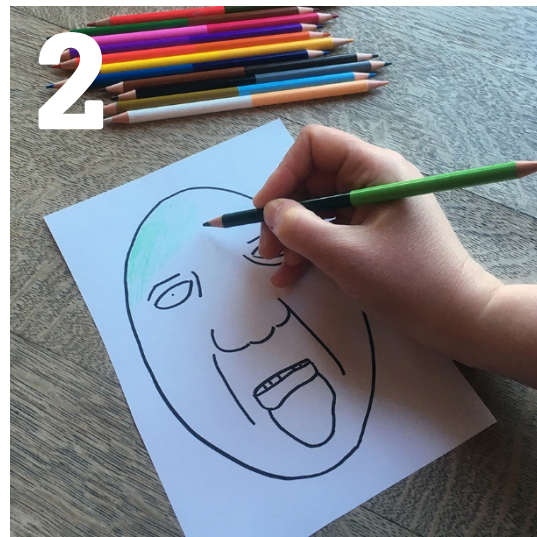
Make your own mask

On the next pages you can find out more about 3 of the carved stone 'Elgin Heads'.

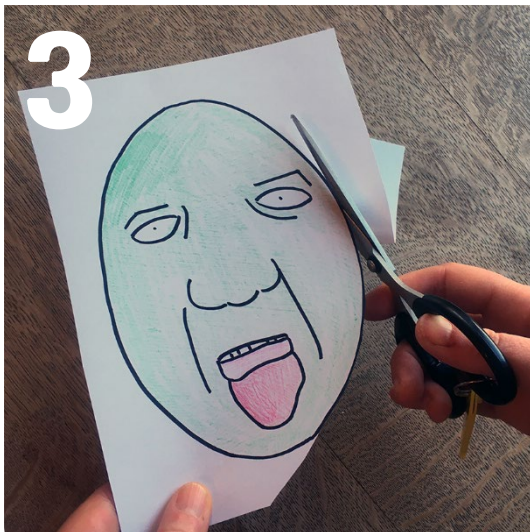
To make your mask you can either draw one following our step-by-step or, if you have a printer, print out one of the templates.



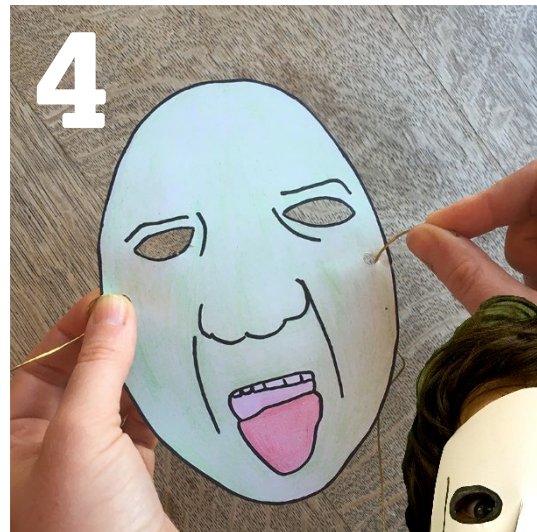
1 Draw your mask.



2 Give it some decoration



3 Cut it out.



4 Add string, elastic, or a strip of paper.

Top Tip

You can use scissors to make your mask 3D



The Dog Head

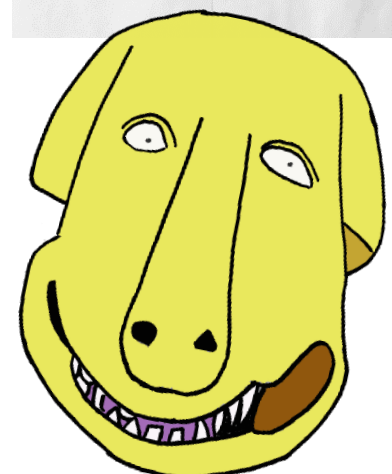
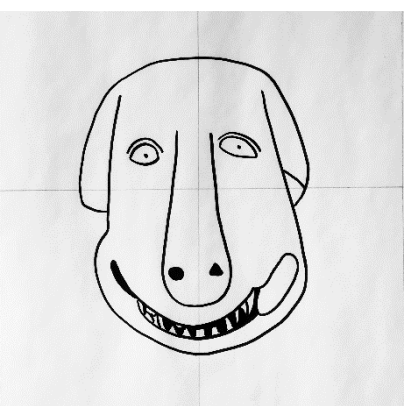
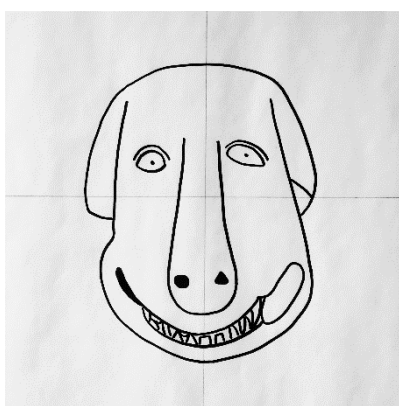
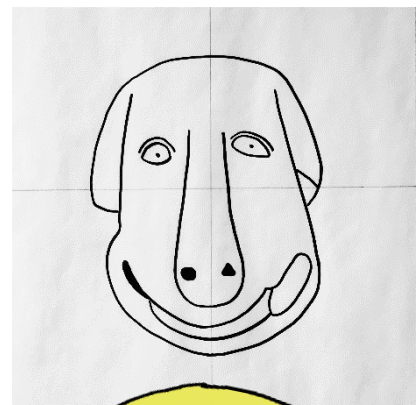
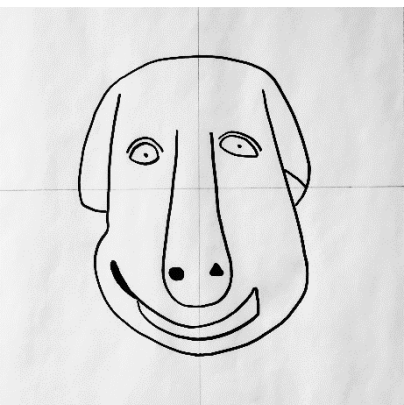
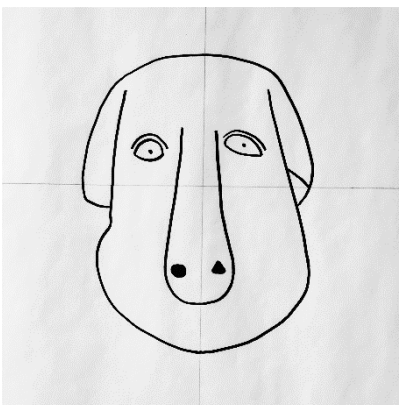
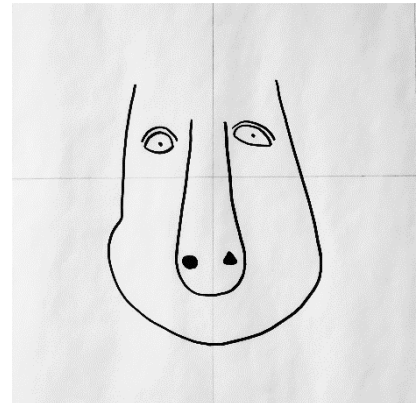
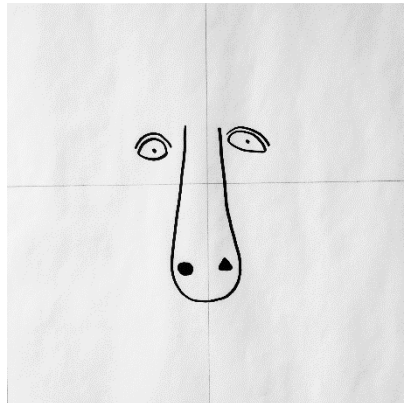
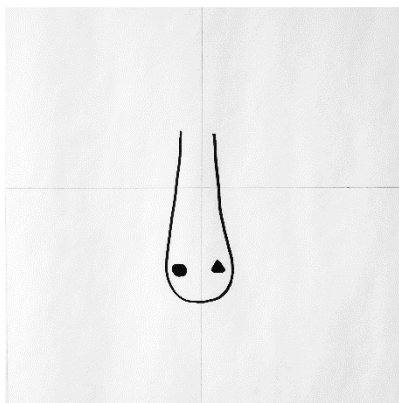
This is a stone carving of a dog's head.

As a symbol, we think dogs represented either faithfulness and loyalty, or people committing the same sins over and over again. This second meaning comes from a line in the bible which says: "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly"

What meaning do you think a dog might represent?



Step-by-Step: How to draw the Elgin Dog Head



The 'Making a Face' Head

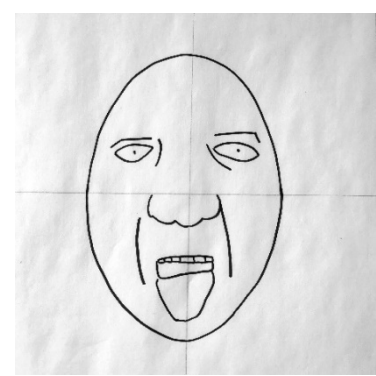
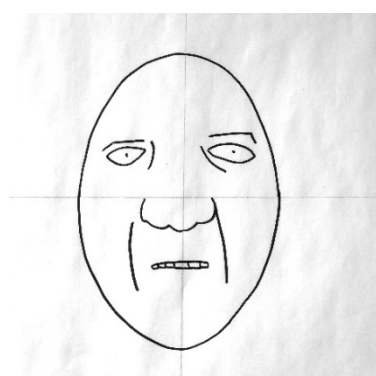
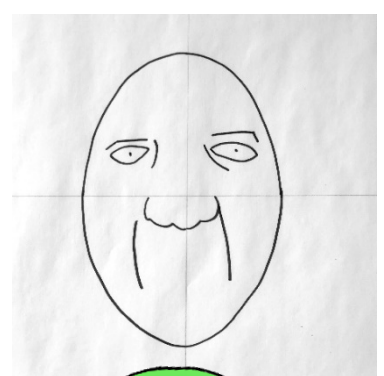
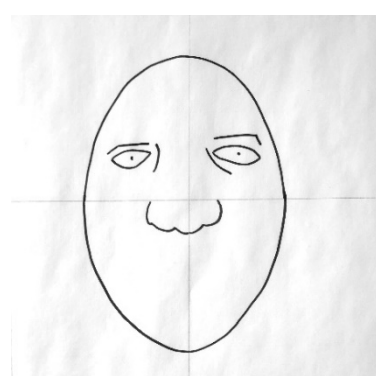
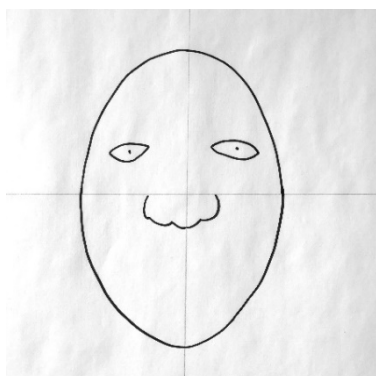
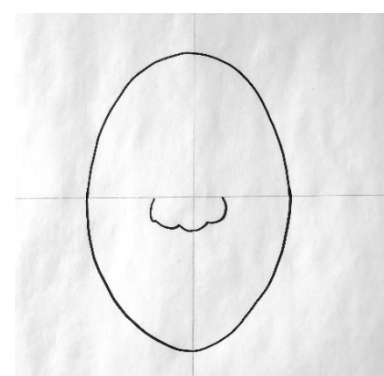
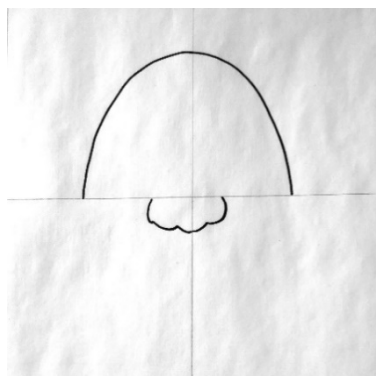
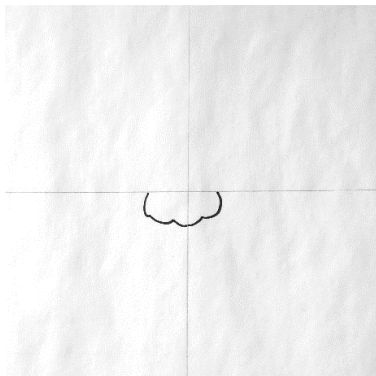
This carving shows a person's head. It was part of a 'vault boss', a special keystone which held the ceiling arches in place.

Human faces often represented 'sinners'. They look very different from the calm, peaceful angel carvings around them. We think they were meant to be a reminder about the how bad it was to be a sinner.

What do you imagine this carving might be saying or thinking?



Step-by-Step: How to draw the Elgin Head making a face



The Lion Head

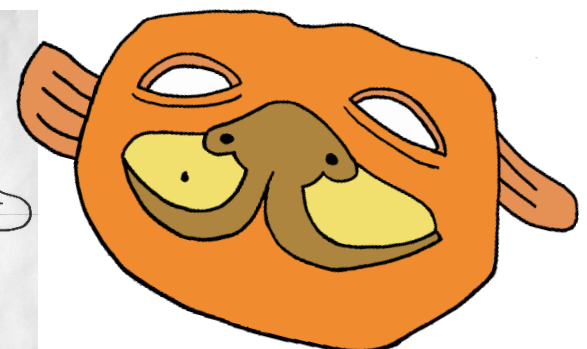
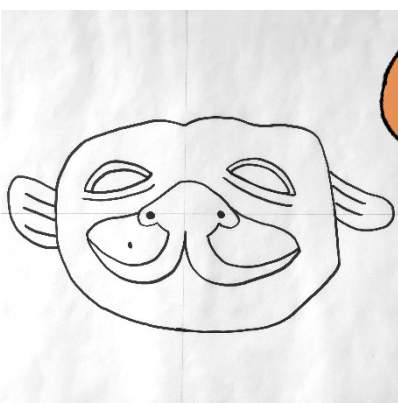
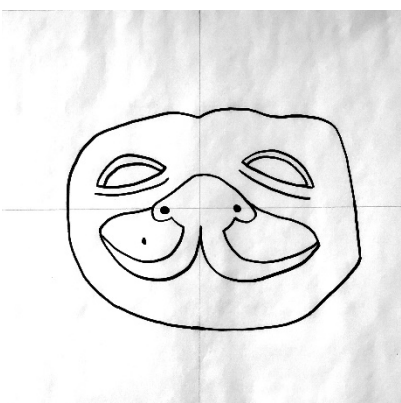
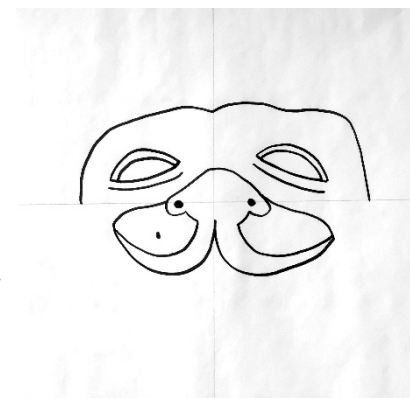
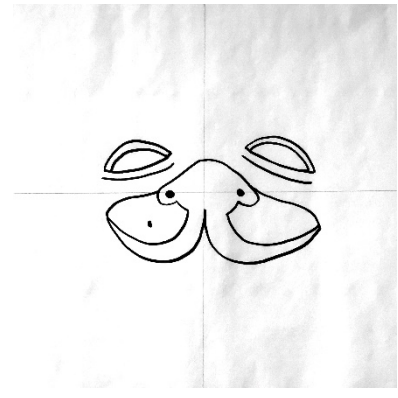
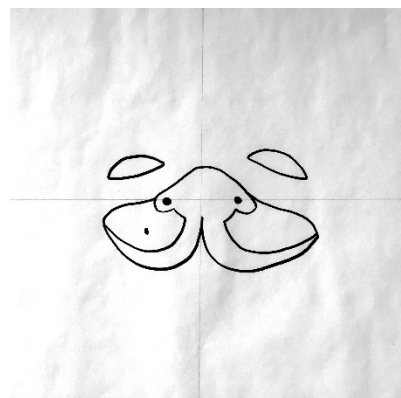
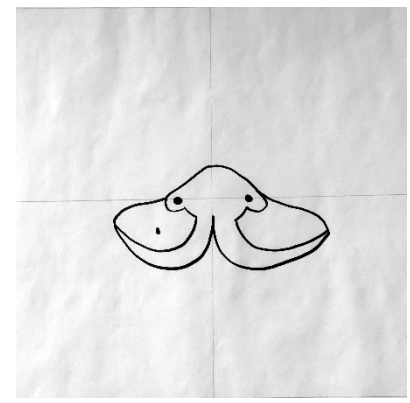
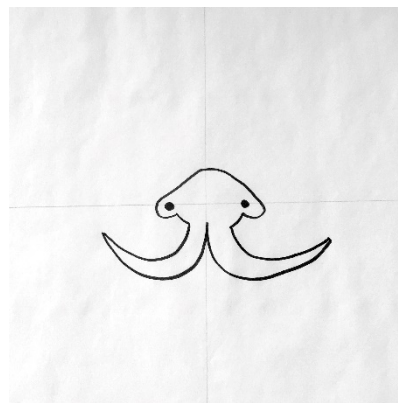
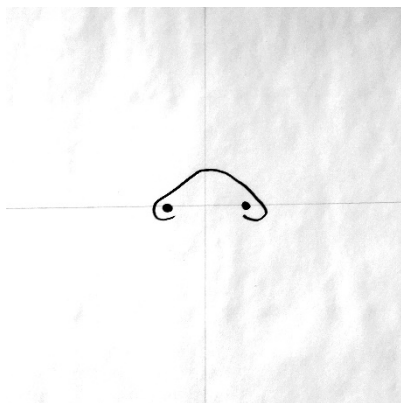


This is a stone carving of a lion.

In medieval churches lions were often a symbol of Jesus Christ. This is because people thought they slept with their eyes open and were always watching.

Also, they believed lion cubs were born dead and came to life three days later, in the same way Jesus rose from the grave at Easter.

Step-by-Step: How to draw the Elgin Lion Head

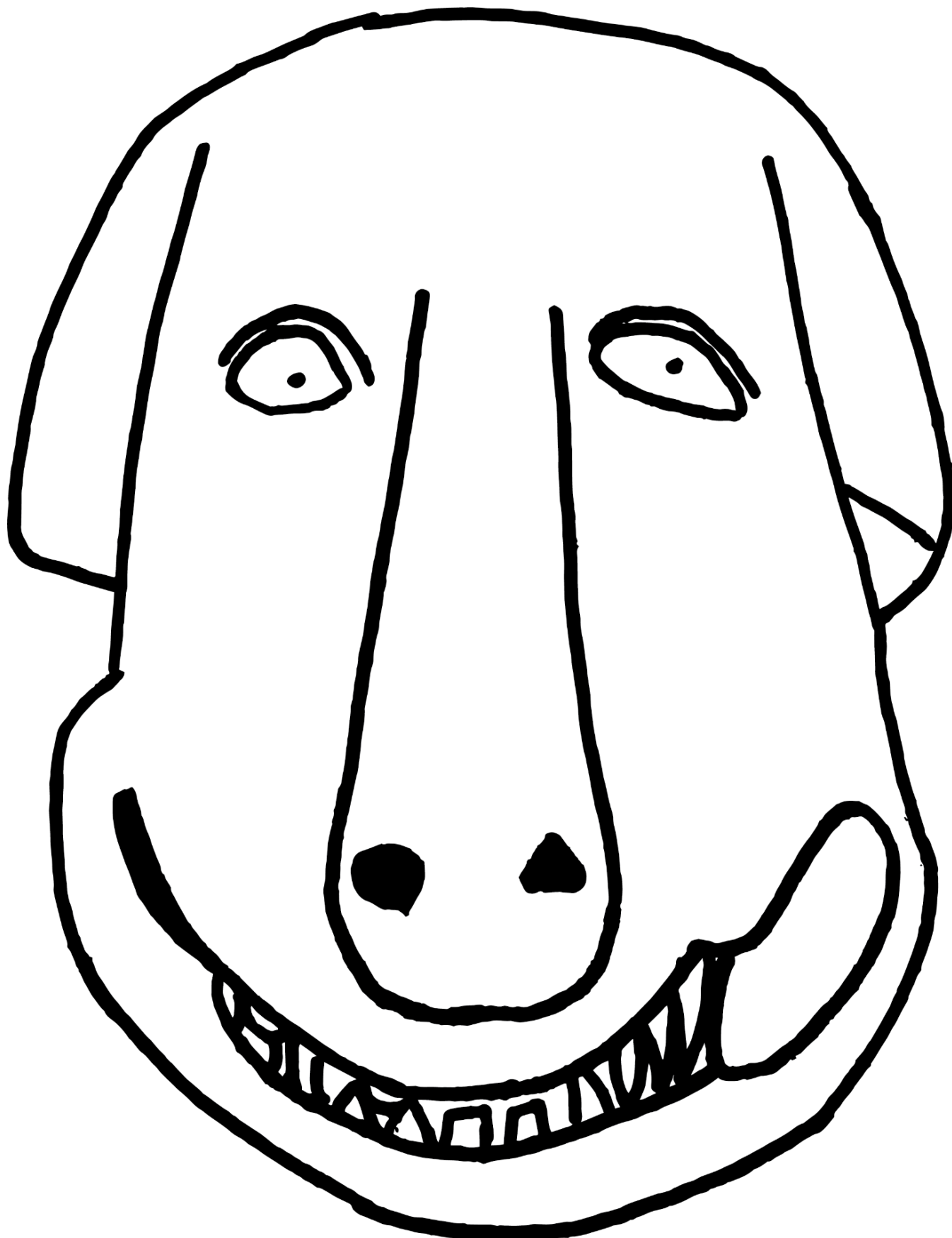




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