

# Puppet Making Workshops

Also of interest the teachers' notes  
from our other puppet shows

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## Shadows

### **LOOKING AT SHADOWS**

**Objective:** To explore the history, construction and principles of shadow puppets and therefore encourage the development of imagination, communication, self expression and creative skills of the participants.

**Requirements:**

- \* A room that can be darkened ( classroom is fine)
- \* Access to power
- \* Students supply cardboard ( cereal packets are good thickness)
- \* Scissors

**Curriculum areas covered by “Looking at Shadows”:**

- \* Creative and Visual Arts. Through the actual creation and manipulation of the shadow puppet
- \* Literacy. Through the learning of new words associated with puppetry in general and shadow puppetry in particular.  
Play building and story structure using a visual medium.
- \* Communication. Through the enactment of a scenario.
- \* Science. Through the use of light (Science & Technology K6 Syllabus and support document. Unit is called “Light up my Life” page 130-131.

**\*Suggested Preparation:**

1. Preparation of geometric cardboard shapes. If this is able to be done prior to the workshop it will leave much more time for working with the finished

puppets.

Preparation of cardboard shapes is as follows. Each student will cut out four to five geometric shapes about the size of their hand from the cardboard that they collected. Squares, circles, hexagons, triangles, rectangles etc. The shape can be repeated if the students want to. They then draw a geometric shape inside at least three of those shapes leaving at least a 1cm border. It does not have to be the same as the outside shape. This inside shape is then cut out. This is where colour will be introduced in the workshop. A single hole punch is useful to get the cutting started. The students can then experiment with laying their shapes out, overlapping them by about a centimetre to make an abstract form, and then mark where joints are to go with a pencil. *See Below.*

Geometric shapes are used rather than a recognisable figure as they are relatively easy to draw and cut and can suggest many different shapes, either real or abstract, once put together. (Students can prepare these shapes before hand leaving more time for working the puppets).

2. Wordbanks to do with puppetry can be built up.

Areas to consider may be:

Puppetry: String puppets, rod puppets, theatre, mask , mime.....

Shadow Puppet: Silhouette, shadow, outline, screen, light.....

Construction: Joints, string, cardboard.....

Movement: Manipulate, action, characters, entry, exit, stillness.....

3. Research on Internet or “Encarta” In Encarta search under “shadow puppet” or on the internet

Workshop outline. A creative hands on puppetry workshop lasting approximately 80-90 minutes that explores the world of the shadow puppet.

1. A brief introduction to shadow puppets: what they are, the mechanics of how they work, the use of the shadow screen; a short history and display of shadow puppets and pictures of shadow puppets from around the world.

2. Workshop facilitator will demonstrate use of both Indonesian shadow puppets and an example of the type of puppet that the students will make.

3. Students make their own puppet from prepared geometric shapes. The steps that need to be taken to make the shadow puppet will be clearly demonstrated at this point. This will assist the students to work at their own pace and enable the workshop leader and teacher to pay individual attention to students.

4. Students prepare and rehearse a play in groups of three written and supplied by workshop facilitator.

5. Groups present their play to the rest of the group.

**Teacher's role:**

1. Organise the preparation of shapes before workshop starts.
2. Students put into groups of six made up of two groups of three. The students will sit either at desks or on the floor of the space where the workshop is to be held. This enables the students to share equipment easily. A group of three will act out each play.
3. To actively participate in the workshop and assist with class management.

**Materials Used:**

Cardboard (recycled from cereal packets works well)  
String (supplied) Masking tape (supplied)  
Coloured cellophane (supplied)  
Wooden barbecue skewers (supplied)  
Clear sticky tape (supplied)

**Tools Used:**

Scissors (will supply some)  
Pencils  
Erasers  
Awl (for making holes) (supplied)  
Cutting boards (supplied)

**Outcomes:**

At the completion of this workshop participants will be able to:  
Identify a shadow puppet and shadow puppet stage.  
Build a shadow from cardboard and coloured cellophane with moving joints.  
Manipulate a shadow puppet.  
Explore further the use of translucent colours in shadow puppetry.  
Know a brief history and overview of shadow puppetry.  
Work in small groups to perform a short shadow puppet play.

**Learning Experiences:**

Students will engage in learning experiences during the course of the unit that may include:  
Symmetry Drawing and cutting out of objects  
Use of colour  
Team work  
Use of imagination  
Co-ordination

Suggested follow ups:

1. Make more puppets and practise technical skills using the following steps.

Steps:

Explain principles of building shadow puppet  
Solid shapes - show from behind screen  
Cutting out of geometric shapes  
Introduce colour - show how to cut and glue and to add shapes with textures  
etc  
Jointing shapes to allow movement.  
Method of jointing.  
How and where to make holes with awl and how to joint with string  
Methods of attaching rods to puppets using coat hangers and tape or skewers and tape.  
How to manipulate

2. Write a procedure for the making and operating of a shadow puppet
3. Describe the character that the student made. Its name, traits etc.
4. Devise a narrative or write a script.

**Things students need to have reinforced:**

1. How to manipulate their puppet
2. To think of how their shapes might move.
3. How to enter and exit the screen.
4. How their figures interact with others.
5. To see their own puppets from both front and back of the screen

**Shadow Screen**

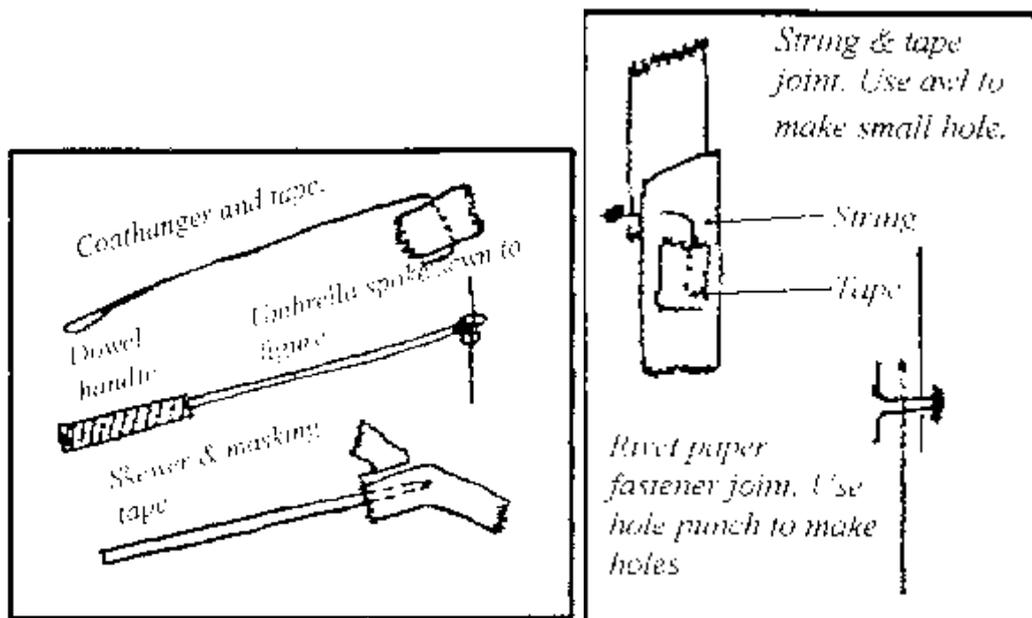
A shadow screen can be made fairly simply from easy to find materials. White sheeting stretched across a large picture frame clamped to a table with a light source behind it. If there is a fixture in the classroom from which a screen can be suspended put large safety pins in the corners of the fabric to be used as a screen and tie cords to these, attach a masking curtain at the bottom to hide the operators. A large cardboard box can be cut down to form a shadow puppet Theatre. Cut the top and one side out of the box and then cut out the hole for the screen out of the centre section. Fasten the screen across the hole nice and tightly so that there are no wrinkles. From the side that was removed cut a decorative top piece and attach this top of the centre section to hide the operators. Extra holes can be cut in the two sides to make extra screens as the need arises. Screen material is most commonly cotton or cotton/polyester but can be tracing paper or greaseproof paper although this might be a little flimsy. All screens should be taut with no wrinkles as they spoil the effect.

### Further Reading

The Puppetry Handbook by Anita Sinclair. An invaluable resource for all sorts of puppet building. (Richard Lee Publishing, PO Box 828, Castlemaine, Vic, 3450. ISBN No 0-909431-04-03)

The complete Book of the Puppet by Bill Baird. A history of puppetry by a master puppeteer. (Ridge Press Inc)

The Australian Puppeteer. A quarterly publication of UNIMA Australia, Australia's leading puppetry organisation. For more information contact: Australian Puppeteer, PO Box 208, Elsternwick, Vic, 3184



### Further Ideas:

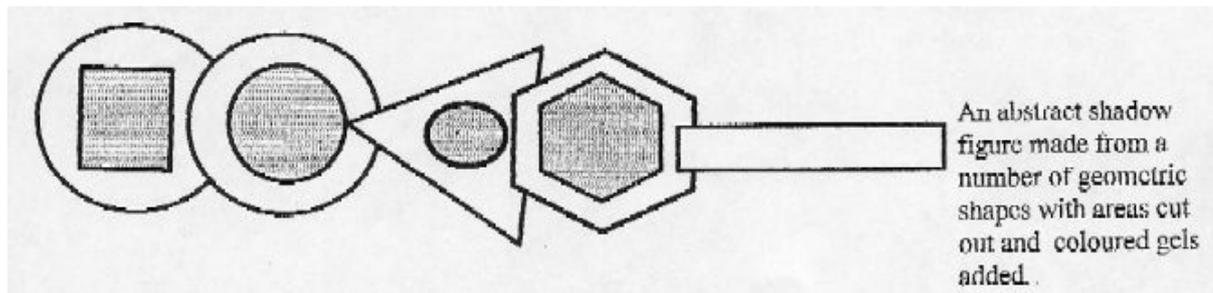
To make articulated shadow puppets the parts of the character that are to be made should be drawn onto thin cardboard. The pieces that are to move must be designed to overlap for joining. There are no restrictions on where to make the joints, it depends on what is to be achieved. However remember your own limitations in using controls. Parts that move naturally without an extra control are fine, but think about those parts that do need their own control.

Shadow puppets can be decorated by punching small holes or cutting slits area out. These then can be left clear or coloured gel or cellophane can be glued over them to give some colour to the figure.

To join the separate parts either use cord threaded through holes in the card and knotted on one side and taped securely down on the other ensuring that full movement is still possible, or use a rivet type paper fastener. The pieces must be joined one on top of the other in layers so as not to restrict movement.

Various materials can be used as a form of control. Coat hangers straightened and cut to the required length, bent into an L shape at one end and bent over at the other to form a handle and attached with sticky tape or a cardboard tab. Umbrella spokes have an eye at one end which can be stitched to the shadow figure with cord or for quick workshops, barbecue skewers taped on can be used.

Colour can be introduced in a couple of ways. By cutting out holes in the cardboard and covering with coloured cellophane or gel and gluing, it down, glue sticks are good for this or clear tape; the second way is to draw the figure onto thin white cardboard and colour in with water base textas and then lay down onto kitchen paper and rub coloured surface with cooking oil or clear liquid paraffin with more kitchen paper, then turn over and rub back with more oil until colours show through. Wipe excess oil off card and finally cut out figure. Articulate any joints by using fishing line and sealing the knot with clear nail varnish.



## LOOKING AT SHADOWS BACKGROUND NOTES

Shadow puppets are normally flat cut out figures that are held by a rod or wire against a translucent screen whilst some form of light is shone onto them. As the puppets are made to move the audience on the other side of the screen watches the shadow of the figures. Shadow puppets were originally made of parchment or hide but they are now usually made from strong cardboard. Shadow puppets are controlled from below or behind usually by means of wire or rods. It is most common to support and move the figure with one main rod. Extra rods are added if required to control movement of limbs.

Shadow puppets are to be found in many countries around the world telling many tales and are an ancient form of puppetry.

From Turkey comes Karaghioz, the best loved clown and principle theatrical figure of the Ottoman Empire. He is a rogue, boisterous, vain, impetuous and likes to get his own way. Seen in profile he has a large bald head with a bearded chin and one large dark eye. His name means :Dark eye:. Like all the members of his troupe he has been reduced to a simple symbolic form that is instantly recognisable when he appears on the screen. His origins are obscure but thought to originate from the nomadic tribes of central Asia where the tradition of shadow Theatre is ancient. It is known that the Scythians of the third and fourth centuries BC made handsome silhouettes of leather.

Wayang Kulit, Indonesia's shadow puppet tradition uses flat leather figures and is an important element in the celebration of important events such as anniversaries. The Dalang or puppet operator has become a combination of storyteller, spiritual teacher and dramatist. Before he may perform he must be ordained by a priest. The play is an all night affair, the Dalang sits behind his large screen crossed legged with an oil lamp hanging above his head to cast the shadows. In Java men sit behind the screen with the Dalang while the women sit in front watching the shadows.

Southern India has its own shadow puppets tholubomalatta, articulated leather shadow puppets, probably ancestors of Indonesia's Wayang. Less delicately designed than the Indonesian but are intricately pierced, brilliantly coloured and extremely large, 1.5 metres is not an unusual height. Most often the plays derive from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and are often performed in the temple grounds. The show lasts all night and the puppeteer has to be highly athletic. Action is emphasised by dancing and stamping on sounding boards below the shadow screen, often shaking the bells on his ankles. The play may last literally for several months and is as much a part of an Indian's life as his work. The audience comes and goes as the play proceeds.

In China there are two principal kinds of shadow puppet, the Cantonese, or southern shadow, and the Pekingese, or northern shadow puppet. The Pekingese are smaller, more delicate and made from leather taken from the belly of a donkey and painted in bright translucent colour by a stiff wire. Often one body may be used with several different heads, therefore the neck has a flat collar of leather enabling heads to be interchanged. The shadow play came into being between the 7th and 9th centuries AD and reached their peak of development in the 11th century.