



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning

Northeast Ohio

Lesson Title: *Shadow Puppets: An Arts-Integrated Lesson Plan* by Debra Wuliger

Grade level lesson designed for: 3rd – 4th grades

Academic Subject Area(s) in this lesson: Language Arts, Social Studies

Art Form(s) in this lesson: Visual Arts

Brief description of lesson: Students will create shadow puppets that will be used to re-tell important elements of stories or poems read in the classroom. The puppets that students design will accurately portray important aspects of the story and its characters.

Academic Standards Addressed:

Visual Arts

Standard: Create to express artistic ideas

3rd Grade

Make informed choices about how to transform ideas into art

4th Grade

Create works of art based on a theme, event or mood that demonstrates how the art elements express meaning.

English Language Arts

Standard: Reading Applications: Literary Text

3rd Grade

Use supporting details to identify and describe main ideas, characters and setting

4th Grade

Describe and analyze elements of stories including; character development, the importance of setting and elements of plot

Social Studies

Standard: People and Societies

3rd Grade

Students compare the cultural practices and products of the local community with those of other communities in Ohio, the United States and the World.

4th Grade

Describe the practices and products of various groups who have settled in Ohio over time including recent immigrants from Europe, Asia and Africa.

Materials Needed:

Flex foam, colored construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, tissue paper, feathers, pipe cleaners, bamboo skewers (or other long and narrow sticks), clear packing tape, a white piece of cloth or sheet, and an overhead projector or other strong light source.

Words to Know

The Six Simple Drawing Shapes: Square, Rectangle, Triangle, Diamond, Oval, Circle

Folktales

Transparent

Translucent

Opaque

Introduction: The History of Shadow Puppet Theatre

Shadow Puppet Theater originated in China more than 2,000 years ago. A favorite concubine of Wu Emperor of the Han Dynasty died of illness; the emperor missed her so much that he lost his desire to reign. One day, a minister happened to see children playing with dolls where the shadows on the floor were vivid. Inspired by this scene, the smart minister hit upon an idea. He made a cotton puppet of the concubine and painted it. As night fell, he invited the emperor to watch a rear-illuminated puppet show behind a curtain. The emperor was delighted and took to it from then on. This story recorded in the official history book is believed to be the origin of shadow puppetry.

The shadow plays were used to tell **folktales**, historical stories and to teach about religion. Originally, behind the screen large torches were used for light. The puppets would be placed in front of the light and their shadows would be cast on the screen. Today, we use electric light in back of the screen. This is called dead light because the light does not move. Very thin leather was used to create the shadow puppets. Openings were cut into the leather to let a pattern of light shine through onto the screen. This helped define the face and clothing. The puppets cast a shadow because they are made out of material that is **opaque**. This material doesn't let any of the light through. When we cut out shapes in our puppets and paste tissue paper over the openings, the tissue paper lets some of the light through because it is **translucent**. When we use colored plastic gels to cover our cut out shapes, the light can go through and that is called **transparent**. Translucent means that light can go through, but objects on the opposite side are not clearly visible. Transparent means light can go through and objects beyond can be distinctly seen.

To build the basic shape of the shadow puppet's body we will be using the six shapes that are the building blocks for all visual art: **Square, diamond, rectangle, triangle, circle and oval.**

Procedures: Shadow Puppet Construction

1. Prior to class, cut six building block shapes cut out of flex foam in various sizes for the class to use for their puppets. The students can also draw their own puppet just make sure that the neck is at least two fingers wide so that the stick can be attached to the back.
2. The students pick flex foam shapes to be used for the head and the body. Encourage them to try different shapes for unusual puppets. The students should trace around the head and body shapes on colored construction paper, making sure there is a thick neck to join the head to the body.
3. The students cut out the head and body shape. It is fun to use the different wavy edged scissors to get special effects.
4. The students create the face by folding the head down and cutting two half circles or half ovals for the eyes.
5. The students then fold the head sideways, the eyes lining up with each other, and cut out half a nose and mouth. The face is very important as this gives the puppet its character.
6. With the construction paper scraps left from the body the students fashion legs and arms and attach them using paper fasteners or glue sticks.
7. Ideas for decorations: Glue tissue paper over the eyes, nose and mouth for color. Use a glue stick. Cut out shapes and patterns in the body using paper punches. Attach feathers by weaving them into two punched holes. Use pipe cleaners for arms, legs, hats, hair, etc.
8. Break off point of a bamboo skewer and using clear packing tape attach the stick from the head down through the body and off the puppet so that the student can hold and move the puppet.
9. Have the students use the puppets to retell a story or poem that has been studied in class.

Shadow Screen Construction

You will need a screen for the puppets to cast their shadows. You can create this very simply with any white cloth. Hang the cloth between two objects (chairs, sticks or poles) so that it hangs as flat as possible. Secure the cloth with duct tape.

Place the overhead projector in back of the screen so that the light is projected onto the back. Use the overhead transparencies to draw scenery that can be projected onto the screen for settings. Have the puppets move in back of the screen and the light will project their shadows.

Optional Shadow Screen Construction:

For teachers who would like to make a permanent and more durable shadow screen, follow these instructions:

At an area art supply store buy four wooden stretcher bars normally used for making a frame for painting canvas. Two bars sized 4 feet and two bars sized 3 feet.

These will join together at the corners by inserting the tabs into the slots. Be sure to use strong white glue on the tabs before insertion. This will make the corners strong.

Cut a white piece of cloth, I have used an old white cotton sheet, large enough to cover the opening and to wrap around the bars to the back. Or, you made buy a piece of twin screen from a theatrical lighting and supply firm. This is the material they use to project movies on. It is expensive but durable.

Staple the fabric to the top wooden frame, once in the middle, using a staple gun. Now do the same for the bottom frame, once in the middle. Next each side is to be stapled once in the middle. Continue stapling the fabric to the frame, making sure to pull the cloth taut and smooth.

Purchase two L shaped brackets, screws and two vise grips at a home supply store. The L shaped brackets will have holes for screwing it to the frame. Mark on the bottom frame, using the brackets as a guide, where the holes need to be drilled.

Drill the four holes, two per side, and screw the two brackets to the frame. Place the screen on a table, the brackets lined up along the edge. Use the grips to anchor the brackets to the table.

Place the overhead projector in back of the screen so that the light is projected onto the back. Use the overhead transparencies to draw scenery that can be projected onto the screen for settings. Have the puppets move in back of the screen and the light will project their shadows.

Internet Sites to Explore

<http://discover-indo.tierranet.com/wayang.html>

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/shadowpuppets/artsedge.html>

<http://www.karagoz.net/english/shadowplay.htm>

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/focus/shadow-puppetry.htm>