

#### ART FORM

Puppetry

#### LEARNING AREA

The Arts

#### SUBJECT

Art & Design

#### TARGET GROUP

Key Stage 2

#### MATERIALS

An overhead projector (OHP) and screen

Small figure toys - dolls and plastic action figures cast crisp shadows.

(Ask pupils to bring them in.)

Unlined paper/thin card

(A4 size)

Left and right-hand scissors

Pencils and markers

Paper-clips or split brass pins for hinges

Coloured cellophane

(Sweet wrapping kind is good)

Plastic drinking straws

Masking tape

Glue

Clear acetate

#### SPACE

Classroom

#### DURATION

The workshop is structured by developmental stages and can be undertaken in manageable chunks across several class periods for a larger project.

#### ARTIST'S INTRODUCTION

For people new to puppetry there can be a bewildering array of choices to make not just about materials to use for making puppets, but also in how to animate them and bring them to life in performance. What follows is an outline of how to make and use simple puppets based on one of the oldest forms of puppetry and play - the shadow puppet.

A broad definition of a shadow puppet would be: A two-dimensional figure shown against a semi-translucent screen and lit so that an audience on the opposite side of the screen can see the shadow of the figure only. Unlike other forms of puppetry, mistakes made in shadow puppets are easily repaired, if you cut too much off, simply stick on a patch and continue.

The idea is that we start by using the familiar (our heads and hands) and move to the extraordinary. We take the everyday stuff of classrooms, the mundane and familiar paper and scissors, and use them to fashion shapes which we bring to life. We can discover "Where in the World", shadow puppetry traditions come from, and find out about other cultures and countries, e.g. Indonesia, Turkey, China and their differing shadow puppetry practice. We can discover about lenses, light, colour, and about the history of Silhouette portrait making. We can discover about the articulation of joints in the human body.

The techniques outlined are not exhaustive, they are a starting point, and are designed to be used in the classroom with minimum preparation and tidying up. Unlike other methods, the work is 'dry art work', and can be undertaken in manageable chunks across several class periods for a larger project.

Puppets are full of surprises, sometimes a puppet can say something which a person might find difficult to say, or they can move in new and surprising ways, taking on symbolic significance.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Communication Skills – listen to and respond to questions, ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- Problem Solving and Decision Making – use a range of materials to make and work a shadow puppet.
- Creative Skills – explore and respond to a range of ideas to make an original silhouette.
- Working with others and self-management – work cooperatively with a group and make choices and review their own work.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Getting Started (Allow 3-5 minutes per group)

Switch on the OHP and focus it on the screen. Explain that we are going to work with shadows.

- Bring the pupils up in small groups with their toys and ask them to place the toys on the OHP casting a shadow on the screen. The others watch.

Which outline shapes do we like?

Which toys cast the clearest shadow?

How do we place the toys to get the most pleasing shadow shape?

Does the toy cast a surprising shadow?

What happens to the shadow shape if we move the toy away from the surface of the OHP and closer to the screen?

### Capturing Shadows

Explain and show that we can capture a shadow shape by drawing around the outline which the shadow casts onto a piece of paper held up against the screen.

- Have groups draw around the shadow shapes cast by their toy.
- As one group finishes drawing around the shape they can return to their desks to cut out the shapes, while the next group goes to the OHP.
- Have pupils compare the cut out shape with the original toy by placing them side by side on the OHP. Are there any differences in the outline shape of the shadows?
- Allow a period for finer cutting and adjustment if required.

### Capturing our own Silhouette Shadow Shape

Explain that we can make a silhouette portrait by drawing around the shadow cast by a person's head. (Allow approximately 30-60 seconds per pupil.)

- Have a pupil stand close to the screen in profile.
- Hold an A4 Sheet of paper against the screen as before and rapidly draw around their profile shadow shape, cast by the light from the OHP.

- Pay attention to detail of individual shadows. Does the pupil have spikey hair? Curly hair? Wear glasses?
- As each pupil returns to their desk with their profile silhouette, the next one takes their place to have their shadow captured.
- Back at the desk, they carefully cut out along the line to reveal their own profile. The cutting out needs care, so encourage spending time at it.
- As before, have the pupil stand near the screen and place their profile cut out on the OHP. (Allow 30-60 seconds per pupil)
- Compare and contrast the two shadow shapes. Allow for finer cutting if necessary.

### Talking heads (Allow 30-60 seconds per pupil)

- Take a volunteer's cut-out profile, and with scissors cut through it horizontally along a line from between the lips to the back of the head. This gives you two pieces.
- Lay both pieces on the OHP so that they overlap
- By moving the lower part of the jaw the head can be made appear to talk. If the head could talk what would it say? Perhaps the person's name, their favourite food or a well known nursery rhyme.
- Encourage the pupil to talk. As the pupil talks move the puppet, so that the mouth opens and closes in time to their speech.

### Making the hinge (Allow 2-3 minutes)

- Using the point of a pencil, pierce through the overlapped section of jaw and upper head, so that both holes line up.
- Insert a paperclip or split brass paper pin in the holes to make a hinge.
- Test the hinge to see that the jaw moves freely. Adjust accordingly.

### Attaching control rods (Allow 3-5 minutes per puppet)

- Take two plastic drinking straws and attach one to the upper part of the silhouette head, and one to the lower jaw part of the silhouette, with strips of masking tape.

Practice making the head talk by moving the drinking straw control rods. [Illustration 5]

#### **Moving limbs (Allow 5-10 minutes)**

- Attach a single straw control rod to the shadow puppet made from the shadow outline of the toy.

How can we make that move?

What would we need to do if we wanted an arm or leg to move on the puppet?

Where would the overlap need to be?

Where would the hinge be?

#### **Letting the light through (Allow 2-3 minutes )**

Shadow puppets do not just have to show the outline shape. By cutting out within the overall shape we can let the light through to show features, e.g. cut out a shape to show where the eye is.

- Use the point of a pencil to pierce holes in the shadow puppet to make patterns and add texture.
- Test in the light from the OHP and make any additions or adjustments.

#### **Adding colour (Allow 5-10 minutes)**

- Place a small piece of coloured cellophane (sweet wrapping) over the opening or hole cut into the overall outline shape.

Try different colours of cellophane. Try layering different colours by overlapping them. What happens?

- Test them in the light on the OHP. When you are happy with your choice fix the cellophane in place with glue or small strips of masking tape.

#### **Look at my hands. (Allow 15-25 minutes for 1st part)**

- Take a sheet of A4 paper, place your hand on it and draw around the outline.
- Cut out that shape and use as a template to draw around again.
- Cut that shape out. ( You now have two hand shapes, a right and a left)
- Arrange one or both of the shapes so that they suggest an animal or creature. Does it

suggest to you the shape of a rabbit, a bird, an angel fish, a manta ray, an insect?

- When you are happy with your shape, test the shadow it casts at the OHP.

How does it move? Practice making it move in different ways.

Make adjustments and refinements.

#### **Look at my hands part two (Allow for timings as above)**

- Cut into the shape to let the light through as before, to give detail of feathers, fish scales, eyes, important features etc.
- Decide on any joints for moving limbs
- Attach control rods as above. Add colour and texture as above

#### **Draw freehand puppet shapes (Allow 15-25 minutes)**

You now have an idea of what size of puppet casts what size of shadow using the OHP and screen. You have used a toy, your head and your hands, to make puppets of different scale. You have made decisions about letting light through and adding texture and colour. You have had practice in fine motor skills to animate the puppets made.

- Based on discoveries made, draw freehand shape puppets to a scale that fits. As before decide what part of the puppet moves, is it the head? A jaw? Limbs? A wing?

#### **TEACHER'S TIPS**

An alternative to using an OHP is to use any bright light source and the white board (or large sheets of white paper stuck to the black board )

It may be useful to have folders for pupils to store work in between classes

Sometimes in cutting out the profile or in piercing the hole the paper is torn or accidentally cut, spoiling the image. Use masking tape to repair and reinforce around the hole. Explain that

accidents and mistakes are a normal part of learning, and that we learn from our mistakes.

Shadow puppets have this advantage over other puppets, you can easily repair mistakes in making them, if you cut too much off, make a patch and attach it with masking tape, and carry on

For pupils with limited mobility, holding puppets against a screen in the traditional manner can be very tiring during repeated rehearsal, which is why I suggest using an overhead projector - puppets can be laid on the surface of the projector and animated with greater ease from there.

All materials used are readily available from craft shops such as EDCO, and many materials are free to schools through membership of the Play Resource Centre, North City Business Centre, Belfast [www.playresource.org](http://www.playresource.org)

### LINKS TO OTHER LEARNING AREAS

- The Arts – using aspects of drama, art and design and music to develop a shadow puppet show
- The World Around Us – use science and technology to explore light, lenses, colour and make a moving 2D stick puppet; explore world cultures and traditional stories
- Geography and History – research the shadow puppet history of silhouette portrait making and the shadow puppet traditions from many countries of the world
- PE- exploring how different parts of the body move
- Personal Development – developing confidence in performing with shadow puppets

### FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

See Puppets into Performance for the next step to performing using the puppets made in class.

Though the workshops are written with KS2 pupils in mind, I have used the same approach with an inter-generational arts project, where I worked with children, their parents and grandparents, to make and perform with shadow puppets. I have worked on combined art -form projects, where shadow puppetry is combined with dance and music, with puppeteers performing behind the screen, as a live action backdrop to different simultaneous performances in front of the screen.

One special school took the ideas of shadow puppetry and used them in performance for the transformation scenes in their school pantomime, Cinderella, where mice became horses, a pumpkin became a coach etc.

Throughout the making and rehearsal process there are many opportunities to link the work directly into the KS2 Curriculum. Here are some additional resources to help:

Visit the Puppetry Homepage at [www.rosesage.com](http://www.rosesage.com). This is a child-friendly award winning site. Follow the links from the homepage to Puppetry Traditions around the World. There is an excellent if very detailed account of Shadow puppets in Indonesia, with explanations of Wayang Kulit, Gamelan Instruments etc. From the same home page visit international exhibitions of Turkish and Chinese shadow puppetry.

Rod, Shadow, and Glove (Puppets from the Little Angel Theatre) By John Wright  
ISBN 0-7090-2628-5

The Little Book of Hand Shadows By Phila H.Webb and Jane Corby  
ISBN 0-89471-852-5

**Don't forget to send feedback to [toolbox@youngatart.co.uk](mailto:toolbox@youngatart.co.uk)**

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