



# Connecting Teaching and Learning through the Art of Puppetry



NAEA, 2012

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# Puppetry

**"Inanimate objects brought to life through manipulation to convey a story."**

**There are multiple types of puppets including , rod, hand, marionette, and shadow.**



# History

People have been making puppets for thousands of years. In ancient times when Egypt, Greece, and Rome ruled the western world, puppets were used by adults in religious ceremonies and often buried in tombs. Simultaneously, people of Mexico were using puppets for religious reasons. In India as well as China and Japan, puppeteers held honored positions and used puppets to tell stories of the daily happenings of people. Puppets were first used in the churches of Italy, then France, to tell religious stories. This art expanded to the streets and marketplaces with stories of the world being told. In the Middle Ages, puppets were the most popular entertainment for the great masses of people. Punch and Judy, most well-known puppets of England, migrated to the United States and the television expanded the popularity of puppet performances on a large scale. This ancient art is especially enjoyed by school children today and in addition to the joy of viewing a performance, it provides opportunity to work creatively by making puppets, building stages, writing original stories or retelling folk tales as well as being the puppeteer!

# Production

- Engages students in visual arts and theatre
- Integrates content
- Emphasizes the elements of art including form with feasible materials



**EXAMPLES:** <http://ponderingpaige.blogspot.com/2011/07/puppetry-in-elementary-school.html>

# Performance Benefits

Promotes oral language skills

Helps children overcome the inhibitions of speaking in public

Forces performers to enhance their voice projection

Obvious advantages for English Language Learners:

- group effort involved in even a simple, impromptu production offers the additional support
- being concealed (at least partially) minimizes the self-consciousness associated with communicating in a non-native language

# Types of Puppets

**Hand puppets** - human and animal forms can be purchased from stores and/or catalogs featuring early childhood materials.

People puppets should represent diverse groups and reflect special needs, such as puppets in wheel chairs or using adaptive equipment.

Animal puppets should represent species that are familiar to children in some way such as common pets, animals indigenous to a geographical area, or familiar characters in a favorite book.

Minimal accessories, such as a hat or shirt, can increase their versatility and temporarily individualize puppets to suit a specific script.

Bath mitts, usually found with the baby items, and character oven mitts, found in the kitchen section, provide economical options for hand puppets.

**Finger puppets** - require less storage space and allow children to manipulate multiple characters at one time

Figures for preschoolers are often hollow and can be used as finger puppets.

Patterns for paper finger puppets can be attached to empty film canisters with wide, transparent tape (open end at the bottom) for durable finger puppets that also serve as play figures.

## Handmade Puppets

Puppets can also be made by parent volunteers, the teacher, or the children.

### Sock

Hot glue “jiggle eyes” to the toe of a clean sock to create the most basic sock puppet.

Decorate with permanent markers (spots for Trinka Hakes’ *Jimmy’s Boa* series)

Combine with paper pieces (*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*)

**Stick** – attach sturdy paper or felt figures to a wooden paint stirrer (quick and

inexpensive but large enough for small hands to easily hold and move)

**Finger Puppets** - Make individually with felt and pom poms (frog)

**Glove** – use pom poms to make one character for each finger (works particularly well for classic fairy tales with few characters, such as *Three Bears*, *Three Pigs*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Little Red Hen*, *Billy Goats Gruff*)

**Other Options** - bag, paper plate, cup, clothes pin, human, and marionette can be found on handout and at websites.

# Puppet Theatres

A puppet theater is not necessary for puppet-related activities.

If desired, the alternatives to a purchasing a commercially manufactured puppet theater, are plentiful:

- Turn a table with sturdy legs on one side. Children can sit behind the table top and perform by holding puppets over the edge of the table.
- Hang a blanket between two chairs for children to sit behind.
- Use a suspension curtain rod and curtain across the bottom half of an open doorway.
- Position a tri-fold display board on top of a small table.
- Cut a window into one side of a cardboard appliance box.
- When children become comfortable, eliminate the barrier and have children perform in the open.

# Resources

- <http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/building/index.html>
- <http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/>
- <http://www.puppet.org/>
- <http://www.makingfriends.com/puppetg.htm>



# Shadow Puppetry

**How to do your own Shadow Puppetry Show**

<http://www.hvanrossum.com/shadpup.html>

**Shadow Puppets: A Series of Novel and Amusing Figures Formed by the Hand**

<http://www.shadow-puppets.com/shadow-puppet-0.html>

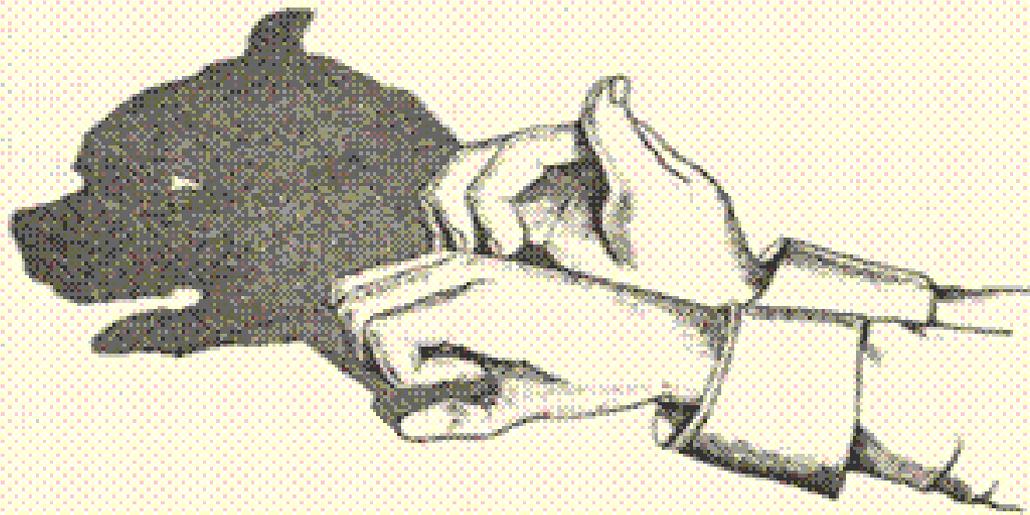
**Richard Bradshaw: Shadow Puppeteer**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNsJ6kDVbfk>

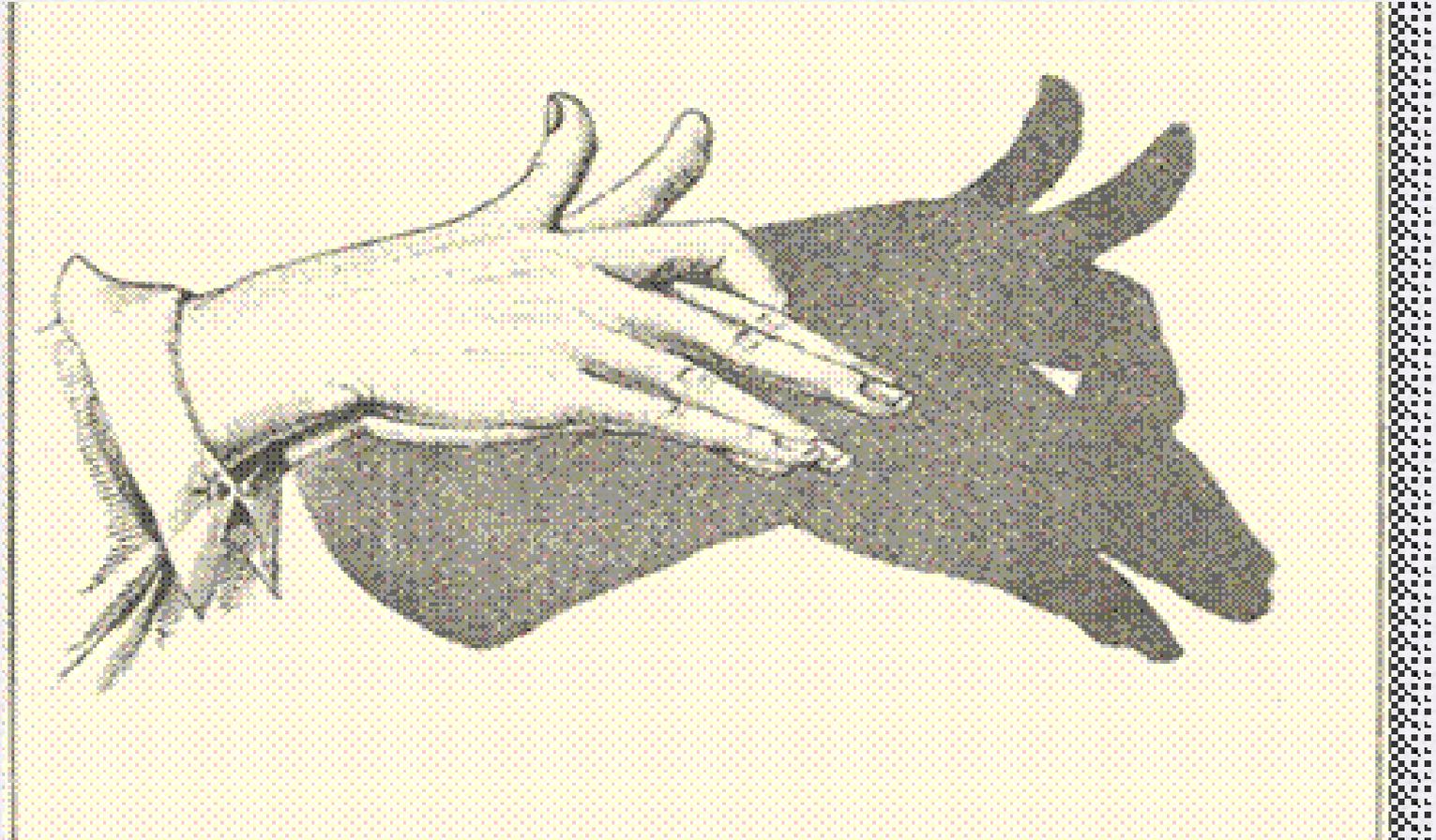
**What a Wonderful World!**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCn3mYR97YM>

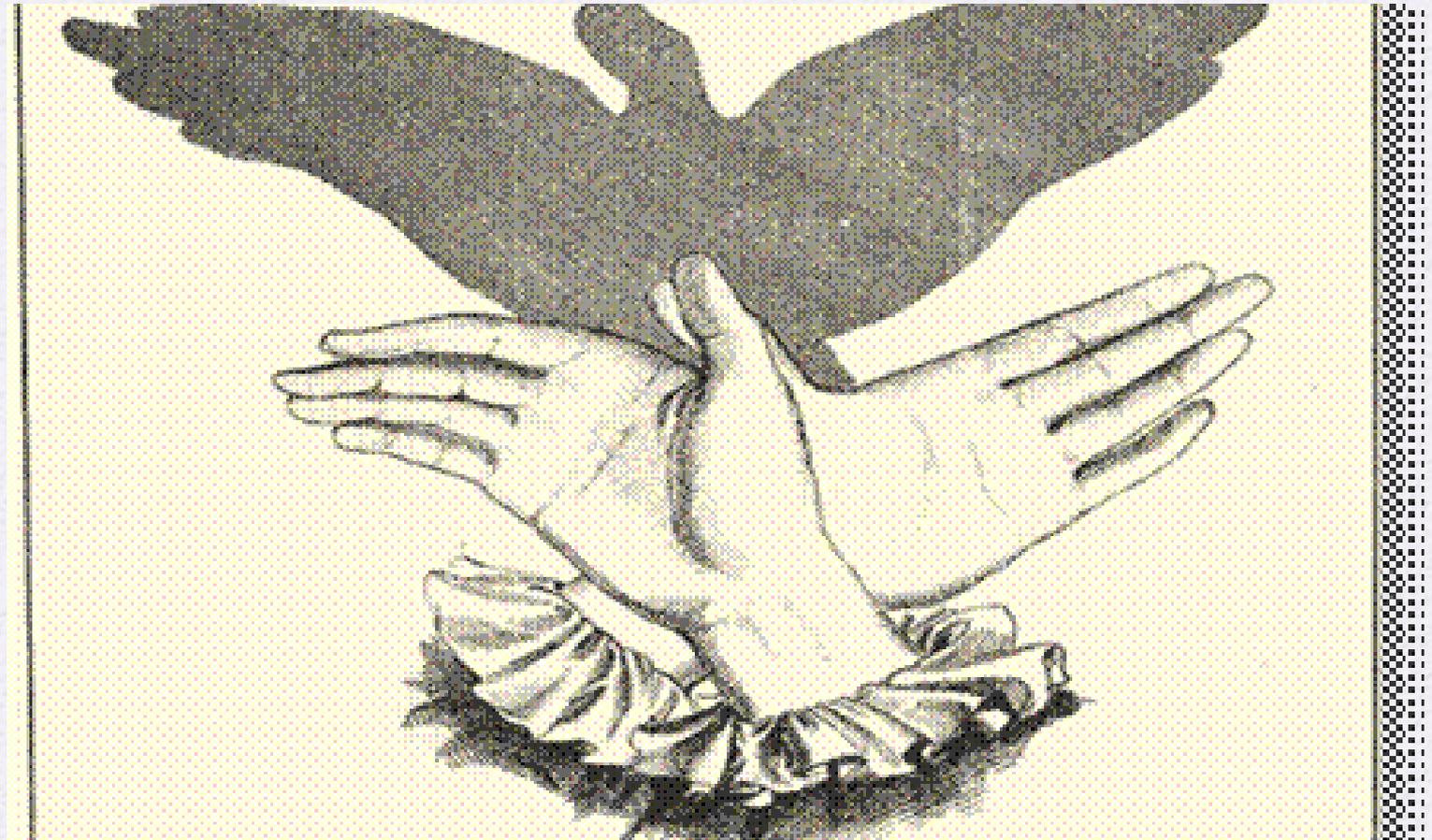
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# Class Assignment

- Explore the resources in class, posted this week, and under the "puppetry" category at [Doc Sharing](#)
- Decide on a puppet you will create and how you will use it to teach a concept or tell a story
- Identify a resource such as a book, site, or become your own *playwright*
- Construct your puppet and any *backdrops*, *scenery*, and/or *props*
- Work individually or with a group to create a puppet show incorporating music, theatre, and visual arts to teach and/or entertain

# Class Assignment

- You will be required to video the 2-to-3 minute performance in class on an assigned date; be sure you are prepared **BEFORE** you attend class to video record:
  - All puppets should be created prior to this date
  - All background scenery and staging should be created
  - The performance should be *rehearsed*; this is NOT *improvisation* (know your *script*, *articulate* and *enunciate* the *dialogue*; practice the *gesturing* of your puppets)
  - ALCOS standards from Theatre and Visual Arts should be identified

# Assignment: Initial Questions

- Are you working individually or with a group (no more than three in a group); if you are working collaboratively, who is in your group?
- What are you teaching through your performance and what arts Alabama Course of Study Standard ALCOS (dance, music, theatre, and/or visual arts) are you meeting?
- Each person must produce a puppet. What type of puppet are you planning to produce; what materials will you use?
- What questions do you have about this project?

# Let's Hear from YOU: Questions? Comments?

