Rag & Bone

Scrap wood puppets

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Making the puppets

You need:

- wood for a handle
- *(ruler, paint stir-stick, or moulding)*
- scraps of wood
- white glue
- construction paper
- scissors
- masking tape
- fabric
- twist ties
- heavy duty stapler *(optional)*

- Play with two or three scraps of wood until you see a face.

- Glue them together, making sure that the two sides you're gluing are both flat. Let dry.

- Meanwhile, make eyes, mouth, teeth etc. from construction paper, and glue them on.

- Glue handle at the back. Masking tape will hold it in place while the glue dries.

- Glue a corner of fabric onto the top of the handle, the puppet's neck, and secure it with a twist tie. This becomes the puppet's body and clothing. Fabric can also be stapled onto the puppet for capes, hats

Putting on puppet plays

WORKING THE PUPPET:

• Let the audience see. Show the puppet's face. A puppet faces the audience most of the time. Even when speaking to another puppet, it should look "out". Even actions, such as a slave bowing to a king, should be done with both puppets facing the audience. The puppet should also be held high enough to be seen, and in front of the puppeteer.

• Let the audience hear. You're just pretending to be speaking to the puppet next to you. You're actually talking to that audience member way in the back row. Use a loud voice, not your usual speaking voice.

• Let the audience understand. Take turns. The puppet that is talking should move, the others should keep still. Everyone (puppets and puppeteers) should give their attention to the puppet that is talking or doing the main action.

• Safety note. Puppets shouldn't actually touch each other, especially when fighting. If one puppet hits another puppet, the puppets will break. (A fight scene can be more safely faked if the puppet receiving a blow shows a big reaction.)

MAKING UP PUPPET STORIES:

Start with short, quick scenes that have a beginning, a middle and an end:

In the beginning, the audience quickly finds out who is in this story, either through dialogue, monologue, or narration.

In the middle, a problem is introduced. This problem can arise from the characters (e.g., if there's a mouse and a lion, the lion might want to eat the mouse). It should be an in-

teresting problem, and there might even be a complication, which makes it even more interesting.

In the end, the problem is solved. Sometimes it's a good idea to clearly state the solution: "And after they scared him, the bad guy never returned."w

The whole story can be about two minutes long to begin with. More details about character and plot can be added once the basics are clear, and easy to understand. Let a group of three or four students improvise a scene, present it to classmates, work on it again, and present it again a few times before anyone even thinks of writing anything down. This keeps the work fresh and easier to remember, and more flexible (if someone's absent, the group can work around them, or add someone else etc.)

And remember, the audience wants to see, hear, and understand! Have fun!

Language Curriculum links

Making a puppet play in groups is an excellent way to address these expectations from the Language Curriculum:

THE ORAL COMMUNICATION STRAND:

Students will:

• Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;

• Use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;

• Reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.

THE WRITING STRAND:

Students will:

• Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience;

• Draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience;

• Use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively;

• Reflect on and identify their strengths as writers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful at different stages in the writing process.

THE MEDIA LITERACY STRAND:

Students will:

• Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts;

• Identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning;

• Create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques;

• Reflect on and identify their strengths, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.

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