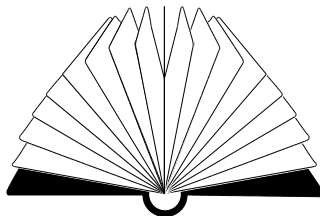


How-to-Kit

Puppets



NWT Literacy Council



Other How to Kits & Literacy Activities

TV Free from A to Z was created to help celebrate NWT Literacy Week. It is part of a series of How-to-Kits, all of which are available for download at www.nwt.literacy.ca. Feel free to print, photocopy and use any of these kits at home or in your program.

- 1-2-3 Rhyme with Me
- Community Book Swap
- Family Reading Party
- Games Night
- Literacy Treasure Hunt
- Pyjamas and Book Party
- Reading Circles and Story Extenders
- Scattergories
- Storytime on the Radio
- Family Literacy Activities Night
- Book Making
- Literacy Games for Adults
- Get Caught Reading & Other Promotion Ideas
- Election
- Environmental Print Games
- More Literacy Games
- Read for 15
- Writing and Publishing Children's Books
- Science Fun
- Involving Families in Children's Learning
- Literacy Activities for Holidays – Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, Birthdays
- Puppet Making
- Writing Contest
- Culture and Traditions
- Books in the Home
- Facilitating a Workshop
- Talking Books
- Family Math
- Family Cooking
- Readers Theatre
- Family Literacy Activities Night 2
- Word & Picture Bingos
- Plan a Family Literacy Fair
- Storysacks
- Literacy Survivor
- TV Free from A to Z

You are welcome to download and use these kits.

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Introduction

Puppetry is a very old, traditional art form. Many different cultures around the world use puppets to entertain and to pass on stories.

Puppets lend themselves very well to family literacy activities. Even very young children can make their own puppets and use them to make up and act out stories. With a little practice, adults can use puppets to engage children in stories, books, language learning and more.

This how-to-kit has two sections. The first section includes activities for children. You can use these activities in family literacy programs, childcare centres, at school or at home. The second section includes information and ideas for family literacy providers, language instructors and teachers about using puppets in their programs.

Part One

Activities to Do with Children



Hand Animals

This is a simple but engaging activity to introduce very young children to puppetry.



First, have the children spend some time examining their hands and the amazing things they can do. Try looking carefully at them, wiggling the fingers and twisting the wrists. Spend a minute or two exploring different hand movements.

Next, demonstrate how you can use your hands to create animal shapes. A spider or a bird is easy to start with. For example, you could have one hand crawl up your arm like a spider. React with fear or surprise. This will show the children how easy it is to create a believable animal using just your hands.



Then, ask each child to come up with a hand animal and show it to the group. After they demonstrate, everyone in the group can try making the animal.

Idea adapted from: <http://www.childdrama.com/hand.html>

Making Puppets

In this section, you will find instructions for simple puppets that children can make and use themselves. For even more ideas, see the NWT Literacy Council's *Puppet Making How-to-Kit*. It is available for download at http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/famlit_res.htm.

Rod Puppets

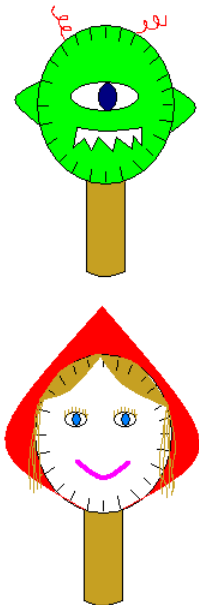
These large puppets are great to make with a group of children. Try making the characters from a favourite fairy tale or legend. Then put on a play for parents.

You will need:

- A paper plate for each character
- Markers or paints and brushes
- Yarn for hair
- Tape
- Scissors
- Dowel or paper towel tube for each character
- Construction paper and fabric scraps (optional)

1) Draw or paint the face of a character onto the bottom of a paper plate. Use yarn for hair and construction paper or fabric scraps to add features, like eyes and ears.

2) Tape the dowel or paper towel tube to the back of the face.



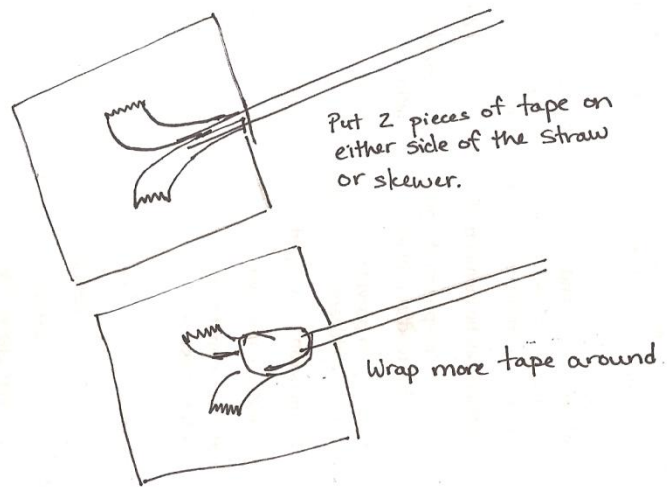
Shadow Puppets

You will need:

- Bristol board or lightweight cardboard (an empty cereal box will work)
- Brass fasteners (also called brads or split pins)
- Markers and pencil crayons
- Wooden skewers, drinking straws or wooden chopsticks
- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Hole punch

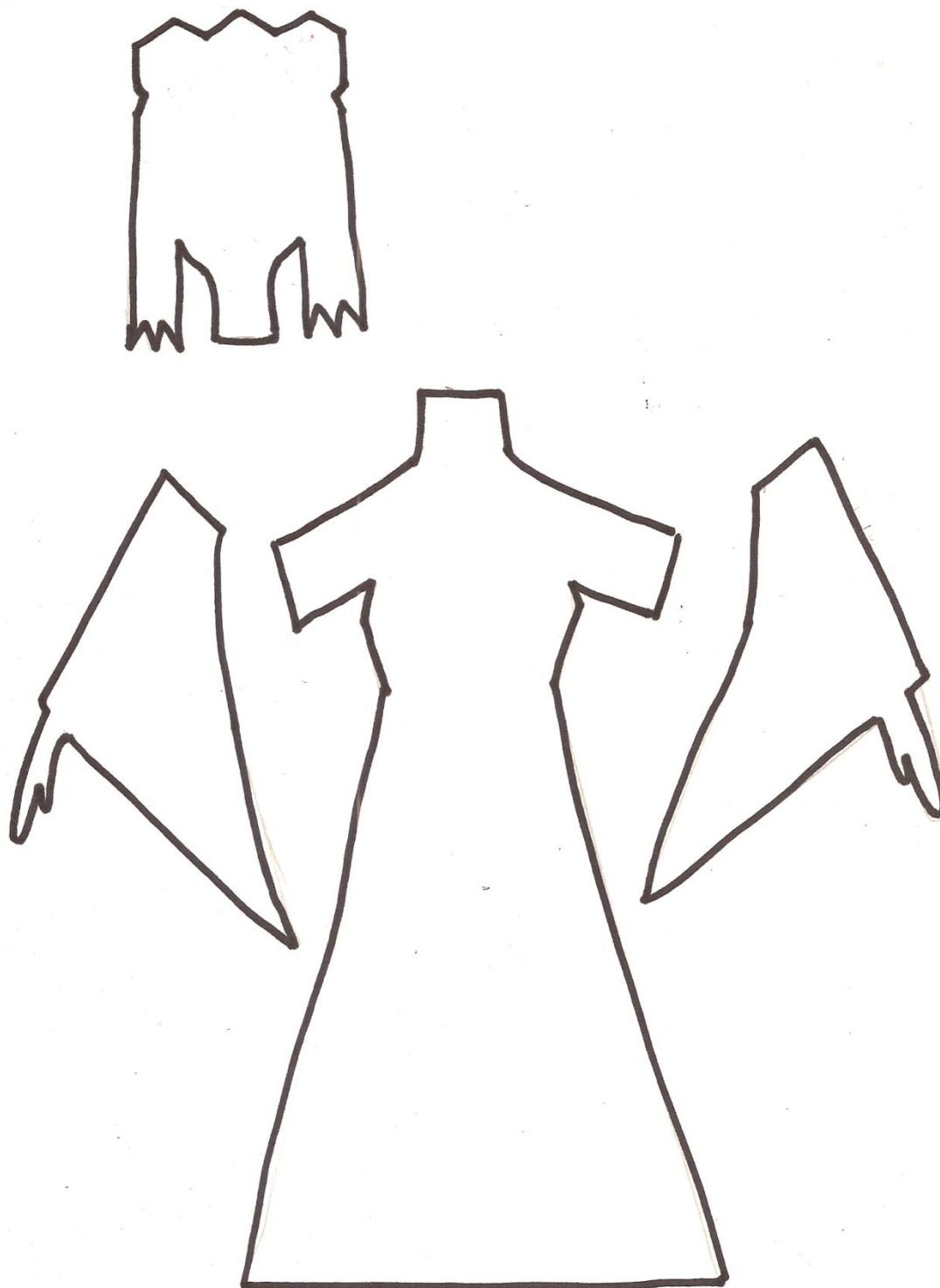


- 1) Draw and cut out the pieces for your puppet on Bristol board. You may want to try making the puppets from the templates on pages 9 and 10 first to see how they work, and then come up with your own designs.
- 2) Colour and decorate the puppet pieces.
- 3) Put your puppet together, using brass fasteners at the joints. You may want to punch holes in the ends of each piece using a hole punch first.
- 4) Make a handle and hinge for your puppet using masking tape, as shown below:

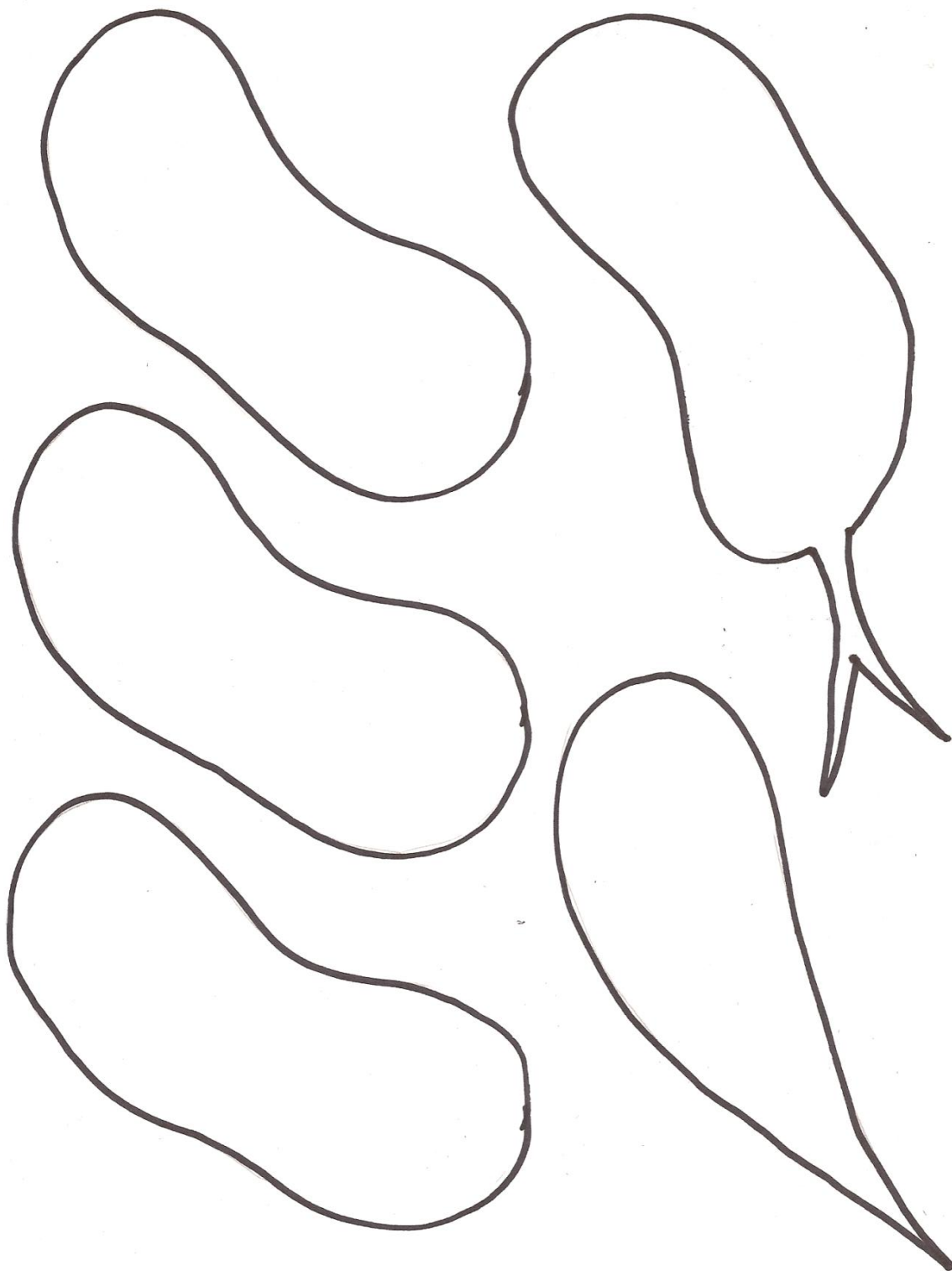


- 5) Set up a shadow box theatre (see pg. 21) and put on a show. To make your puppets seem small and sharp, hold them very close to the screen. To make them seem big and menacing, hold them farther away.

Princess Template



Snake Template



Papier Maché Puppets

These more detailed puppets are a good project for older children.

You will need:

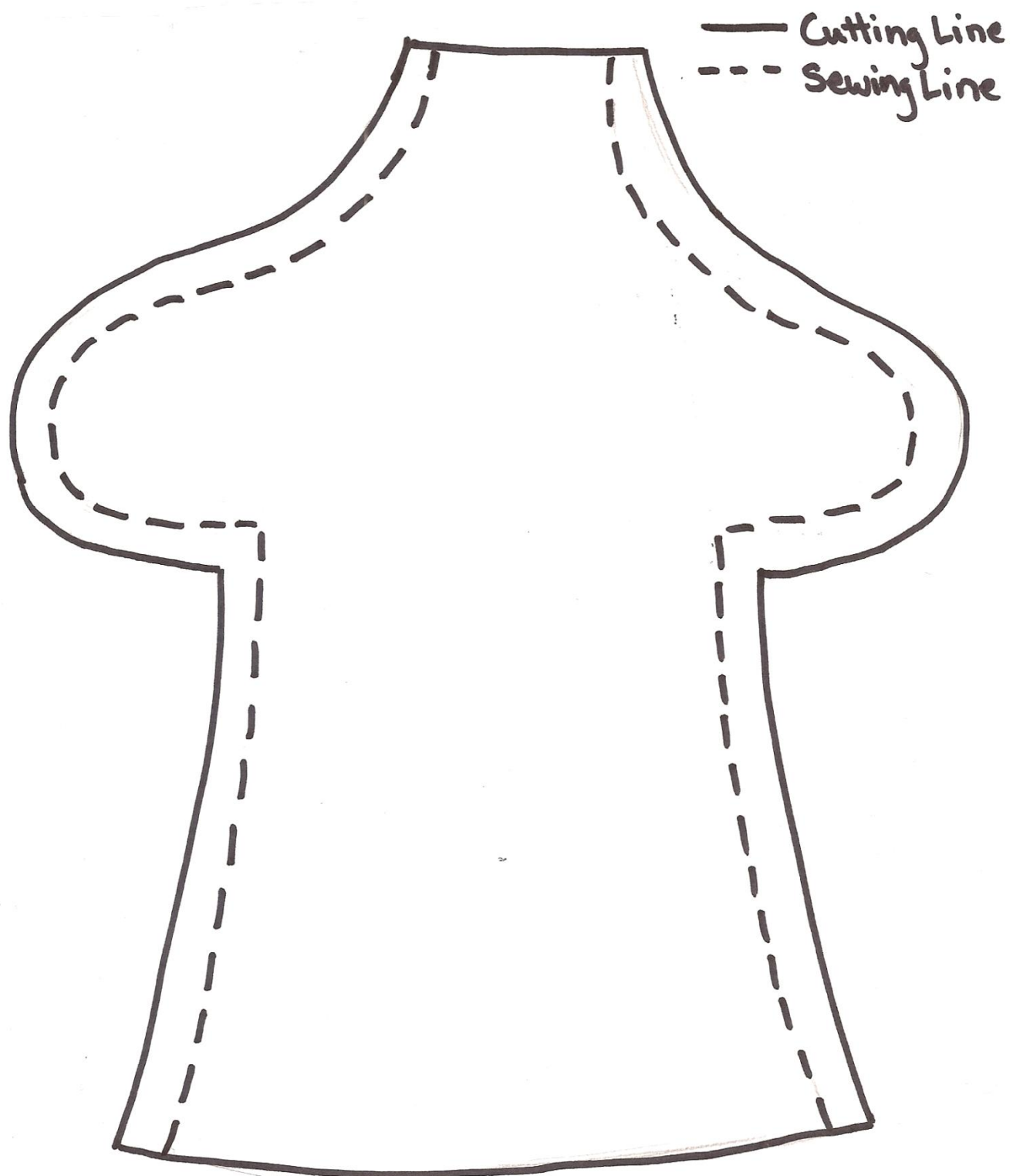
- Old newspapers
- 1 cup flour
- 2 cups water
- Masking tape
- Fabric (about $\frac{1}{2}$ m for each puppet)
- Chalk or pencil crayon
- Scissors
- Needle and thread
- Yarn for hair
- Paints and paintbrushes
- Googly eyes (optional)
- White glue



- 1) Mix the flour and the water together and stir until the mixture is smooth.
- 2) Cut the newspaper into long strips about 2cm wide.
- 3) Crumple up 1 to 2 sheets of newspaper to make a small ball. This will be the head of your puppet. Shape a neck using more newspaper, and tape it to the head using masking tape.
- 4) Dip the strips of newspaper in the flour paste. Run your finger along them to remove the excess.



- 5) Wrap the head in papier maché strips. Add features, such as a nose, using crumpled bits of newspaper dipped in paste.
- 6) Allow the head to dry overnight.
- 7) Paint a face on the head. Add yarn hair and googly eyes if you wish.
- 8) Fold your piece of fabric in half. Trace the body template on the following page onto the fabric using chalk or pencil crayon. Cut around it.
- 9) Put the good sides of the fabric together. Stitch around the edges, leaving the bottom and the neck open.
- 10) Turn the body right side out. Pull the neck hole over the neck of your puppet. You may need to use some white glue to hold it in place.
- 11) Depending on the age and skill level of the child, you may want to make hands for the puppet out of papier maché and glue them in, or make them out of felt and sew them on.



Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly Puppet

This special puppet goes with a favourite children's song – *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*. Because it is more complicated to make, it works better if an adult makes the actual puppet ahead of time, but children will love helping to act out the song.

You will need:

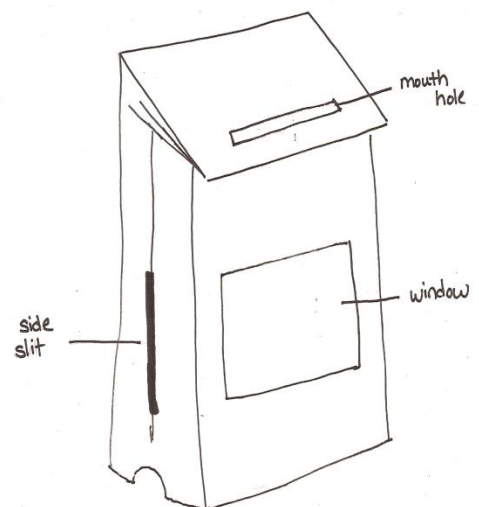
- A paper grocery bag
- Stiff paper or cardstock
- A piece of cellophane or overhead transparency sheet
- Markers
- Tape
- Glue
- Scissors

1) Cut a window in one side of the paper bag.

2) Cut a piece of overhead transparency slightly larger than the window. Glue it in place on the inside.

3) Cut a slit in the top part of the bag for the mouth.

4) Cut a slit in the side of the bag so that you can remove the animals.





- 5) Cut a hole in the back of the bag that is large enough to fit your fingers through. This lets you move the puppet's head.
- 6) Draw a head slightly larger than the top of the bag on stiff paper. Colour and cut it out. Cut a slit for the mouth the same size as the one in the bag.
- 7) Glue the head on to the top of the paper bag, lining up the mouth holes.
- 8) Decorate the rest of the bag. Add legs and arms cut out of stiff paper.
- 9) Tape a piece of stiff paper across the bottom opening of the bag.
- 10) Draw the animals from the song on stiff paper. Make sure they will fit into the mouth of your puppet. The horse should be slightly too big to fit into the mouth. Cut around them. If you don't want to draw the animals, enlarge the ones on the following pages using a photocopier. Then glue them to stiff paper and cut them out.
- 11) To use the puppet, sing the song. When an animal is mentioned, drop it through the mouth. The children will be able to see it through the window in the stomach.

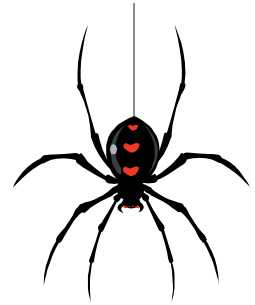
Idea adapted from *Storytelling with Puppets* by Connie Champlin and Nancy Renfro. Chicago: American Library Association, 1985.

I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly

I know an old lady who swallowed a fly
I don't know why she swallowed a fly
Perhaps she'll die



I know an old lady who swallowed a spider
That wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly
I don't know why she swallowed the fly
Perhaps she'll die



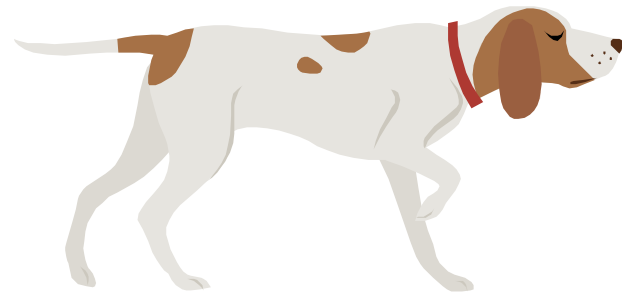
I know an old lady who swallowed a bird
Oh how absurd! She swallowed a bird
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly
I don't know why she swallowed the fly
Perhaps she'll die



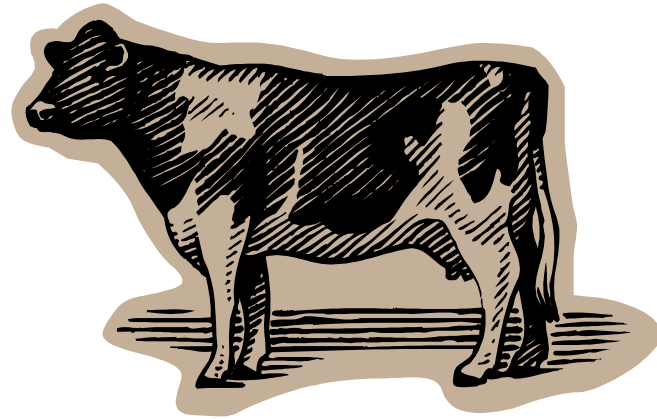
I know an old lady who swallowed a cat
Imagine that! She swallowed a cat
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly
I don't know why she swallowed the fly
Perhaps she'll die



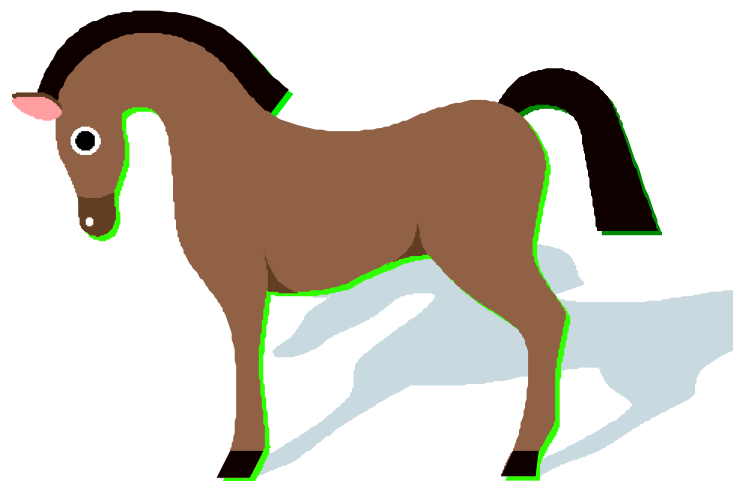
I know an old lady who swallowed a dog
Oh what a hog! She swallowed a dog
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly
I don't know why she swallowed the fly
Perhaps she'll die



I know an old lady who swallowed a cow
I don't know how, but she swallowed a cow
She swallowed the cow to catch the dog
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly
I don't know why she swallowed the fly
Perhaps she'll die



I know an old lady who swallowed a
horse
She's dead, of course!



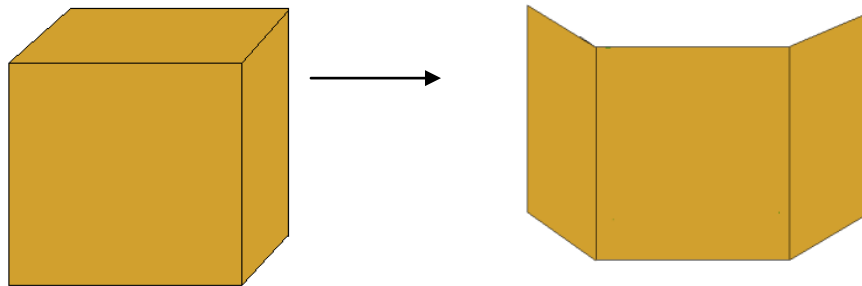
Making Puppet Theatres

You can make a variety of simple puppet theatres out of things you probably already have in your house, centre or school.

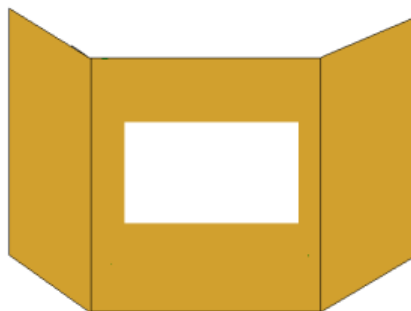
Box Puppet Theatre

There are a few ways to make a puppet theatre. The simplest is to cover a low table with a blanket or tablecloth and hide behind it. To make a more permanent puppet theatre, follow these instructions.

- 1) Cut the top, bottom and one side out of a large moving or appliance box.

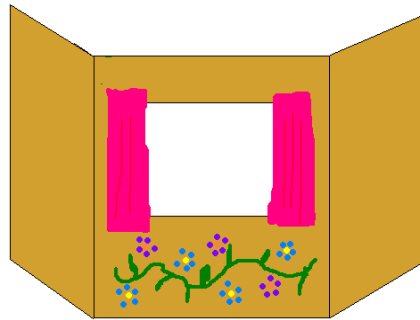


- 2) Cut a square out of the front panel.





- 3) Staple cloth or tissue paper curtains into the window.
- 4) Decorate the theatre with markers or paint.



Now you're ready to put on a puppet show!

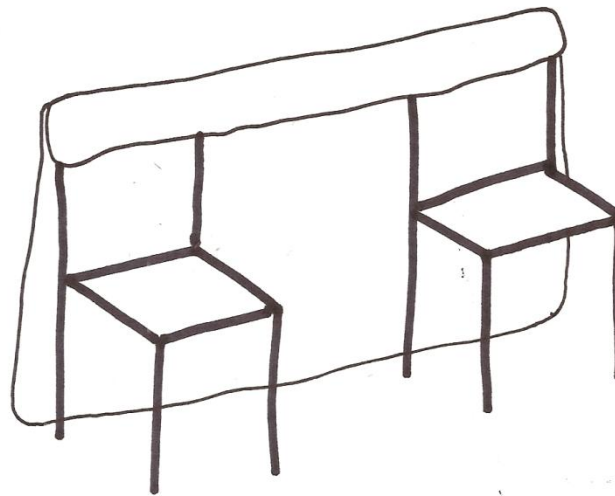
Temporary Puppet Theatre

You can also make a temporary puppet theatre out of things you have around the house.

You will need:

- 2 sturdy chairs
- A broom handle or thick dowel
- String
- A sheet, blanket or tablecloth

- 1) Place the chairs about a metre apart.
- 2) Tie the broom handle or dowel across the tops of the chairs using string.
- 3) Drape the sheet over the broom handle.
- 4) You can put props or puppets you aren't using on the chair seats.



Shadow Puppet Theatre

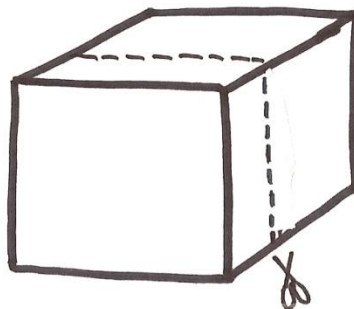
You can make your own shadow puppet theatre out of a cardboard box. Then, turn out the lights and put on a show for your friends and family.



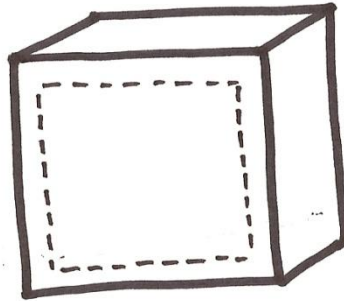
You will need:

- A large cardboard box
- A large sheet of thin white paper or a piece of white fabric (an old sheet works very well)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Markers or paint for decorating

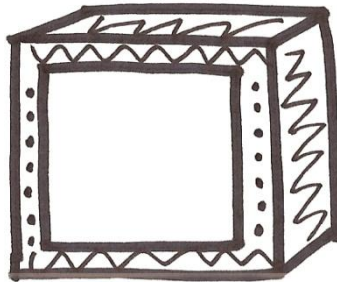
1) Cut one side off the box, leaving an edge of about 15 cm.



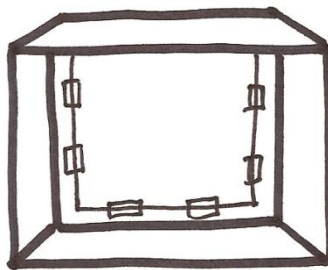
- 2) Cut a large window out of the end, leaving a frame of about 4 cm.



- 3) Use marker or paint to decorate the box.



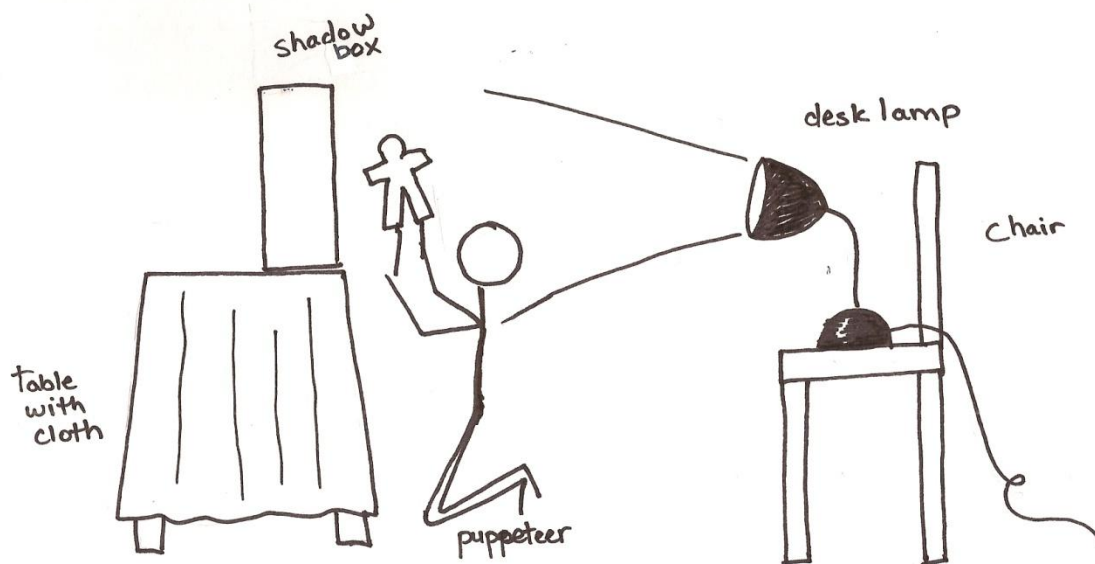
- 4) Cut the paper or fabric so that it is slightly larger than the window.
Tape it into place on the inside of the box.



To set up your theatre:

- 1) Cover a table with a sheet, blanket or tablecloth.

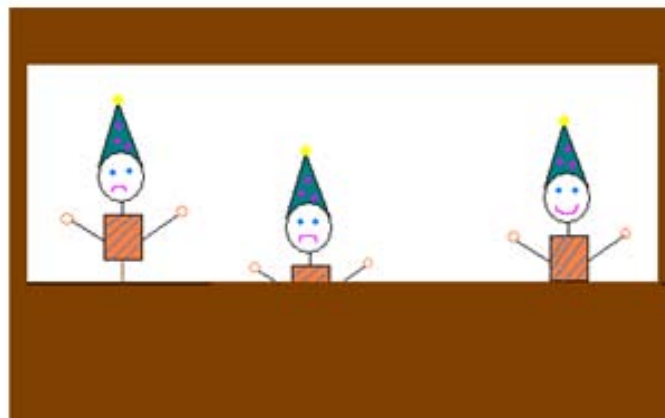
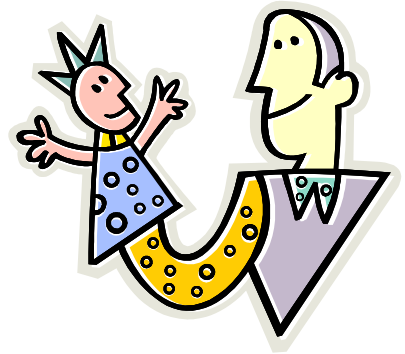
- 2) Place your theatre on the table.
- 3) Set a desk lamp on a chair behind it.
- 4) Turn out all the other lights in the room.



Tips for Young Puppeteers

Here are some tips for moving and performing with your puppet to make it seem alive.

- 1) **Use your whole arm.** To make your puppet seem lifelike, you will need to use your fingers, wrist, elbow and shoulder.
- 2) **Practise, practise, practise.** Before you put on a show, practise with your puppet in front of a mirror. Try making different expressions.
- 3) **Lip Synching.** Every time you talk, your puppet's mouth should move too. Try practising by singing the ABCs or another favourite song in front of a mirror.
- 4) **Puppet Posture.** If you are performing behind a table or puppet stage, make sure your puppet is not standing too high or too low.



too high too low just right



- 5) When your puppet is not talking, try not to let it slump or keep it completely still. Have it nod its head, look around or make small gestures.

Adapted from: <http://www.legendsandlore.com/puppetmanipulation.html>



Part Two

Ideas for Family Literacy Providers, Language Instructors and Teachers



This section gives tips and ideas for family literacy providers, language instructors and teachers about using puppets with young children. Most of the ideas given here are meant to be done by a single person with a glove puppet, and without any kind of special stage or set up. This kind of puppetry is easier to perform than puppet plays, as it does not require as much set up or rehearsal. Also, the same puppet can interact with the children over a longer time, building a close relationship.

Getting Started

Using a puppet in your program or classroom may seem daunting at first, but with practice it can be a great tool for learning and a lot of fun. Here are some tips and ideas for starting out.

- 1) **Start with a glove puppet.** A glove puppet is simple to manipulate and doesn't require a special stage – your body is the stage! Another advantage is that glove puppets can usually pick up items in their mouths or arms.



- 2) **Keep it short and simple.** You will feel more comfortable at first if you have a clear plan for what you want to do with your puppet, so you don't have to improvise. Bring your puppet out, follow your plan and then put it away. For ideas about when and where to use your puppet, see pg.31.
- 3) **Have a "home" for your puppet.** When you are not using your puppet, keep it in a special bag or box. Puppets can be quite real to young children, and they don't like to see them lying lifeless or

stuffed in a drawer! An empty gift bag or decorated box makes a great home. Another reason to have a home is that you can put your puppet on unseen. Just stick your hand into the bag, put the puppet on and have it peek out.

- 4) **Your puppet doesn't need to talk.** You can use puppets even if you're not comfortable with making your puppet speak. Try having the puppet whisper in your ear, and repeating what he says to the children. Or, use body language and facial expressions to show the children how the puppet is feeling. This excellent video demonstrates how effective silent puppets can be:
<http://www.teachers.tv/video/215> . This video from the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education gives specific tips on using body language to communicate:
<http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/earlychildhood/puppets/index.html>.

Creating a Voice for Your Puppet

Creating a distinct character for your puppet will make your puppet seem interesting and alive. It will also focus the audience's attention on the puppet rather than on you. It's especially important if you are planning to use multiple puppets with the same group of children. Here are some tips for giving your puppet its own personality.



- 1) **Look at your puppet.** Is it big or small? Is it an animal or a person? Is it old or young? Is it tall and thin or short and round? These things will help you decide whether it should have a deep, booming voice or high, squeaky voice, whether it should be shy or outgoing and whether it should move quickly or slowly.
- 2) **Think about what you need your puppet to do.** A shy, timid puppet is great for making shy children feel comfortable. A more active, outgoing puppet can help get children more involved in an activity.
- 3) **Practise.** Find a quiet place to practise your puppet's voice and body language. Try out different voices to see which one suits the puppet the best. Experiment with different expressions and reactions. Once you settle on a voice and personality, practise in front of a mirror.
- 4) **Keep the voice and personality of your puppet consistent.** Make sure that your old man puppet doesn't hobble along one minute and race around the next. This will become easier with practise.

How and When Should I Use My Puppet?

You are only limited by your imagination in how you use your puppets. However, you may find it easiest to start with one of these ideas:

- 1) Introduce a book for story time.** This is a great way to get started with puppets. A glove puppet can choose a book out of a box or pile by grabbing it in his mouth. He can talk about why he likes the book, or about experiences he's had that relate to the book. He may want to go back into his house while you read the story (leaving both of your hands free to turn pages), and come out again afterwards to talk about it. He may even want to dress up as a character in the story. A simple hat or costume can be made out of construction paper or felt, and usually gets a laugh out of children.



Chester introduces *The Paper Bag Princess*.

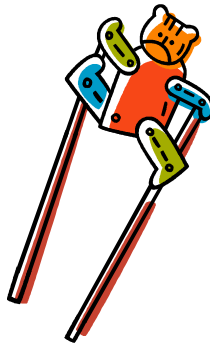


All ready for *Little Red Riding Hood*.

- 2) **Teach a new song or rhyme.** A puppet who loves to sing can teach the words to a new rhyme or song. Children also love correcting a puppet who forgets words or sings the wrong words to a familiar song.



- 3) **Teach a new word every day during a language lesson.** An elder or animal puppet is especially good for teaching aboriginal languages.
- 4) **Help with some part of the daily routine, such as saying the date or describing the weather.** This gives the children something to look forward to each day. This kind of puppet works well with props or costumes. For example, the puppet could wear sunglasses on a sunny day, carry an umbrella on a rainy day, wear a mask for Halloween or wear a Santa hat for Christmas.
- 5) **Tell a simple story or legend.** A puppet can either act as the main character of a story, or can be the storyteller.





Sticky Situations

While most young children respond extremely well to puppets, you may occasionally run into a problem. Here are some suggestions for dealing with common difficulties, which are adapted from *Storytelling Made Easy with Puppets* by Jan VanSchuyver. Oryx Press, 1993.

Children are afraid of puppets. Occasionally, preschool children will be afraid of a puppet. There are a few things to keep in mind to avoid this:

- Start with the puppet well away from the children. Move it closer as they become more comfortable.
- Avoid having the puppet make loud sounds or jerky movements at first.
- Introduce the puppet and have the children meet him individually. They may want to pet him gently, or he can nibble on their fingers.
- If the children are very shy, it is sometimes helpful to have the puppet pretend to be shy as well. He could start by peeking his head out of his house, then darting back in, then slowly creeping out. Give suggestions to the children of how they could make the puppet feel at home.

A child says, “I can see your hand in there.” The best way to deal with a child who insists on pointing out that a puppet is not real is to be truthful. You could say something like, “Yes, my hand is inside because it’s a puppet. Be we’re all pretending that it is a real bear/camel/princess (or whatever it is) so that it can help us out with this story.”

A child says, “I can see your lips moving.” Puppeteer Jan VanSchuyver suggests having your puppet respond with shock and amazement. Have it



turn to you and say something like, “No way! I can make her lips move just by talking!” As long as your puppet has a distinct personality and responds as though it has a brain of its own, this should not be a problem.

Using Puppets to Teach Aboriginal Languages

Puppets can be a great tool for teaching a second language to young children. Children are often less shy and more willing to take risks when talking to a puppet than to a teacher.

If a language lesson is part of your daily routine, you can have a special puppet that only comes out during that time. A northern animal or elder puppet is great for this. The children will really look forward to seeing the puppet come out each day.

Puppets are also great for teaching young children who revert to speaking English during language lessons. Let the children know that the puppet only knows how to speak the aboriginal language. If they try to talk to the puppet in English, you can have the puppet give confused looks, shrug its shoulders or say something like, "I'm sorry, I only speak ____." This gives children a real reason to use the language in the classroom.





Puppets on the Web

For some simple puppet videos made by the NWT Literacy Council, check out our website:

<http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/FamilyLiteracyVideoClips/index.html>

You can also view them on our YouTube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/NWTLiteracy>

For simple ideas about using puppets to teach aboriginal languages, check out **nisgaalanguage**'s channel on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/nisgaalanguage>

Check out this neat video about how to turn a stuffed animal into a puppet:

<http://www.5min.com/Video/How-to-Make-Puppets-From-Stuffed-Toys-Pt-1-11657217>

This video gives some helpful tips on how to use puppets to teach young children:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj6etsPtqrc>

Purchasing Puppets

Homemade puppets can be very effective. For more ideas about making your own puppets, check out the NWT Literacy Council's *Puppets How-to-Kit*. You may also want to try using purchased puppets. Here are some places that sell high quality puppets.

Folkmanis Puppets makes a wide variety of realistic northern animal puppets for fairly reasonable prices. They can be ordered in Canada through www.bcpuppets.ca.



Verna Arey shows off a Folkmanis moose puppet.

Wintergreen also sells people and character puppets that are designed to be used in the classroom. You can order them at www.wintergreen.ca, or call 1-800-268-1268 and ask for a catalogue.