CHAPTER 18

Puppetry, Shadow Play, and Masks



Chapter Outline

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Spotlight on Terms

- animation
- character mask
- flipping the lid
- full-body puppet
- hand puppet
- lip sync
- manipulation
- marionette
- mask
- mounting the show
- movable-mouth puppet
- neutral mask
- puppet
- rod puppet
- shadow play
- shadow puppet

When you were young, did you enjoy the antics of Big Bird, Cookie Monster, and the Count on the television series *Sesame Street*? Do you remember pretending that you were one of the four Ninja turtles? Did you check out all of the Muppet movies from the video store and watch them at least twice? Did you take a peek at Barney and his friends just to see what all the excitement was about? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you have observed the pleasure and power of puppetry.

You may have even adopted a puppet when you were younger. Perhaps it was a commercially made Lamb Chop, Bert, or Ernie. Or was it a crocheted lion or felt monkey that your grandmother made especially for you? Possibly you made a puppet in elementary school. Did you use a pattern to create a paper plate puppet or a paper bag puppet? If you were really lucky, you had a creative teacher who provided materials and encouragement for you to design and make your very own creation, a puppet who looked like no other puppet on earth.

After creating the puppet, you were indeed fortunate if you brought your puppet to life, animating it in front of an audience of appreciative friends. Not all students have had that opportunity. Most often, when puppets are created in school, it is merely a craft project, with the puppets soon finding their way into the garbage can. In this chapter, you will learn that puppetry is more than a craft project. You will learn that puppetry is an art form. A skilled puppeteer can bring life to a small puppet, touching the hearts of all who wish to believe.

In this chapter, you will explore the techniques of puppetry, shadow play, and masks. These theatre styles will give you the opportunity to integrate art, dance, music, and literature into your projects.

What you may think of as a modern idea, created for television or the movies, really dates back thousands of years. Early recorded evidence points to the use of masks and puppets in religion, education,



Oscar the Grouch and Zoe are just two of the many popular puppets created by Jim Henson for *Sesame Street*. How many more of the *Sesame Street* puppets can you name?

and entertainment long before people experienced theatre as we know it today. The people behind the puppets, shadows and masks are special kinds of actors who bring to life the characters depicted by their puppets and masks. If historians are correct, these "puppet actors" were in existence long before "human actors" took to the stage themselves.

As you study puppetry, shadow play, and masks you will be exposed to the art, drama, history, and literature of different cultures. These opportunities will give you a new understanding of people throughout the world.



Making a Puppet

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Recognize and identify the five basic puppet types.
- Use imagination to design and make an original puppet.
- Use other art forms to enhance theatre.



Warm Up

Look among your personal belongings or around the classroom for an item to be used as an "instant puppet." What were some of the items you found?

puppet
almost anything brought to life by a human in front of an audience.

animation
bringing something to life through movement and action.

manipulation
the way a puppeteer moves or works a puppet.

Even though the word *puppet* comes from the Latin *pupa*, meaning "doll," a puppet is not a doll, nor is it limited to being doll-like. A **puppet** can be almost anything brought to life by a human in front of an audience. The puppeteer communicates with the audience through the puppet. Bringing a puppet to life is a form of **animation**.

Years ago, in many different cultures, puppets were used in religious rituals. In our own culture, the popularity of puppets has increased during the twentieth century. It seems that many people still find pleasure relating to colorful puppets with warm, friendly personalities. Today, puppets are being used to teach religion on television and in churches and synagogues. We also see puppets used in advertising, art, celebrations, crime prevention programs, education, entertainment, and therapy.

Types of Puppets

The way a puppeteer works or moves a puppet is called **manipulation**. Puppets are categorized by the way they are manipulated, rather than by the fabric from which they are made. A sock puppet with a hinged mouth, for example, is considered a hand puppet with a movable mouth. A puppet that is made from a cereal box, empty paper towel tubes, and paper cups and is manipulated by strings is considered a marionette.

Five major types of puppets are used in performances today: rod puppets, shadow puppets, hand puppets, marionettes, and full-body puppets. From these five basic puppet types come other variations or combinations, such as hand-and-rod puppets, nonpuppet or object puppets, finger puppets, and even puppets for the feet.

rod puppet
a puppet constructed without shoulders, arms, or legs and manipulated by one or more rods.

shadow puppet
a flat, two-dimensional puppet designed to cast a shadow or form a silhouette on a white screen.

hand puppet
a puppet that fits over the puppeteer's hand, much like a mitten, and is manipulated by the puppeteer's fingers inside the puppet's head and hands.

movable-mouth puppet
a hand puppet with a movable mouth.

marionette
a puppet manipulated by strings connecting a control rod or paddle to the moving body parts.

full-body puppet
a puppet worn over the puppeteer's head and body like a costume.

The rod puppet is one of the oldest and simplest of puppet types. The **rod puppet** is a puppet manipulated by one or more rods. In its most basic form, it is constructed without shoulders, arms, or legs. But a rod puppet can become more complicated by adding joints and body parts such as arms, legs, and shoulders. Traditionally, the puppeteer manipulates the rod puppet from below the stage, although rod puppets can be designed to be controlled from above the stage. The puppeteer indicates that the rod puppet is talking by moving the entire puppet.

A **shadow puppet** is a flat, two-dimensional figure controlled by a wire or rod against a screen. Projecting light from behind the puppet projects the shadow onto a white cloth screen stretched and stapled to a wooden frame. The puppeteer moves the puppet to bring it to life. The earliest shadow puppets were made out of thin animal hides. Today's shadow puppets can be made of cardboard or translucent acetate. (Later in this chapter, we will discuss the shadow technique known as shadow play.)

A traditional **hand puppet**, also called a glove puppet, fits over the puppeteer's hand much like a mitten or glove. The puppeteer manipulates the puppet by placing the second and third fingers into the puppet's head and using the fourth and fifth fingers along with the thumb as the puppet's hands. Since the hand puppet does not have a movable mouth, the puppeteer moves the entire puppet to indicate talking.

A variation of the standard hand puppet is the **movable-mouth puppet**. Although this puppet fits over the puppeteer's hand, it is constructed with a hinged jaw and movable mouth. The puppet's head is manipulated by the puppeteer's four fingers, while the thumb is used to control the puppet's lower jaw. The puppet's mouth opens and closes as the puppeteer's thumb moves up and down.

Puppets controlled and manipulated by strings are called **marionettes**. Built with jointed parts, the marionette moves much like a human or animal. The puppet's moving parts are connected by strings to a control rod or paddle. The puppeteer stands above the puppet stage and manipulates the puppet, moving it along a play board or stage floor.

A **full-body puppet** is a puppet worn over the puppeteer's head and body much like a costume. Most full-body puppets are animated by one puppeteer inside the puppet. Extremely large full-body puppets may be controlled by more than one puppeteer. A few full-body puppets are so large that they are manipulated by remote control.

Puppet Construction

Are you ready to make a puppet? You will need an assortment of materials, but you don't have to spend a lot of money. In fact, making puppets is a fun way to recycle items that would otherwise be thrown away. Make a sweep of your house, collecting some of the materials listed on the materials chart (see Figure 18–1 on page 350). Worthless junk will suddenly become valuable to you as a puppet maker. Items that you do not use can be shared or traded with other puppet makers in your class. Along with puppet materials, you will need to collect basic construction tools and supplies before you begin.

How many of the different types of puppets that you just read about can you identify in these pictures? From top to bottom in the left-hand column: rod, hand, movable mouth, and marionettes; to the right: shadow and full-body puppets.









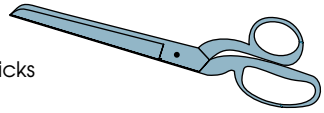




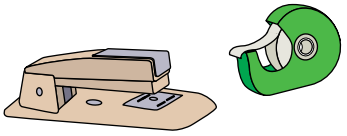
Figure 18–1

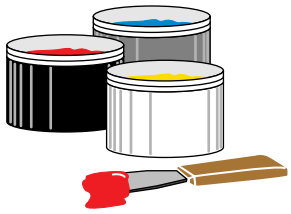
Puppet-Making Tools and Materials.

BASIC CONSTRUCTION TOOLS



scissors
stapler, staples
glue gun, glue sticks
hole punch
colored markers
rulers
tape measure
yardstick
needle
rubber bands
string
several types of tape
(clear plastic, colored duct, masking)
wire cutters (optional)
sewing machine (optional)
latex paint, tempera paint, acrylic paint
sponge or bristle paintbrushes
coffee cans





Plastic:

colored transparent report covers
margarine tubs
film containers
colored Easter eggs
used ping pong balls
drinking straws
bubble wrap
packing squiggles



Accessory Materials:

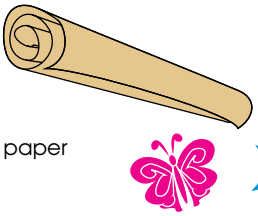
sequins
buttons
feathers
fake fur
cotton balls
yarn
rug scraps
costume jewelry
ribbons
lace
fringe
binding
cording
braid
rope
tassels
doll accessories



OTHER MATERIALS

Paper:

construction paper
heavy craft paper
colored tissue paper
decorated wrapping paper
wallpaper samples
foil paper scraps
paper doilies
decorative dots, stars, and gummed reinforcements





Cardboard:

lightweight cardboard and tag board
fillers from shirt and hosiery packages
cereal boxes
various sizes of gift boxes
cardboard tubes
round cartons from speciality ice cream shops

Miscellaneous:

wire hangers
dowel rods
Styrofoam
foam scraps
craft sticks
pipe cleaners
brad-type fasteners
clothespins

Puppets can be as simple or as complicated as the puppet builder wants to make them. Rod puppets, shadow puppets, hand puppets, and movable-mouth puppets are easier to construct than marionettes and full-body puppets. Before making your puppet, consider how the puppet will be manipulated. A good rule to remember is that the closer the puppet is to the puppeteer's body, the easier it is to work and control.

Rather than copying a pattern, let your imagination run free as you design your puppet. Your puppet's greatest asset is the way it looks. Eyes, mouth, nose, ears, and even hair help define and project the



It's not easy being green.

Kermit the Frog

puppet's character. Close your eyes and picture the way you want your puppet to look.

The eyes of the puppet should be large in proportion to the head. Make your puppet's eyes from buttons, rubber balls, jiggly eyes, egg carton cups, pom-pom balls, or wooden beads. Add a little sparkle to the eyes to reflect light by using a small sequin or small white button on top of dark eyes. Placement of the eyes on the face helps to indicate the puppet's focus. Experiment with eye placement before you permanently glue or sew the eyes to the face. Eyebrows and eyelashes help give your puppet facial expression. Try several different combinations to find just the right ones to suit your puppet's personality.

Adding the proper nose can give your puppet character. Even the size and placement of the nose create personality. A puppet with an upturned nose could have a snobbish personality. A puppet with a huge red ball nose might always have the sniffles. A tiny shy mouse could have one small pink bead for a nose.

The mouth of a movable-mouth hand puppet must be glued or sewed as part of the basic construction. When making a puppet without a movable mouth, a permanent mouth can be painted on the puppet's face or cut from felt and glued in place.

Although many puppets do not have ears, the addition of ears can do much to exaggerate a puppet's personality. Ears can be small and understated or large and overdone. A good-listener puppet could be constructed with short perky ears. A hard-of-hearing puppet could be constructed with long floppy ears.

Hair is one of the most important features on any puppet. Instead of trying to create the look of real hair, use unusual materials to exaggerate your puppet's look. Try rug yarn, raffia, pipe cleaners, fake fur, mop heads, feathers, metal scrub pads, gift wrap ribbon, or paper strips for dramatic results.

Hair is one of the easiest ways to emphasize a puppet's character. Style, color, and even hair texture can tell the audience a great deal about the puppet. A female puppet having a "bad hair day" would be believable if her flyaway hair were made of bright orange yarn. Professor Lucas, a mad scientist, would be perfect sporting a tuft of wild wiry hair made from a metal scrub pad.

Every puppet has its own style of dress, just as you do. Dress your puppet to reflect its personal style. Don't forget to add personality with accessories, such as a hat or cap, a gaudy piece of jewelry, weird eyeglasses, a feather boa, or a bow tie. One of these accessories might be just the finishing touch your puppet needs.

Creating an interesting, believable puppet takes time, thought, and lots of work. Take pride in your original creations; each contains a special part of you.

As you just learned, a puppet's character is determined partly by the way it looks. The way it talks and acts also reveals its personality. Once you have made your puppet, give it a name, a voice, and a distinct personality. Completing a puppet profile for each puppet you create will help build your puppet's background and establish its personality (see Figure 18–2). If you need additional help with characterization, refer to Chapter 7. Puppet personalities can be developed the same way character roles are created.



Name: *Lolly Popple*

Voice quality: *Light and sweet*

Personality traits: *Happy, always friendly*

Hometown: *Sweetville, TX*

Job or occupation: *Candymaker*

Talent: *Juggling*

Habits or mannerisms: *Always carries a lollipop*

Clothing taste: *Bright, bold; likes to mix stripes and plaids*

Favorite saying: *"A spoonful of sugar helps everything."*

Favorite food: *Peanut butter*

Figure 18–2

Puppet Profile.

ACTION

1. **Show and Share Puppet Day.** Bring to class one of your personal puppets for a Show and Share Puppet Day. Use your puppet in some of the improvisation activities from Chapter 6.

2. **Object Puppets.** Bring to class a household object you might manipulate as one of the basic puppet types. Give a name, personality, and voice to something as simple as a feather duster, dish mop, folding fan, or kitchen tongs. Create a voice that suits your puppet's personality. Introduce your puppet to the class. Invite the class to ask the puppet questions.

3. **Finger Puppets.** Using a water-based marker, draw faces on your index fingers. By wiggling your fingers, you can create simple puppets. Give each puppet a name, a voice, and a personality. Have the puppets talk to each other. Have them talk with other puppets in your acting company or group.

4. **Design a Puppet.** On unlined white paper, design and color an original puppet from each of the five basic types. Explain to your acting company or to the class how you would transform each design into a puppet.

5. **Search for Supplies.** Collect and bring to class materials to make an original puppet. Use one of the five basic puppet types or a combination of types.

LESSON 2

Bringing a Puppet to Life

LESSON OBJECTIVE

- Explore puppet manipulations.
- Animate a puppet character.
- Experiment with puppet voices.

Warm Up

Bring to life your pencil or your pen by moving it and talking as a puppet might.

Puppets are animated (brought to life) when puppeteers give them movements and actions. A simple turn of the body or tilt of the head gives a puppet lifelike qualities. Puppets can use many of the same gestures and movements used by human actors. They can also perform actions that human actors are incapable of doing. Puppets can fly, twist into unusual shapes, or sail into the audience.

Manipulation

Each type of puppet is manipulated in a different way. Here you will learn about basic puppet manipulation for hand puppets. As you



Shari Lewis's well-known puppet Lamb Chop has been entertaining youngsters for many, many years. Recently, a whole new generation of children has been discovering the antics of Lamb Chop on PBS.

become more interested in puppetry, consult additional books in your school or public library for information on ways to manipulate other types of puppets.

As you know, a hand puppet is worn over the puppeteer's hand, much like a glove. The puppeteer inserts from one to three fingers into the puppet's head and uses the remaining fingers and thumb to serve as the puppet's hands. The puppeteer is able to achieve good hand puppet posture by holding the puppet straight and tall, directly in front of his or her body.

When a hand puppet talks, the entire puppet body should move. You can make your puppet's dialogue even more meaningful by using simple gestures on important words such as verbs and nouns. The movements and gestures of the "talking" puppet help focus the attention of the "listening" puppets and the audience on the talking puppet. To demonstrate that they are "listening," other puppets onstage "freeze," paying attention to the puppet that is speaking.

You can manipulate a movable-mouth puppet by using your fingers to move the top part of the puppet's head and your thumb to move the puppet's lower jaw. Some students have found that they gain upper-hand strength by inserting bent fingers into the upper head. They call this using "knuckle action."

To achieve the best posture for manipulating a movable-mouth puppet, you need to stand or kneel. The arm upon which you place the puppet should be outstretched above your head. Then lock your elbow and slightly drop your wrist, allowing the puppet's eyes to make contact with the audience.

lip sync
synchronizing movement of the puppet's mouth with the spoken words.

Moving only your thumb, you can make the puppet talk. Try to match the puppet's mouth movements with the words being spoken. This action is called synchronization or **lip sync**. Correct lip sync requires practice and patience. The puppet's mouth should open as it begins talking and close when it is finished. Since a puppet's mouth cannot move rapidly enough to open and close on every word in a sentence, try emphasizing the most important words. Use one thumb movement for one-syllable words, two thumb movements for two-syllable words, and three thumb movements for three-syllable words. Faster speech may necessitate fewer thumb movements.

flipping the lid
improperly manipulating a movable-mouth hand puppet, causing flapping of the upper jaw or head.

For ease in manipulation, lightly thrust the puppet forward as the thumb is lowered. By moving only the thumb, you avoid flapping the puppet's upper head. This useless flapping is called **flipping the lid**.

Try not to lean on your elbows or shoulders on the puppet stage or playboard. When a puppeteer leans, the puppet looks tired and lazy. A puppet's physical height should be determined on entrance and maintained throughout the show. Growing or shrinking puppets distract from the performance unless such occurrences are part of the show's action.

Successful entrances and exits are important in a puppet show. A puppet should enter the acting area as if walking up a short flight of stairs. Proper exits include turning the puppet around backward and descending the steps. Special entrances and exits might include a puppet popping up, flying off, or rolling off the stage. These special movements should be included as part of a well-planned script rather than improper puppet manipulation.



A puppet is an inanimate figure that is made to move by human effort before an audience.

Bil Baird

Contemporary Theatre: A World and a Theatre of Change

The world of the 1960s was a world of great change. It is only natural that theatre would reflect this demand for change. Increasingly, theatre was being created and staged as a way to urge political and social reform. Theatre after the middle 1960s was characterized by a number of theatre companies who utilized nontraditional theatre practices.

One of the most well-known of these politically unified groups was the Living Theatre, founded by Judith Malina. Although the original group formed in the 1940s, the group continued to produce plays far into the turbulent '60s. Their work was characterized by the actors not pretending to be characters so much as trying to represent forces in society. They often purposely made their characters stereotypes to dramatize the ways in which the forces of society influenced each other. Although the Living Theatre began its production history using scripted plays, their later works were all improvised performances which were loosely practiced and developed around an outline of a story or "scenario." This meant that each performance was truly unique. In most of their later productions, the group performed in everyday clothes. Scenery was sparse, reduced to only a few essential props and set furnishings. Although their popularity declined rapidly as the 1970s passed, they were a very important group in theatre history. They influenced many other groups, such as the Open Theatre group, which utilized improvisation, minimal theatrical elements, and other alternative approaches to theatre.



Hair was a radical and influential change from previous Broadway productions. Do you recognize the actor from this original 1968 production who went on to become a famous movie actor? (Diane Keaton, center)

A common thread running through most of these alternative theatre practices was the understanding that theatre was unique from film and television by virtue of its live, immediate nature. The alternative groups viewed theatre as a communal (shared, group) experience. Many of these artists, such as the Polish director Jerzy Grotowsky, believed that theatre could only survive the electronic, computer age by emphasizing what makes theatre different—direct interaction between actor and audience. Grotowsky and his followers saw theatre as a ritual in which all the people present—actors and audience members alike—are participants. These general beliefs led to the audience participation productions that occurred in post-1960 theatre. This approach has been labeled *environmental* theatre because there is no separation of audience and performer, no fixed seating, little constructed scenery, and a dependence upon improvisation rather than a script.

Today, the theatre is a place of great diversity, involving all of the styles and movements that have come before. Artists today have at their disposal a rich selection of theatrical tools, which they can endlessly recombine to tell their stories.

Some theatre makes us laugh or entertains us with its songs and dances. Other plays move us to feel deep emotions and empathize with characters in situations we understand and identify with. Still other productions motivate us to think hard and ask political and social questions. We can be sure that theatre will continue to embrace and reflect those changes. ■



Remaining basically unchanged since the nineteenth century, the English puppets Punch and Judy are still popular with young and old today.



I always hold up the wooden actors as instructive object lessons to our flesh-and-blood players. The wooden ones . . . move you as only the most experienced living actors can. What really affects us in the theatre is not the muscular activities of the performers, but the feelings they awaken in us by their aspect.

George Bernard Shaw

Additional movements and exercises for hand puppets can be found in *Making Puppets Come Alive*, by Larry Engler and Carol Fijan. This book is an outstanding source for beginning puppeteers.

Regardless of puppet type, the way to discover exactly what your puppet can do is to experiment in front of a mirror. Working in front of a mirror, try several of the puppet movement exercises at the end of this lesson.

Vocalization

One of your puppet's most important features is the way it talks, or its voice. The puppet's voice helps define and communicate the puppet's character and personality. Work at finding the perfect voice for your puppet. Give your puppet a voice of its own—a voice different from yours.

One of the best ways to find a puppet voice is to experiment. Experimenting with voices may seem silly at first, but it is the only way to find just the right tone and quality.

A puppeteer often matches the puppet's voice with its character. For example, a big, gruff goat puppet would need a big, gruff voice. A small, sweet bug puppet would need a small, sweet voice. It is also possible to contrast a puppet's appearance with an unexpected voice. A large lion puppet who is afraid to roar could have a teeny, tiny voice. Contrasting voice and character is another way to reveal the puppet's personality to your audience.

Be sure to choose a puppet voice that you can maintain for the entire show. If you begin puppet dialogue with one voice, you should

keep that voice throughout the show. As in formal theatre, switching voices "breaks character" and distracts from the performance.

In your search for the perfect puppet voice, try several vocal exercises. The same vocal exercises used by stage actors are also helpful to the puppet actors.

ACTION

Movement Exercises

1. **Profile Exercises.** With the puppet in a profile position, have the puppet
   - **a.** look up and down
   - **b.** move as a young, excited child; as a teenager in a hurry; as a sad older person
   - **c.** walk slowly, with head down
   - **d.** skip, hop, run, and jump

2. **Full Front Exercises.** With the puppet facing full front, have the puppet
   - **a.** shift weight from side to side
   - **b.** scratch its head
   - **c.** wipe away a tear
   - **d.** cross its arms
   - **e.** pick up an object
   - **f.** rub its hands together in concern
   - **g.** clap its hands joyfully
   - **h.** rub its head to indicate a headache
   - **i.** pat its chest to indicate a heart attack
   - **j.** pat its chest to indicate "in love"
   - **k.** wave hello or good-bye
   - **l.** nod its head yes
   - **m.** shake its head no
   - **n.** stroke its hair
   - **o.** rub its tummy

3. **Add a Habit.** With the puppet facing full front, try adding a mannerism or habit.
   - **a.** a twitch
   - **b.** a wiggle
   - **c.** a shy head turn
   - **d.** a confident strut

4. **Partner Work.** Working with another puppeteer, have two hand puppets
   - **a.** shake hands
   - **b.** hug
   - **c.** touch shoulders
   - **d.** pat heads
   - **e.** hold hands
   - **f.** stand arm in arm
   - **g.** take turns gesturing "come here"
   - **h.** take turns gesturing "go away"

5. **Stage Movement.** On a puppet stage have your puppet
   - **a.** run
   - **b.** bow
   - **c.** glide
   - **d.** bend
   - **e.** jump
   - **f.** walk
   - **g.** skip
   - **h.** shrug
   - **i.** strut
   - **j.** march
   - **k.** twirl
   - **l.** fly
   - **m.** sit
   - **n.** pace

Vocal Exercises

1. **Vocal Variety.** Exercise your puppet's vocal range by having it count aloud from 1 to 10 in the following ways:

high	whispering
deep	babyish
squeaky	intellectually
creaky	nasal
slow	sweetly
fast	deliberate
angrily	snarling
quavering	with an accent

2. **Sing Along.** In a voice other than your own, have the puppet sing a short familiar song. Puppets always enjoy singing "Happy Birthday," "Jingle Bells," and "The Alphabet Song."

3. **Try This.** Have your puppet try different voices as it recites the alphabet or a nursery rhyme.

4. **Puppet Improv.** Using puppets, try several of your favorite improvisation activities from Chapter 6. Experiment with different puppet voices as you act out different situations.



Writing a Puppet Show

LESSON OBJECTIVE

- Write a puppet script using original dialogue.



Unless you are improvising your puppet show, you will need a script. Writing a puppet script is much like writing a play—you begin by brainstorming plot ideas. Scriptwriters often collaborate on ideas, so try working with your acting company or class to compile a list of ideas.

Great play ideas can come from the simple story lines found in legends, folktales, or fairy tales. Think about personal experiences and school events. What about retelling a historical event, a current event, or a political situation? You can often find a story in practical jokes and funny songs. Or consider writing a play based on a television sitcom, game show, or commercial.

Once your group has compiled a list of possibilities, select one idea from which to develop a script. The most effective shows have simple plots filled with interesting puppet action.

As you learned in Chapter 8, the play's basic structure should have three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Keep in mind that the beginning of the play captures the audience's attention, sets up the scene, introduces the characters, and establishes the conflict. The middle part of the play, with its rising and falling action, focuses on



It is said that Milton saw a puppet show of Adam and Eve and was inspired to write Paradise Lost. *Haydn composed music for puppet operettas.*

Susan French

how the characters struggle with their problem or conflict. This is the heart of the play, and it determines the length of the show. In the ending, the characters resolve their conflicts, solve their problems, or give up—and the show concludes. Be sure to include all five Ws—who, what, when, where, and why—in your play's three-part outline.

Once the outline is clearly defined, try improvising what you have planned for the puppets. Many puppeteers first act out the situation

A Sample Puppet Show Script

UNDERCOVER BUG
written and performed by
GiGi Bollinger and Jennifer Franklin

Characters:
Daffy—a flower hand puppet
Daisy—a flower hand puppet
Di Dot—a caterpillar rod puppet
Charles III—a caterpillar rod puppet
Charles III—a butterfly rod puppet
The play takes place in a lovely flower garden. Two hand puppet flowers, Daffy and Daisy, stretch and yawn as the scene opens.

Daffy: Good morning Daisy! (*bows*)
Daisy: Good morning Daffy! (*curtsies*)
Daffy: Oh! What a beautiful day! (*nods head*)
Daisy: Yes, Yes, Mr. Sunshine sure makes us grow tall and gorgeous! (*Flowers smile, stretch, and grow taller*)
Daffy: (*The two caterpillars, rod puppets, enter the scene. Di moves quickly but Charles is very slow*) Speaking of gorgeous, here comes Lady Di Dot, OH, MY! and her ugly Prince Charles Caterpillar the Third. (*leans over and whispers to Daisy*)
Daisy: Now, Now, Daffy, you mustn't judge a bug by his cover. (*shakes head to indicate disagreement*)
Daffy: Daisy, Daisy, that sounds just like you—"Miss Goody Two Blooms!" (*shrugs shoulders in disgust*)
Daisy: (*Daisy leans over to listen.*) Listen! The two love bugs are talking.
Charles: Di darling, please walk a little slower. My legs are so tired today. (*dragging along, stops walking*)
Di Dot: Now Charles, you certainly have been acting strange lately. Maybe I should kiss you and make you feel better. (*Di Dot stops moving, leans over and plants a big kiss on Charles*) SMACK!!!
Daffy: Oh my goodness, Daisy. Look at poor Charles, I think he fainted! (*Charles falls rolling off upstage. Charles, butterfly rod puppet, emerges wings first, followed by the entire body*)
Daisy: Look Daffy, look! He's so handsome! Just look at those wings! (*gestures toward Charles*)
Daffy: OH, MY! (*hands on either side of face*)
Daisy: I told you Daffy . . . (*points finger to Daffy*)
Daffy: I know, I know. (*shakes head to indicate "yes"*)
Together: You can't judge a bug by its cover! (*puppets link hands*)
(*Daffy and Daisy turn and walk offstage holding hands. Di Dot and Charles Butterfly freeze in a romantic pose; turn and walk offstage*)



There is no subject that puppetry can't handle but we must always make the strongest use of puppets.

Bil Baird

and then write the script. When writing a puppet script, a good rule to remember is that dialogue should be short and filled with lots of puppet action. Successful puppet shows must move along without long, boring speeches. In puppetry, actions speak louder than words.

Audiences enjoy puppet shows filled with humor. The plot and dialogue can both be humorous. Humor can also be achieved through repetition. The audience finds it funny when puppets keep repeating certain words, actions, or reactions.

If you are planning to perform your play, remember that changing scenes usually requires changing sets. It is a good idea for beginning puppeteers to restrict their plays to just one setting. The size of the puppet stage is another important point to consider when planning a puppet script. The number of characters in your puppet play should depend on the size of the stage, the number of puppeteers in the group, and the space behind and below the puppet stage. You can avoid a backstage traffic jam if you remember to limit the number of puppets in the play.

Avoid confusion by including stage directions and puppet actions in the written script. In the example script on page 358, stage directions and puppet actions are printed in italics and included in parentheses.

ACTION

1. **A One Puppet Show.** Write and memorize a 1-minute monologue for your puppet to share with your classmates. Follow your teacher's directions for sharing the project.

2. **A Comedy Duet.** Working with a partner, write ten lines of comedy dialogue for your puppets. Write the dialogue in script form. Include stage directions in parentheses. Perform the dialogue from the puppet stage.

3. **Write a Script.** Working with the other members of your group or acting company, write a 3- to 5-minute puppet script. Develop the plot from an original idea or from a familiar story line.

LESSON 4

Producing a Puppet Show

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Work with a group to produce a puppet show.
- Use technical elements to enhance a puppet production.

The script is written and the puppets are made. Now it is time to mount the show. **Mounting the show** means providing accessories and equipment, such as a stage, scenery, lighting, props, sound effects, and music. All of these extras add to a theatrical production. The amount

Warm Up

Imagine the script or lines you have just written being produced for a "live" puppet performance. What special effects would you like to see added?

of time and work needed to mount the show depends on the complexity of the show. Shows needing several sets and numerous props will take much longer to prepare. Check with your teacher to be sure you have enough class time to produce a complicated show.

The Stage

There are lots of different ways you can share your puppet with an audience. Some puppeteers dress in black and perform onstage in full view of the audience. Other puppeteers wear regular clothes and perform the same way; once the puppets begin to move and talk, the audience doesn't notice the puppeteers. Most puppeteers, however, prefer to work from behind a puppet stage. Unless you have a puppet stage already made, you will need to make a stage for your puppet show.

You can easily make a temporary stage from a variety of materials—a low bookcase, an overturned table, or the back of an upright piano. Cover the furniture with an old bedsheet or a big piece of black felt. Covering the furniture ensures that a makeshift appearance will not detract from the puppets.

mounting the show adding the finishing touches—such as scenery, props, and costumes—to a theatrical production.

A large appliance packing box can also be converted into a stage for a small cast of puppets. Cut an acting window out of the front side of the box and a puppeteer stage door out of the back side. You can then cover the outside of the box with bright craft paper or paint it with water-based paint. Then decorate the outside to suit the theme of the puppet show.

A more permanent puppet stage can be built from hinged plywood panels. One advantage of a plywood stage is that it is sturdy. One disad-



These hand puppets are both performing and being displayed in and around this colorful stage.

vantage, however, is that it is very heavy. A more lightweight stage can be constructed from PVC plumbing pipe and fabric sewn into curtains.

A practical traveling puppet stage can be made by attaching a plywood stage floor to the top of a collapsible ironing board. Once the ironing board is adjusted to the puppeteer's working level, drape a large rectangle of black felt over the entire surface and presto!—instant stage!

Scenery

Color or paint scenery on heavy paper to hang behind the puppets as a background for the action. A longer-lasting backdrop can be designed and painted on fabric and hung on a rod across the backstage area. Fabric backgrounds can be easily folded for storage and reused for numerous shows.

Not all puppet shows require full backgrounds. You can cut simple set pieces from construction paper and pin or tape them to the back curtain of the puppet stage.

Props

Using props during a performance provides stage business and action for the puppets. Props can be used very effectively but should not dominate the show. Puppet action should always be more important than the use of props.

Construct simple props from paper, posterboard, or cardboard. Add a wire rod, wooden ruler, or dowel stick to the props and manipulate them as rod puppets.

Toy stores offer many inexpensive items to use as props. A toy telephone, musical instrument, doctor's stethoscope, or foam football



Part of the fun of working with puppets is creating the scenery and props used for the shows.

makes a wonderful puppet prop. Always exaggerate the size of puppet props. Larger-sized props are easier to handle and more easily seen by the audience, and they add a humorous touch to the show. Try combining real props and cardboard props for variety.

If a puppeteer's hand is needed to help the puppet handle props, the hand should be gloved. Brown gardening gloves are a good choice for this situation. They are inexpensive and come in several sizes.

Technical Elements

Technical elements—lights, music or sound, and special effects—all add spectacle to a puppet show. These elements should be planned during the scriptwriting process and should be tried early in the rehearsal process. Often, an idea seems feasible in your imagination, when in reality it is impossible. Never wait until show time to try technical elements for the first time.

Simple show lighting can be obtained using clip-on desk lights, low-cost spotlights, or photographer's floodlights. For all types of puppet shows, other than shadow shows, these are attached to the front of the stage. Shadow shows require lighting from behind the puppet screen. Light from a 35 mm slide projector or a filmstrip projector can also be used to provide a limited amount of stage lighting.

Used at the beginning of a show, music helps set the mood and capture the audience's attention. Musical selections should be simple and appropriate for the show. Show music can be "live" or recorded. Assign one puppeteer to be in charge of the music.

It is fun to manually produce sound effects for a puppet show. As a class, collect a box of noisemakers for the puppet productions. Include inexpensive noisemakers and toy musical instruments, as well as cans and boxes filled with pebbles, dry beans, or pasta.

Sound effects for a puppet show can also be recorded. Use a cassette tape recorder to capture the sound of a squeaky hinge, the closing of a car door, a school bell, crowd noises, or laughter. Professionally recorded sound effect tapes are also available in most music stores or theatrical supply catalogs.

Special effects such as wind, smoke, or thunder should be planned with the safety of the puppeteers in mind. A small electric fan can be used as wind; short puffs from a baby powder box can be used to simulate smoke; and a sheet of tin will rumble like thunder. Be sure to talk over your ideas with your teacher.

Rehearsal

As a puppet show cast member, it is your responsibility to attend all rehearsals. Rehearsals require dedication and concentration, and you will need to work hard during the entire rehearsal. Rehearsals are more than just "playing with puppets."

A puppet show's success or failure depends on the puppeteer's skill in manipulating the puppets. This particular skill can only come from frequent rehearsals. Just because puppets are small actors does not mean that they can rehearse less than human actors.



Rehearsals play a critical role in the overall success of a show. They require hard work and commitment by everyone.

Plan to spend one full class period of rehearsal time for each minute of show time. Once the script for a 5-minute show is memorized, the cast should rehearse at least five full class periods. Extra rehearsal time will be needed to add technical elements, to set up and strike the set, and to store the puppets. Puppeteers kneeling for long rehearsals will want to use foam cushions or wear knee pads for comfort.

Some puppeteers find that rehearsing in front of a large mirror helps them see how to work out basic moves. Videotaping rehearsals after the show is blocked is another helpful rehearsal technique. Viewing the tapes early in the rehearsal process allows you to make necessary changes.

Rather than produce a show "live," it is possible to record the script ahead of time. An audiocassette or reel-to-reel tape recorder may be used in a recording studio or other quiet place to record all puppet dialogue, sound effects, and music. The tape is then played during the performances while the puppeteers lip-sync.

Unfortunately, even in a well-rehearsed show, a cue may be missed or a puppet may fall apart. At this point, the puppeteers must improvise new dialogue or movement and cover the mistake by incorporating it into the show.

The Performance

As you already know, most puppet shows are presented "live," with puppet actors onstage and human actors backstage. A live production is filled with energy and excitement. When it is show time, puppeteers should move backstage as quietly as possible. Always keep a puppet first aid kit backstage for last-minute emergencies. Your first aid kit should include a glue gun, scissors, tape, safety pins, extra puppet eyes, a stapler, and staples.

Masks and Puppetry

Puppetry began thousands of years ago—so long ago, in fact, that historians cannot agree on the exact beginning. We can imagine that centuries ago the religious leader (shaman) created shadow stories using the cave walls as a stage. During dances around the campfire, jaws of animal skulls might have been made to move as part of primitive chants.

We do know that some form of puppetry exists in almost every culture. In most cultures, puppetry is found in the religious rituals or celebrations. Early puppets were used by male adults, not females, and often were buried with people in ancient tombs. The various styles of puppets have mixed together as civilizations, cultures, and religions have merged and migrated. In many lands, the puppeteers were, and many still are, ranked as very important people in society.

The earliest written documentation of puppetry can be traced to India. The *Mahabharata,* an ancient Hindu epic poem, composed about 200 B.C., refers to string-controlled puppets or marionettes. In Indonesia, the rod puppet, or *wayang golek,* was used to tell the story the *Ramayana* as well as to tell the *Mahabharata.*



These large, colorful wooden puppets are *Bunraku* puppets, which originated in sixteenth century Japan when a puppeteer and a musician combined puppets, narration, and music. It can take up to three puppeteers (seen in black) to manipulate just one Bunraku puppet.

Authorities tell us that in India, it is possible the puppeteer preceded the actor on stage since religious beliefs of the times did not allow impersonations by humans. Ancient Indians believed that if you pretended to be someone else, or if you acted out the role of another human, you were foreshadowing your own death.

In ancient Greek literature references are made to marionettes by several writers. A Greek writer, Xenophon, tells of the visit of a traveling Greek puppeteer to the home of an outstanding Greek leader named Kallias. Xenophon mentions that one of the guests, who was not interested and would not pay attention, was the Greek philosopher Socrates.

In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle compared man's control of marionettes to the controller of the universe. Other noteworthy Grecian writers, Apuleius, Galen, Plato, and Horace, each compared marionettes to men, and men to marionettes. The "string puller," Potheinos, performing in the Greek theatre of Dionysus, was the first puppeteer referred to by name. Puppetry and other theatrical entertainment were well established in Rome by 400 B.C.

As the Roman Empire began to decay, so did the quality of theatre. Christianity, which at that time opposed the theatre, began to spread rapidly, and by the fifth century the actors were attacked by church councils and forced to wander into the countryside with their shows. Many ventured into other parts of Europe. It was these strolling players who kept theatre, including puppetry, alive during the period called the *Dark Ages.*

African Mask Puppets

Puppetry in Africa is art set in motion. Through the use of music and dance, masked performers become human puppets. The colorful, animated performances are part of life for the entire community. Entertainment, religion, education, and celebrations are all enhanced through this living art form.

In West Africa, in the Segu region of Mali, improvised puppet plays are performed by the young men of the Bamana and Bozo tribes twice a year, during the planting and the harvest seasons. The puppeteers wear large character puppets that cover

their bodies completely. These large wood and cloth puppets form a moving stage from which smaller rod puppets are manipulated. Young female members of these tribes assume the less important roles, performing as musicians and dancers.

Puppetry in Africa is not performed just for the sake of entertainment. It also offers a way for tribal members to share, without fear of criticism, controversial ideas and opinions that are usually forbidden by individual members of the society.

Masks and Puppetry in America

There were puppeteers in America long before European settlers came. The first puppeteers were the Native Americans. The string puppets used by the Northwest Coast Indians and the Hopi Indians of the American Southwest developed from masks. These puppet styles were used long before puppetry from other countries would migrate to the American shores.

The Spanish explorer, Hernando Cortez, (1485–1547) was accompanied on his voyages by a puppeteer. This puppeteer may well have been the first known puppeteer to arrive on this continent when Cortez conquered Mexico.

In 1738, an English-style marionette show, *The Adventure of Harlequin and Scaramouche,* was performed in New York by a puppeteer named Holt. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, immigrant puppeteers brought their European and Oriental puppetry skills with them to the New World. Soon the exciting Punch and Judy show, so popular in England, was seen on American street corners. Punch, the forerunner of today's circus clown, aimed his humor at the political problems of the day. Speaking as a puppet, Punch was able to voice opinions that most people were afraid to express in public.

An early American puppeteer, Walter Deaves, gained international attention. One of his tours around the world lasted for seven years. Deaves is also credited with creating the complicated puppet theatres that fit upon the live theatre stage. His vaudeville puppet shows of the late 1880s were among the favorite entertainments. But interest in puppetry waned, and puppetry was almost a lost art by the early 1900s.



Masks are an important part of this Cinco de Mayo celebration in Austin, Texas.

In 1915 Tony Sarg, a talented illustrator of books, moved from London, England, to New York City. He began to create puppets to entertain his friends. It was Tony Sarg's creativity and talent that strongly influenced the art of puppetry in the United States in the early twentieth century. By 1933 Tony Sarg's famous puppets were seen by more than three million people at the Chicago World's Fair.

As early as 1939 the medium of television enabled puppeteers to share the art of puppetry with the entire world. Puppeteers such as Burr Tillstrom and Bil Baird, along with their puppets, were among the first to join the ranks as television personalities. Later Shari Lewis became one of the first female puppeteers to appear on television. And, of course, many of us grew up watching Jim Henson's muppets on *Sesame Street.* ■

Once onstage, puppeteers should perform the show as rehearsed. The performance is not the time to change lines or try to be a star. It is also important to pay attention backstage. See that the puppets enter and exit on cue, clearly projecting all lines. And remember to have fun! Then the audience will, too.

Critiquing the Show

Once the show is performed, you need to spend time reflecting on the project and evaluating the performance. In discussing the show with the rest of the cast, consider these questions:

1. What was the most important thing you learned from this activity?
2. What did you most enjoy about the activity?
3. If you could plan this assignment again, what would you do differently or change?
4. What parts of the puppet performance were successful?
5. What parts of the puppet performance need to be changed or eliminated?

ACTION

1. **A Puppet Production.** After writing a short puppet play, you will need to design and make the set, costumes, and props and plan the music, movement, sound effects, special effects, and lighting. Follow theatre safety guidelines as you and your group complete the production project.

2. **Puppet MTV.** Working with a partner or your acting company, choose a short upbeat musical number to lip-sync and choreograph with puppets. Ask your teacher to approve the song's lyrics before you begin rehearsal. Follow your teacher's instructions for performing the musical number. Videotape the performance.

LESSON 5

Shadow Play

LESSON OBJECTIVE

- Experiment with shadow play.
- Create a shadow character.
- Use movement to project characterization.

Warm Up

What is a shadow? How can shadows be used to create theatre?

You read earlier in this chapter that a shadow puppet is a flat, two-dimensional puppet designed to cast a shadow or form a silhouette on a white cloth screen stretched and stapled to a wooden frame. Shadow play might be considered a form of shadow puppetry. In **shadow play**,

What image has this puppeteer created? Have you ever created a shadow puppet like this one?



shadow play
projecting shadow images on a screen.

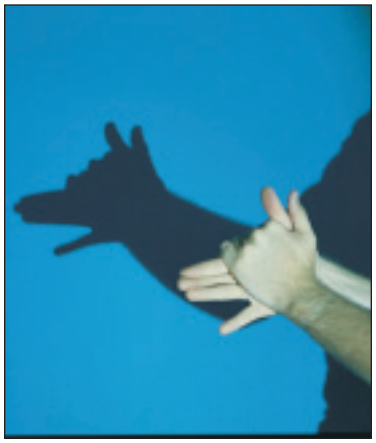
the puppeteers use their own hands or bodies to make shadow pictures on a screen.

Shadow play is one of the simplest forms of entertainment, requiring only a shape, a light, and a surface on which to cast the shadows. You have probably already experimented with shadow play. At night, alone in your room, have you ever shaped your hands into a dog or rabbit, moving the animal across the bedroom wall? Have you cast shadows on the classroom wall when your teacher turned on the movie projector light? Have you observed how tall your shadow looks on the sidewalk at certain times of the day? If you've had any of these experiences, you've experimented with shadow play.

Hand Shadows

Your hands can create all kinds of interesting shadow birds and animals. Create a bird in flight by joining your thumbs together and moving your fingers. Try to make a rabbit by holding up your first and second fingers for ears and forming the head by touching your thumb to your third and fourth fingers.

What other animals can you create? By moving your fingers in different ways, you can bring the animal to life. See how many parts of your animal shadow can move. Can it wiggle its nose, flap its wings, or hop away?



Can you create a story for this shadow puppet?

Body Shadows

Hands are just the beginning of shadow play. You can use your entire body to create a shadow character. For human shadows, you will need a screen large enough for one or more persons to stand behind. Construct the screen from a white bedsheet stretched and stapled to a large wooden frame.



The spectator's imagination is one of the most effective aids to the shadow show.

René Simmen

You will need a bright light to project the shadows to the audience. Light the screen from behind the actors using an old pole light with three adjustable fixtures (check the local thrift store), or use two clip-on desk lights containing 100- and 150-watt bulbs. When the lights are properly positioned, the actors are sandwiched between the screen and the light. Experiment placing the lights in different positions until the desired silhouette is achieved.

Now you are ready to create a character. Because the audience will only see your silhouette, it is important that you remember to exaggerate everything. Think about what you will wear. Select clothing or a costume that has an exaggerated shape. Shape helps create a better silhouette. Wear loose-legged trousers rather than slim tight-fitting jeans. Wear a large hat or wig, or style your own hair bigger. Further exaggerate the character by selecting large props and by moving with large movements. Playing the character in a profile position allows the audience to view the exaggerated silhouette.

Using the Overhead Projector

Another form of shadow play involves the use of objects as characters. Lighting is provided by an overhead projector with a projector screen. This method allows the participants to see what they are doing.

Place the objects directly on the glass surface of the overhead projector, casting shadows on the projector screen behind you. Placing the overhead projector on the floor allows enlargement of the shadows.

Shadow play on the overhead is not limited to flat, two-dimensional objects. Interesting shadows can be formed from some three-dimensional objects. Think of items in your classroom, purse, or locker that might make good shadows on the overhead. What about a rubber band, a comb, or the wire from your old spiral notebook? Be sure to select items small enough to fit on the glass surface of the overhead.

You can also use an overhead projector for a puppet performance. In your classroom, an overhead projector might be more convenient than a shadow screen. The biggest problem using an overhead projector is making the puppets, props, and scenery small enough to fit on the glass surface of the projector.

Puppets can be designed on white paper, cut out, and transferred to lightweight black cardboard. Using black cardboard makes darker shadows on the overhead screen. Movable parts of the cardboard puppets—heads, arms, legs, and mouths—can be made mobile by connecting joints or body parts using pieces of string or metal brads.

Add color to the puppets by stretching colored plastic food wrap over cut-out sections of the puppets. Simple puppets can become more elaborate by punching out holes or cutting designs in the puppets. Colored report covers can be used in a similar fashion to add color. Clear report covers or overhead transparencies can be colored with colored felt-tip pens and used as decorations or as background designs.

Plastic drinking straws make good rods. They can be cut easily into different lengths. Attach the rods to the puppet's body and movable parts using staples or tape and your puppets will be ready for action.

Using the Overhead Projector

1. Object Shows.

a. Each member of your acting company should contribute an item to an improvised shadow show. The objects will become the actors on the glass projector stage. One or more members of the group can manipulate the objects while the other group members speak.

b. Collect five or six interesting objects to use in overhead projector shadow play. Using these objects as the characters, write or improvise a short story or play. Share your story with your class.

2. Shadow Characters.

a. Make a self-identity character shadow puppet. Use the puppet on the overhead to introduce yourself to the class. Be sure to cover all your interests and hobbies—pets, music, movies, television shows, and school subjects.

b. Make a shadow puppet character from one of your favorite books or plays. Using the puppet on the overhead projector, conduct a book or play review.

c. Make puppets of the characters from a favorite folktale or fairy tale. Use the puppets on the overhead projector to share the story with the class. For variation, you might change the ending of the tale.

3. TV Commercials. Working with a partner or your acting company, design an original product that might be advertised on television. Write a television commercial advertising your product. Make shadow puppet characters to use as the product, props, and characters. Rehearse the commercial several times. Then add music, sounds, or special effects to enhance the production. Finally, using the overhead projector as your stage, share your commercial with your classmates.

Using A Shadow Screen

1. Shadow Animals.

a. Use your hands to create animal shapes on a classroom wall. Experiment, using several different lamps or light sources to find the one that works best in your classroom. Often, the light from a filmstrip projector or movie projector can be used for the proper amount of light.

b. Develop your shadow animal into a character, giving it a name, voice, and personality. Think of one or two lines of dialogue for your animal to say. Introduce it to the class and let it speak the lines.

2. Human Shadows.

a. Plan and costume a human shadow character. Create an exaggerated walk and gestures for the character. Prepare to share the character behind the shadow screen.

b. Parade your character behind the shadow screen. Your teacher will provide appropriate music for this assignment. Be sure your character uses the exaggerated walk and big gestures you planned.

3. Shadow Pantomime. Use each of the characters created by your acting company members in a short pantomimed scene. Stage the scene behind the shadow screen. Encourage feedback from your audience after each scene is presented.

LESSON 6

Masks

LESSON OBJECTIVE

- Use movement to communicate attitudes, feelings, and moods while wearing a mask.
- Explore characterization and improvisation while wearing a mask.

Warm Up

Think about plays or movies in which characters wear masks. What is the purpose of the masks?

mask
a covering worn over all or part of the actor's face to neutralize or create a new character.

neutral mask
a white, featureless facial covering worn to neutralize the actor's own face.

character mask
a mask representing a specific character.

Masks have long been a part of the theatre. The Greeks believed that you put on a mask to become another person. In commedia dell'arte, many of the stock characters were identified by their half masks. In Japan, masks have been part of the traditional Noh theatre since the twelfth century.

In this lesson, you will learn how masks can be effective teaching tools for actors. Masks give the inexperienced actor a sense of security and protection—as though the actor is hiding behind someone else.

A **mask** can be any covering worn over all or part of the actor's face. Making a mask is fun, and learning to work in it presents a new challenge for the actor. When you cannot use your own face for communication, then you must exaggerate your body movements and gestures to project characterization to the audience.

Mask Construction

Masks can be constructed from many different materials. Masks are often a combination of materials. Metal, fabric, paper, and leather can all be used to create a mask. The most common and most easily accessible materials are paper products. Ordinary paper products can be mixed with recyclable materials such as Styrofoam©, plastic, or aluminum to make a unique, one-of-a-kind mask. Unusual masks can also be made from natural materials, such as sticks, leaves, bark, grasses, and weeds.

The puppet materials and supplies listed in Lesson 1 can also be used to create masks. Check with your teacher for a list of additional materials.



Designing your own unique mask can be fun, as well as challenging.

The Neutral Mask

A good way to begin working with masks is to wear a **neutral mask**, a plain white mask without any features. The actor's use of exaggerated gestures and body movements appears to make the expression on the mask change. A simple neutral mask can be made from a paper plate or circle of posterboard.

The Character Mask

Unlike the neutral mask, there are masks that represent certain characters. This type of mask is called a **character mask**. A ready-made



These actors are wearing neutral masks during their enactment of the annual Hispanic ceremony of *Day of the Dead*.

or handmade character mask, such as you might wear to a costume party, has its own personality. The actor can use such a mask as an acting tool, adding appropriate gestures and movements to physically interpret the character.

Begin by spending time studying the character mask. Each ready-made mask, like each puppet, has a mood and personality all its own. Study the ready-made mask; imagine the character that the mask represents. Give the character a name, develop its personality, and create a story about its life. Once you understand the mask, add suitable movements and gestures.

Many actors prefer to make their own character masks. There are two basic approaches. One way is to first develop a character. Following characterization guidelines in Chapter 7, develop an original character on paper. Next, draw a mask to express the character you have developed. Once the mask is designed on paper, select appropriate materials and make the mask.

Another way to create a mask is through experimentation. Using this method, you develop the mask and the character simultaneously. Experiment with different materials until you are pleased with the mask. As you make your mask, think about its character. When the mask is complete, give it a name, personality, and background. Finally, move and gesture as the character dictates.



Does the idea of creating a character mask and bringing the character to life sound appealing to you?

Working in a Mask

Acting in a mask presents a challenge for the actor. Many actors want to touch or arrange the mask while wearing it. You can avoid this pitfall by thinking of the mask as a character rather than a costume or prop.

Even though your face is covered by the mask and the audience cannot see you, continue to make facial expressions. Exaggerated facial expressions will help you animate and project the mask's personality



Stories acted out in masks should be long on action and short on dialogue.

Roberta Nobleman

through your body movements and gestures. Overdoing is important in mask work. Actors sometimes exaggerate movement by slightly bending their knees and lowering their center of gravity.

Modeling the mask in front of a mirror helps you become comfortable with big movements and gestures. Unless your mask covers the entire head, always play open (face the audience). To maintain the illusion of the mask, do not allow the audience to see any part of your face.

When you first enter the acting area wearing a mask, pause briefly to reveal the mask to the audience. This pause gives the audience an opportunity to fully see you in your mask. After performing, exit in character, looking back once at the audience. This last look back is called a tag.

ACTION

1. **Neutral Mask.** Create a simple mask using a paper plate or a circle of poster board. Use scissors to cut out eye holes. Punch a small hole on each side of the plate. Run a 12-inch piece of yarn through each side hole, securing the yarn with a large knot. Using the yarn, tie the plate around your head. For a more secure mask, elastic can be used in place of yarn. Staple the elastic to each side of the paper plate.

2. **Moving in Masks.** Move across the performance area wearing a neutral mask as you physically express the following feelings. Play open using a lower center of gravity.

puzzlement	grief	amusement
resentment	irritation	hatred
misery	rage	depression
love	fear	contentment
agony	curiosity	naughtiness
sympathy	delight	shock

3. **Character Mask.**
   - **a.** Make a character mask using your choice of materials. Pause to reveal the character to the audience as you enter and move across the performance area. Exit in character, remembering the tag.
   - **b.** Working with your acting company, use ready-made masks or handmade original masks to pantomime a scene with several characters.

4. **Fairy Tale Theatre.** Working with your acting company, plan and create simple masks for a fairy tale. Plan a pantomime to tell the story. (Refer to Chapter 14 for ideas on using pantomime to tell a story.) Perform the story for your class.

5. **Bag It.** Use paper grocery sacks, newspaper, colored craft paper, and other materials to create larger-than-life masks. Plan a style show to model your "bag it" creations.

Curtain Call!

CHAPTER 18 REVIEW

SPOTLIGHT ON TERMS

An important part of theatre is understanding the terminology, or vocabulary, used. Add the new terms and definitions to the vocabulary section of your theatre notebook or folder.

FOCUS ON FACTS

1. Describe the five basic types of puppets.
2. Explain animation.
3. What is manipulation?
4. What is lip synchronization?
5. How can the puppeteer avoid "flipping the lid"?
6. What should a puppeteer consider before giving a puppet a voice?
7. What technical elements might be used in a puppet show?
8. What are two ways to perform shadow plays?
9. What is the purpose of working in a neutral mask?
10. What is the difference between a neutral mask and a character mask?

REFLECTIONS

Discuss the following questions with your class or answer them on paper as instructed by your teacher.

1. In what ways could puppetry, masks, and shadow play be used in subjects other than theatre?
2. Why should puppetry be viewed as an art form, rather than just a craft activity for children?
3. How did wearing a mask free your body to move?
4. Where in your culture or community do you see masks used?
5. What part of this chapter appealed to you the most? Why?

THEATRE IN YOUR LIFE

Think about the many problems facing our society. What puppet could you design to help teach an important lesson to your generation? Discuss your idea with your class, or write a short journal entry in your theatre notebook or folder.

ENCORE

1. Under the direction of your teacher, write an original play and create shadow puppet characters. Act out the play using the overhead projector as a stage.
2. Write a short puppet play dealing with substance abuse or another social problem that teenagers face today. Create the puppets, rehearse, and perform the play for a science or health class at your school.
3. Under the direction of your teacher, get information from different teachers concerning problems facing students at your school. Write an original play for shadow puppets or hand puppets demonstrating appropriate ways to solve the problems. Make the puppets for the show. Rehearse, produce, and perform the show for an audience. Think of classes on your campus that would enjoy and learn from your performance. You might invite other electives, ESL classes, Peer Assistant Leadership classes, or the student council.
4. Work with a partner to identify the roots of the use of masks and puppets in American theatre.
5. Plan how to tell a children's story using masks and pantomime. Construct the masks and share the story.
6. Create a sound effects tape. Record ten different "live" sounds appropriate for puppet shows.
7. Compile a list of twenty different special effects that might be used in puppet shows. Invent a simple way to achieve each special effect.
8. Collect ten photographs for ideas for creating puppets. Look in magazines for pictures of animals, birds, or reptiles. Explain to your acting company or group why you chose each one and how you would turn each into a puppet.
9. Collect twenty magazine photographs illustrating facial features suitable for puppets. Include a variety of eyes, ears, noses, mouths, and hairstyles.

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