

PUPPETRY ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Puppet by Artist Aleks Molina, age 3, and their family
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Early Childhood
Professional
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INTRODUCTION

This document is a curriculum planning resource for educators, created by the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute's team of early childhood coaches. It can be used in classroom, home-based, distance-learning, or family engagement group settings.

Puppet making can be an open exploration of creativity and play-based imagination. It offers a fun way for children and adults to interact, connect with stories, and explore their own and story characters' relationships. Children can use any material available to them and children and adults can make anything they want – their only limitation is their imaginations.

We look forward to hearing how you use this resource and your feedback. You can contact us directly at questions@earlychildhoodny.org.

ACTIVITY 1

Children and caregivers create a puppet.

Books Stories that feature interesting characters in relationships include:

Sheila Ray, The Brave by Kevin Henkes : Sheila Ray is a mouse who believes herself to be fearless and teases her younger sister for being afraid. In the end, her younger sister rescues her when she is lost in the woods. As a result, their relationship changes.

Read Aloud Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsFtGHsyZCU>

Monster Mama by Liz Rosenberg : Patrick Edward's mother is a monster. When bullies attack him, he and his mother deal with them together to turn a bad situation around.

Read Aloud Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7MiVfV4sGc>

Abuela by Arthur Dorros: A child and her grandmother have an imaginary adventure flying about their city.

Read Aloud Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI3GIsyS66g>

Possible Materials: crayons, markers, paper, fabric, cardboard, felt, foam, paper bags or plates, socks, sticks, straws, twist ties, boxes, recycled caps or lids, scissors, glue, tape, tissue paper, magazines, wrapping paper, or other household items.

THINKING

As children make puppets, they explore different ways of being and interacting as puppets. Their characters come from their ideas and experiences, and sharing these helps children to understand who they are and how to relate with others. A puppet offers a vehicle through which to explore feelings in social interactions. Creating puppets unleashes their imagination through hands-on explorations of materials, art-making, and storytelling. This process promotes early literacy as they start to dream up adventures for puppets to embark upon. Children are guided to describe details (e.g. how their puppets look, their decision-making, who their characters are, and what they say).

INTRODUCTION

Have your puppet introduce itself, ask children questions, and respond to children's questions. Then ask children what happened object (foam square, sock, or bag). Discuss how this transformed into a puppet. Tell children they are going to make their own puppets to play with and talk to each other.

CREATIVITY TIME

Begin work with materials for making a puppet. Hook children into discussion naming shapes to use for different parts. As children name shapes, use pre-cut shapes (square, circle, triangle, rectangle) to make body parts and place them onto a paper background. Talk about more ways of making puppets asking for suggestions for what materials to put together. Think aloud by talking about your decisions (use of lines, shapes, colors, to make forms). Show how to create details, for example, to make a puppet's eyes, mouth with different expressions, or hair.

REFLECTION

During a reflection, children take turns sharing with the group or family member. You may prompt them by asking what kinds of lines (jagged, delicate, sharp), colors (bright, soft and dark), and shapes they chose to put together to make forms, and why they made those visual decisions for their creations. Children may begin to personify their puppets. Direct open-ended questions to puppets, "Tell me about yourself." Allow children to express thoughts with their puppets' movements, gestures, and words. You may guide children by asking "How are they related to one other?" Observe children's interactions with puppets and document with photos and videos.. Families and teachers may encourage children to extend their play and continue sharing their observations.



ACTIVITY 2

Children explore creation of animal, insect, or imaginary character puppets with moveable parts.

Books Foster ideas for creating animals, insects, or imaginary character with whimsical stories including:

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle: This is a story about a hungry caterpillar learning about eating well, staying inside, and transforming into a butterfly.

Read Aloud Video: <https://youtu.be/vkYmvxP0AJI>

As Quick as a Cricket by Audrey Wood: This story invites thinking about animals and insects. You can help children make connections with their experience with animals and insects and begin to imagine their own creatures.

Read Aloud Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuIJvFkg_ZM

Amos and Boris by William Steig: This is a tale of adventure and friendship between two characters, a whale and a mouse. They meet in an unusual situation and form a deep friendship.

Read Aloud Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hE3W4PCdxI>

Possible Materials: cardboard, folders, cards, scissors, pipe-cleaners, twist ties, paper, sticks, straws, plastic spoons, yarn, feathers, buttons, plastic caps, foam trays, masking tape, glue, craft sticks, hole puncher

THINKING

Young children imagine themselves to be a character that is an animal/insect/imaginary character. It may be easier for a child to express their feelings and thoughts through pretend play. Brainstorming a list of animals they know and the physical characteristics of each creature together will support their thinking. Then let them know they will have a chance to make characters, such as animal puppets, that move and talk.

INTRODUCTION

You may ask if they remember their puppets or you can prompt children to recollect details about how they made them. Brainstorm to create a list of possible characters. You may model using a brainstorm on animals that live in oceans, on a farm, in the city, or in a forest. Another way to start discussion is using a read-aloud to discuss characters. Allow each child to take a turn to share connections. Encourage children to think about characters and their body parts first and then add details to their form. Use open-ended questions, such as: "What shapes form a lion's body?" Focus on a body part, such as the head "What shape is its head?" "How do you think a lion's mane would feel?" Invite children to close their eyes and imagine themselves to be a particular character and what this character likes to do. Is it friendly or not? What kinds of things are important to it? Open eyes on the count of three and get to work making it.

CREATIVITY TIME

Children begin by finding materials to put together to form a character. Try placing shapes onto a background sheet of paper. Make a face to put on an object. It may not be easy, and remind them that they may ask for help. Adults can also ask what they would like help with and assist to make the characters. Ask children to find materials to add details, such as facial features and hair. Open-ended questions help them envision: "What kind of teeth do crocodiles have?" "What do they do with their teeth?" "How does a rabbit's tail feel?" Encourage children to move puppets and have them talk or move.

REFLECTION

Invite children to share their puppet making experiences and to talk about decisions and why they made them: "I can see that you glued shiny paper onto your monkey's claws. Why did you do that?" or "The tail of your cat is standing up high and looks excited. Can you move it down to touch the ground? What do you think she is thinking about now?" Children may also make characters talk. This usually happens without prompting. You may initiate this by asking puppets questions: "I can see you have a bright yellow beak. What sort of things do you like to eat with your beak?" or "You have a long body with three parts, and you are standing upright with your six arms and legs bent. Are you dancing?" or "Cat, you look like you are smiling and pleased with yourself. Why are you so happy?" Children may continue to create and play with puppets.



ACTIVITY 3

Children explore creation of animal, insect, or imaginary character puppets with moveable parts. Children may create an environment for their puppet characters.

Books. To inspire ideas about animal homes and habitats share stories such as:

A House is a House for Me by Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Betty Fraser: This imaginative story relates to where people and things feel most comfortable.

Read Aloud Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4cGB0-7R-0>

Call Me Tree/Llamame Arbol by Maya Christina Gonzalez: The child finds a way to grow from the inside out, just like a tree, comfortable in the natural world and in relationships with others.

Read Aloud Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sA6daOKHu_U

Where Once There Was a Wood by Denise Flemming: Collage illustrations of a countryside setting show animals and birds living freely. The story concludes with the image of rows of houses “where once there was a wood.”

Read Aloud Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiwhoZa5cX8>

Possible Materials: Paper, cardboard, crayons, markers, or paint

THINKING

Children can explore storytelling with their characters in particular places. Children will use visual details to create an environment for their puppets. They will continue to make decisions to create with lines, colors, and shape. Children will use puppets in pretend play to create dialogue and events in places where animals live.

INTRODUCTION

Begin with the question: “Where does your character live?” This gives children a focus on envisioning where the character makes a home. “Francisco said that his hamster lives in a nest. What is that nest made out of? Do you imagine your hamster sleeping there during the day or at night time?” Share ideas about places and possible materials to use, such as crayons, pencils, or markers. Model drawing with a crayon or marker how to create a background. Brainstorm how they may create a daytime or nighttime scene.

CREATIVITY TIME

During this time, children may work alone or with someone and may use puppets. An adult can ask about their ideas in open-ended ways, such as: “I can see you have used a lot of brown in your picture. Tell me about that place.” or “Does your character like hot weather or cold weather?” As the children work, they can play with puppets and interact with each other to stimulate ideas.

REFLECTION

Invite children to share their drawings of places and how or why they created them. They can have puppets talk about their homes. Children can talk about any issues they had and how or what they tried. You can guide discussion of decisions they made asking: "I see different colors of green in your picture. It looks like a bright, sunny day." "Does your character live in a place where it rains a lot?" or "Tell me more about that place." At the end, share how they could continue to play with a stage: a cardboard box with a rectangular hole where a picture could be placed to make a background. Children may create a stage using a table or holding a puppet over drawings.



References

Curriculum adapted from: Studio in a School. (2008). Puppetry Workshops, Early Childhood Curriculum. New York, NY: Studio in a School.