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FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

Youth Educational Programs



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

2025/26



PUPPETRY UNLEASHED!

- ☒ **December 3, 2025**
- ☒ **Duke Energy Center for the Arts - Mahaffey Theater**



ClassActs

WHAT IS PUPPETRY?

Puppetry is the art of bringing objects to life to tell a story.

A puppeteer uses movement, voice, and creativity to make a puppet act, speak, or express emotion — almost like the puppet is a real character.

KEY POINTS

Puppetry is storytelling with objects.

These objects can be:

- Hand puppets
- Rod puppets
- Marionettes (string puppets)
- Shadow puppets
- Sock or paper-bag puppets
- Even found objects (spoons, socks, paper, toys)

A puppeteer controls the puppet.

They animate it using:

- Hands
- Sticks or rods
- Strings
- Light and shadow
- Sometimes even mechanical parts

Puppetry is both art and performance.

It combines:

- Visual art (designing puppets and scenery)
- Theatre (acting, voice, staging)
- Engineering (mechanics, movement, balance)
- Storytelling (scripts, characters, emotion)

Puppetry is ancient and global.

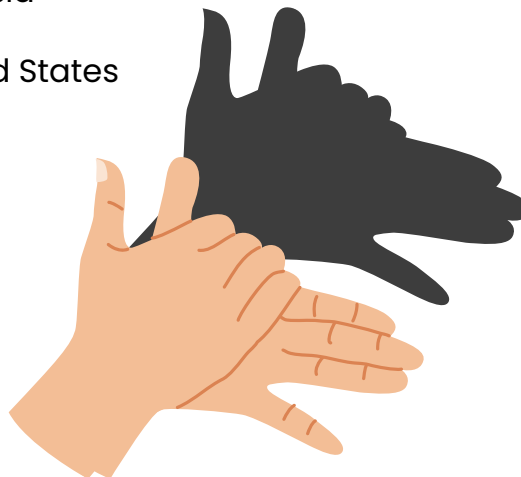
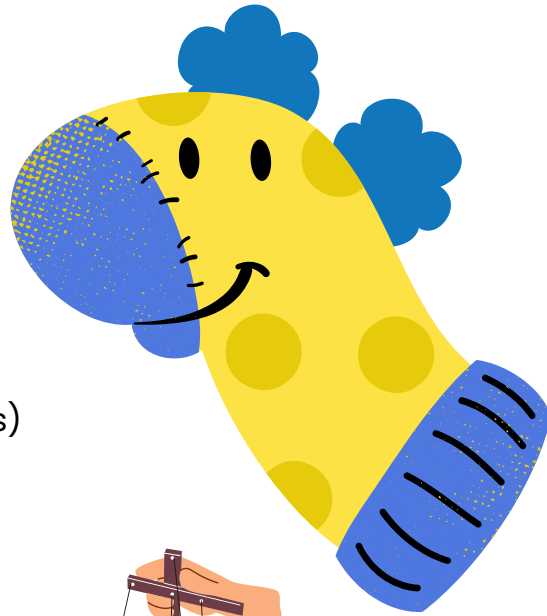
Cultures all over the world have practiced puppetry for thousands of years:

- Wayang shadow puppets in Indonesia
- Bunraku in Japan
- Marionettes in Europe and the United States
- Hand puppets in many cultures

Puppetry brings imagination to life.

It allows artists — and students! — to:

- Create characters
- Build worlds
- Make everyday objects magical
- Share ideas in creative ways



ABOUT STEVENS PUPPETS

Founded in 1933, Stevens Puppets was created by Martin and Margi Stevens. Martin Stevens, a Peabody Award-winning puppeteer and founder of the Puppeteers of America, created groundbreaking touring marionette productions that influenced generations of puppeteers.

Today, Stevens Puppets is owned and operated by Dan and Zan Raynor, each bringing over 20 years of live theatre experience to the company.

The Art & Legacy

- Hand-carved wooden marionettes
- Hand-painted scenic backdrops
- Touring productions of fairy tales & classic children's literature
- Shows featured in books, museums, and national tours



MEET THE PUPPETEERS

Dan Raynor

- BA in Theatre
- Taught theatre at Northwest Arkansas Academy of Fine Arts
- Directed and performed professionally across multiple states
- Worked with musicians such as Neil Young and Huey Lewis
- Experience in directing televised events

Zan Raynor

- Master of Theology; Doctorate in Canon Law
- Actor, dancer, director, designer (lights, costumes, choreography)
- High school principal, theatre teacher, Latin teacher
- Taught preschool through university
- Designs, restores artwork, and trains performers

PUPPET CREATION STATION

Objective:

Students create a puppet using simple materials and develop a character with personality, backstory, and visual design.

Materials:

- Paper bags, socks, or cardstock
- Popsicle sticks / skewers
- Googly eyes, buttons, felt, yarn, pipe cleaners
- Glue, tape, scissors
- Markers, crayons
- Optional: fabric scraps, feathers, beads

Step 1: Character Brainstorm

Students complete prompts:

- Who is my character?
- What do they want?
- What is their personality? (Funny, shy, brave, magical...)
- What challenges do they face?

Step 2: Puppet Structure

Students choose a puppet base:

- Paper bag (mouth moves!)
- Sock (hand puppet)
- Popsicle stick with cardstock (stick puppet)

Step 3: Building the Face

Students add:

- Eyes (googly eyes, buttons, drawn eyes)
- Nose
- Mouth and eyebrows (shows emotion!)
- Hair using yarn or paper strips

Discuss how small changes affect expression.

Step 4: Creating Costumes + Accessories

Students create:

- Clothing
- Props (shields, books, hats, wands, etc.)
- Unique features (scales, wings, capes)

Step 5: Final Touch — Personality Test

Students animate their puppet for the class:

- How does it say hello?
- How does it move?
- What emotion can it show?

Extensions:

- Create “trading cards” describing the puppet.
- Write a diary entry from the puppet’s perspective.
- Build a puppet village or “gallery walk.”

Florida Standards Alignment:

- **VA.K-5.S.3:** Organize ideas for creating art.
- **ELA.K12.EE.3.1:** Make connections between characters and ideas.



STORYTELLING THEATER

Objective:

Students collaborate to create a short puppet performance with characters, conflict, dialogue, and staging.

Materials:

- Student-made puppets
- Small puppet stage (table with curtain works!)
- Script templates
- Props (mini trees, houses, boxes, etc.)

Step 1: Group Formation & Story Choice

Groups choose:

- A classic tale (Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, etc.)

OR

- An original story

Step 2: Quick Story Planner

Students fill in:

- Characters
- Setting
- Problem
- Solution
- Ending

Step 3: Script Writing

Students write (or dictate):

- Short lines of dialogue
- Narrator lines
- Stage directions (e.g., "Lion enters from right.")

Step 4: Rehearsal Time

Students:

- Decide who controls which puppet
- Practice entrances/exits
- Work on timing and voice expression
- Add sound effects (claps, snaps, whispers)

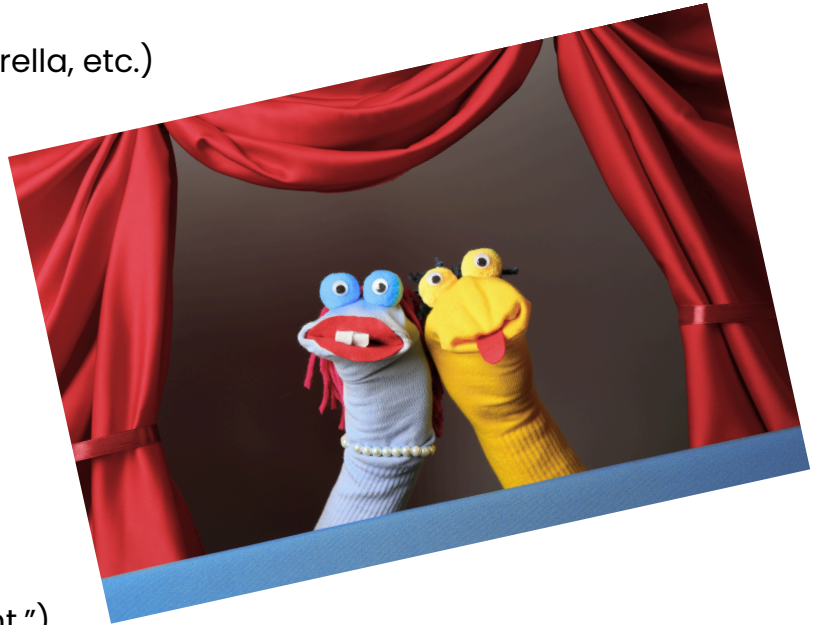
Step 5: Performance

Extensions:

- Add simple lighting (flashlight spotlights).
- Add music cues.
- Perform for younger classrooms.

Florida Standards:

- TH.4.O.1.1: Compare characters and events.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1: Cite textual evidence / story details.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES DESIGN CHALLENGE

Objective:

Students act as designers by creating backdrops, props, and costume concepts for a puppet show.

Materials:

- Drawing paper
- Colored pencils & markers
- Fabric scraps
- Glue, tape
- Rulers
- Samples of Stevens Puppets backdrops for reference

Teacher Role:

- Explain how scenery and costume design support storytelling.
- Show real examples from Stevens Puppets.
- Provide feedback on clarity and storytelling.

Step 1: Scene Purpose

Students identify:

- What moment of the story this backdrop supports
- What emotion the scene should convey (mysterious, cheerful, scary)

Step 2: Rough Sketch

Students sketch:

- Foreground (trees, rocks, tables)
- Midground
- Background (castle, sky, forest)

Step 3: Add Details

Students add:

- Colors
- Shadows
- Texture
- Important landmarks

Teacher encourages “big shapes first, details second.”

Step 4: Costume Add-On

Students design a small costume piece:

- Cape
- Hood
- Crown
- Magical item

Step 5: Share & Explain

Students present to a partner:

- Why they chose certain colors
- How their design supports the story
- What they would add if given more time

Extensions:

- Build a 3D diorama.
- Use the backdrop as the real stage for the final performance.
- Create a “museum walk” of student designs.

Florida Standards:

- VA.4.S.1.2: Use art tools and processes safely.
- TH.5.C.2.1: Explain how design supports storytelling.



TIMELINE OF PUPPETRY

Objective:

Students learn about puppetry traditions across time and cultures and compare them to Stevens Puppets' marionette style.

Materials:

- World map or globe
- Images of puppets from different cultures
- Chart paper
- Venn diagram sheets

Introduction to Global Puppetry

Introduce:

- **Shadow puppetry** (Indonesia, China)
- **Rod puppets** (Japan's Bunraku)
- **Hand puppets** (Europe)
- **String marionettes** (Italy, India, America — including Stevens Puppets)

Historical Timeline Activity

Students place major puppetry events on a timeline:

- 2000 BCE: Egyptian ivory puppets
- 500 BCE: Greek figurine puppets
- 1000 CE: Indonesian Wayang Kulit shadow puppets
- 1600s: Japanese Bunraku theatre
- 1800s: European marionette touring shows
- **1933: Stevens Puppets founded by Martin and Margi Stevens**
- 2000s: Touring productions by Dan & Zan Raynor continue the tradition

Students label:

- Country of origin
- Type of puppetry
- Purpose (storytelling, ritual, education)

Compare & Contrast

Students use a Venn diagram to compare:

- Ancient puppetry vs. modern puppetry
- or
- Stevens Puppets vs. a global tradition (e.g., Bunraku)

Discussion

Guiding questions:

- Why have people always used puppets to tell stories?
- How does culture influence puppet design?
- What makes Stevens Puppets unique?

Extensions:

- Students research puppetry from a chosen culture.
- Create a "Puppetry Museum Exhibit" in the classroom.
- Map activity: mark each style on the world map.



MY PUPPET'S STORY

Objective:

Students develop narrative skills by writing a short story or scene featuring the puppet they created.

Materials:

- Writing journals or lined paper
- Student-made puppets for reference
- Graphic organizers (story map, character webs)

Step 1 – Character Review

Students refresh:

- Puppet's name
- Personality
- Dreams/Goals
- Fear or challenge
- Special ability

Step 2 – Story Planning

Using a graphic organizer, students plan:

- Beginning: Where the puppet is & what they want
- Middle: A challenge or problem
- End: How they solve it

Prompt options:

- "My puppet woke up in a magical forest and heard..."
- "My puppet has to help a friend solve..."
- "A mystery appears at the puppet theatre when..."

Step 3 – Drafting the Story

Students write:

- Descriptions of movement
- Dialogue
- Feelings
- Setting details inspired by their backdrop designs

Encourage: "Show, not tell."

Step 4 – Share & Revise

Students:

- Read their story to a partner
- Receive feedback ("One thing I loved..." & "One thing you could add...")

Step 5 – Optional Performance

Students perform a 1-minute reenactment of their story with puppets.

Extensions:

- Turn stories into a class book.
- Add illustrations or comic-style panels.
- Create a puppet "interview" writing piece.



ADDITIONAL VIDEO ACTIVITIES

Kids Meet Ventriloquist | Kids Meet | HiHo

https://youtu.be/26j-leVV6_M?si=Kf6Q3qjiflavnUea

Stevens Puppets presents "Beauty and the Beast".

https://youtu.be/Mf_A_1VCQ0M?si=anRLpOL-omEvJ3X-

Muppet Classic Theater | Muppet Movie 1994

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=lz8xzXmByFs&si=SIWpK3pkanIJU8Eu>

The World of Jim Henson

https://youtu.be/dEWB0zuZvII?si=E22IWzf_TbVynDRm

History of Puppetry

https://www.youtube.com/live/MI9_y5U49Gw?si=77s8UQESjo6UydK5

Jim Henson and Richard Bradshaw on the History of Puppetry

https://youtu.be/zLPgWNT_KZE?si=6vyfu8WA18Qr8BGM

What are some different types of puppetry?

https://youtu.be/r739_ZykO_4?si=qapvAcq5U4T02IDu

Puppeteer on Broadway: My experience as an understudy & standby on Boop

<https://youtu.be/vqWEgzsN5PA?si=lgzOD0SnWqF02G2D>

Hand Shadow Puppet Tutorial | Handicraft

<https://youtu.be/JZ1DH77eWH0?si=nnPgCkj8PnT5G6Dr>

Interesting Facts About the Origins Of Puppets

<https://youtu.be/88b1in6pJfU?si=Kxsv9xllu9VoyQiL>

Puppetry 101 - Become a Puppeteer! A Guide to Puppetry

https://youtu.be/hxQY3Vi_COg?si=PmTML4iDeOtS_hjt

How to make a hand puppet from one sheet of paper

<https://youtu.be/ayFG5Ow4wXI?feature=shared>



ENGINEERING A PUPPET

Objective:

Students apply science and engineering principles to design and test a functioning puppet system.

Materials:

- Straws, sticks, string, wire, brads
- Cardstock or cardboard
- Rubber bands
- Hot glue (teacher use), tape, scissors
- Weights (washers, small beads)
- Student-made puppets (optional)

Engineering Challenge Introduction

Challenge options:

- Build a working marionette controller.
- Design a rod puppet with two moving parts.
- Create a mechanical mouth using levers.

Planning

Students sketch their design and identify:

- Materials needed
- Moving parts
- Strings, levers, joints
- Balance points

Teacher Tip: Teach students to mark the puppet's center of gravity.

Construction

Students begin building:

- Rod puppets: attach joints using brads or wire
- Marionette controllers: create crossbars and measure string lengths
- Lever systems: rubber band or brad-based mechanisms

Teacher checks for:

- Symmetry
- Strong joints
- Secure attachments

Testing & Troubleshooting

Students test movement:

- Does it tilt?
- Do limbs move independently?
- Is the string too long or short?

Students write 1–2 adjustments they plan to make.

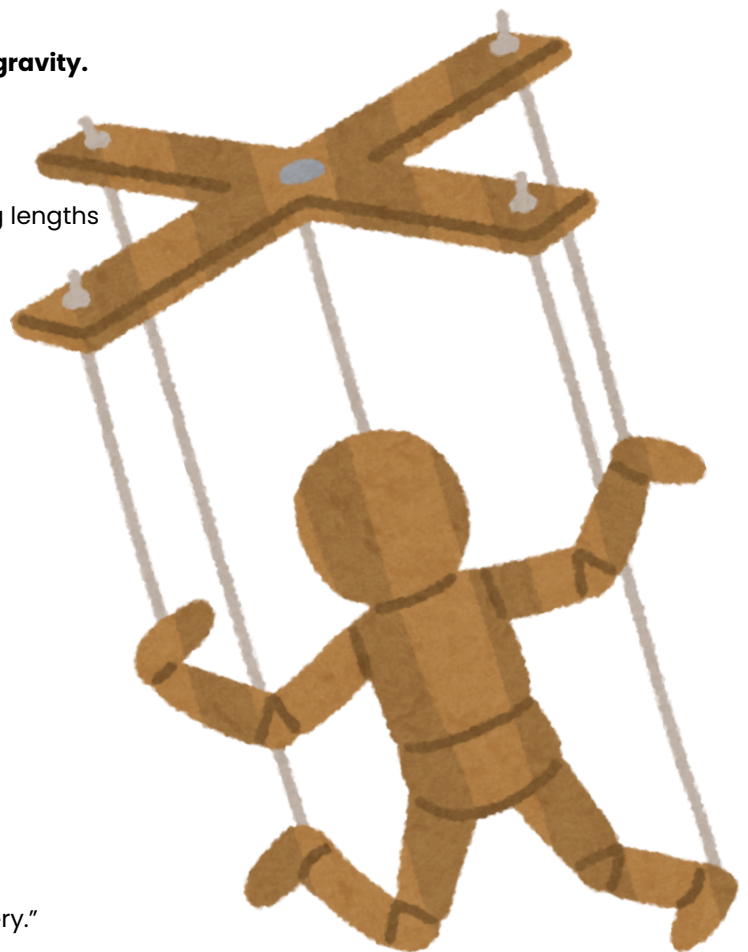
Sharing & Reflecting

Students demonstrate their puppet or mechanism:

- Show how motion works
- Explain what they changed during testing

Extensions:

- Students build a mini stage light using LED circuits.
- Add simple coding using a classroom robot to “move scenery.”
- Explore physics of balance using weighted marionettes.





BE A STAR PARTICIPANT AT BAM!

*BAM! Festivals are hands-on, outdoor adventures where YOU are part of the fun.
To make the most of the day, come prepared:*

Here's how to help make the show magical:

★ BRING WATER

Stay hydrated! Field trips are more fun when you're feeling your best.

★ BE SUN SMART

Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, or a hat.
You'll be outside, so protect yourself from the Florida sun.

★ DRESS FOR THE MESS

Some activities use paint, chalk, or other materials —
so wear clothes and shoes that can get a little messy.

★ STAY ENGAGED

Each station is designed for YOU. Listen, try new things,
ask questions, and participate fully.

★ RESPECT THE SPACE

Take care of the grounds and materials so everyone can enjoy them.
NO LITTERING PLEASE!

★ SHOW APPRECIATION

Say "thank you" to artists, volunteers, and presenters.
They're here to make the day special for you.

★ HAVE FUN!

Explore, create, discover, and enjoy the experience.
BAM! is all about making memories through the arts.



A stylized, blue, cursive signature of "Bill Edwards" is centered at the top of the page. The signature is contained within a white, cloud-like shape that has a soft drop shadow against the yellow background.

Bill Edwards

FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS
Youth Educational Programs

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