

**Elk Grove Unified School District**  
**Visual and Performing Arts Resources**  
**Theatre**

**Grade 6: Lesson 3**

**Title: World Puppets: Bunraku Lesson**

**Standards Addressed**

**Artistic Perception**

*Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre*

- 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre to describe theatrical experiences, such as *action/reaction*, *vocal projection*, *subtext*, *theme*, *mood*, *design*, *production values*, and *stage crew*.

**Creative Expression**

*Creating, Performing, and Participating in Theatre*

- 2.1 Participate in improvisational theatre activities demonstrating an understanding of text, subtext, and context.

**Historical and Cultural Context**

*Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theatre*

- 3.2 Differentiate the theatre traditions of cultures throughout the world, such as those in Ancient Greece, Egypt, China, and West Africa.

**Aesthetic Valuing**

*Responding to, Analyzing, and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences*

- 4.1 Develop and apply criteria for evaluating sets, lighting, costumes, makeup, and props.

**Connections, Relationships, Applications**

*Connecting and Applying What is Learned in Theatre, Film/Video, and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers*

- 5.1 Use theatrical skills to communicate concepts or ideas from other curriculum areas, such as a demonstration in history/social science of how persuasion and propaganda are used in advertising.
- 5.2 Research career opportunities in media, advertising, marketing, and interactive web design.

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Floor Plan:** Classroom with an open area for presentations.

**Materials Needed:**

- Copies of overheads with this lesson

**Option A**

- Tag board
- Brads (brass fasteners)
- Color crayons or felt pens
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Puppet body patterns from this lesson

**Option B**

- 5-6 inches of old newspaper per group
- Several rolls of masking tape per group

**Purpose:**

The students will identify the various types of puppets found throughout the world. They will also build and operate a Bunraku inspired puppet.

**Background:**

A puppet is an inanimate figure made to move by human effort before an audience. Puppets are defined by how they are operated. Common styles of puppets include hand, marionette, rod, moveable mouth, full-body (Big Bird), animatronic, and shadow puppets.

Puppet theatre is found all over the world. Native Americans used puppets in their corn festivals and ceremonial dances. Egyptians made jointed puppets from terra cotta. In Ancient Greece, both Aristotle and Plato mentioned puppets in their writings. The people of Ancient China made shadow puppets from dried animal skins. In the Middle Ages, the Christian Church used puppets to spread church doctrine. The term “marionette” is derived from the church puppet plays and means “Little Mary” referring to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus.

Today puppets are often used on children’s television programming, such as Mr. Rogers and Sesame Street. With the increasing use of animatronic puppets in the film industry, puppetry has become a creative and well paid profession in Hollywood.

**Key Questions:**

How will the student use knowledge of puppetry to collaborate in the creation and operation of a Bunraku inspired puppet?

**Vocabulary:**

- \* *Animatronic*—a puppet created and manipulated through a combination of computers, electronics, and traditional puppet techniques.
- \* *Bunraku*—indicates a type of Japanese puppetry tradition consisting of large (3-4 feet tall) puppets manipulated by three puppeteers visible to the audience and dressed in black.
- \* *Full-body puppet*—a puppet worn over the puppeteer’s head and body much like a costume. Full-body puppets may have remote control body parts and remote video cameras to allow puppeteers to see.
- \* *Hand puppet*—a puppet that fits over the puppeteer’s body with the fingers to manipulate the puppet’s head and hands.
- \* *Marionettes*—a puppet built with jointed body parts that are connected by strings to a control rod or paddle. The puppeteer stands above the puppet.
- \* *Moveable-mouth puppet*—similar to a hand puppet, but the jaw is hinged and the mouth is moveable.
- \* *Shadow puppet*—flat, two-dimensional figures controlled by a wire or rod against a screen. Projecting light from behind the puppet casts a shadow onto a cloth.

<u>Steps of the Lesson</u>	<u>Thoughts for the Teacher</u>
<p><b>1 Set up purpose/goals</b> What is a puppet? How are puppets different around the world?</p>	<p><b>How are you making your purpose clear to the students?</b> By presenting historic background and clear directions.</p>
<p><b>2 Engage students</b> The students will become engaged as they create puppets.</p>	<p><b>How can I effectively get the students interested in the content of the lesson?</b> Through the use of clear directions and visuals.</p>
<p><b>3 Learning Sequence</b> See actual learning sequence below.</p>	<p><b>What are the BIG idea(s) of your presentation? How will students understand/experience the material that you present?</b> Students will experience the material through observation, hands-on activity, and group work.</p>
<p><b>4 Assessment</b> Create a puppet and combine with other puppets to perform a puppet play.</p>	<p><b>How will you allow your students to deepen their understanding of content presented? (Reflect, revise, retell, refine, practice)</b> Students will practice with a puppet they have created.</p>

### Actual Lesson Sequence

1. Using the overheads with this lesson, introduce the students to the basic types of puppets used around the world. You may or may not require note taking. Explain we are going to be exploring the style of Bunraku puppetry. The puppets we are making are not meant to duplicate any kind of Japanese puppet. Rather, they are similar in concept and operation.
2. Choose either Option A or B for constructing a puppet depending on your preference.

#### Option A

Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each group a stack of newspapers and some masking tape. Each group must build a giant puppet—three feet tall. It can be a person or a fantastic animal. The students should use rolled up, folded, or wadded newspaper and masking tape. Generally limbs are made by rolling paper into long, stiff tubes, while solid masses, such as torsos are made by loosely wadding paper and wrapping it thoroughly with tape. Allow the students to tear paper as needed but do not allow scissors, staples, or glue. As they are building the puppet, the group should be thinking about how it will move. This puppet will be manipulated by 3-4 visible puppeteers (i.e., one to operate the feet, one the hands, one the head, etc.).

#### Option B

Make several patterns for puppets from the templates provided. Divide the class into pairs. Each pair will trace the pattern onto tag board and decorate in detail. Do not cut out puppets until after they are decorated as the shapes will change as the students add clothing, hats, etc. Also the puppet may be drawn thinner or heavier than the pattern and clothing shapes may be added if the student chooses. Cut out the puppet and attach the arms and legs with brads.

3. *Name your puppet. Why type of character is he/she?*

4. *In your group, practice moving your puppet. Walk, stand, wave, etc. Remember that in Bunraku the puppeteers are visible at all times and work as a group to move one puppet. Focus on working together.*
5. *Now working with another group, bring two or more puppets together. Meet and greet each other, Have the puppet show an emotion when they meet. Be sad, happy, fall in love, find something, etc. Action can be pantomime only or one student may narrate what is happening.*
6. Now have each group present their puppet play to the class.

**Assessment:**

**Advanced:** The puppeteers smoothly collaborate to build, manipulate, and create a brief puppet play in a complete manner. The puppets have names and are able to walk, stand, wave, and do several other movements smoothly. In addition, the puppets can demonstrate an emotion. The performance is expressive and unique.

**Proficient:** The puppeteers collaborate to build, manipulate, and create a brief puppet play in a mostly complete manner. The puppets have names and are able to walk, stand, and wave smoothly. In addition, the puppet can demonstrate an emotion. The performance demonstrates a somewhat complete understanding of puppetry.

**Below:** The puppeteers have difficulty collaborating to build, manipulate, and create a brief puppet play. The puppets may not be able to move smoothly or express emotion. The performance is incomplete and demonstrates little understanding of puppetry.

**Other Considerations:**

- If more time was allowed a more detailed puppet, such as a rod puppet could be used instead.

**Possible Extensions:**

- Choose a short story or folk tale to tell, using the puppets.
- Formally write a monologue or scene for the puppets to present.
- Write a research paper on modern careers in puppetry and animatronics.

**Sources:**

Jackson, Jeanie and Prince, Nancy, Exploring Theatre, San Francisco, California, West Publishing Company, 1997. ISBN #0-314-07017-6.

<http://www.geocities.com/broadway/alley/3765/puppetdoll.html> (The puppetry home page.)



