



# School Visits

2019–20 Grades  
K–12

Online Learning – DIY:  
Shadow Puppets!

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Shadow puppets are fun to make, but are also a wonderful way of **telling a story**. You may want to entertain your **family** with a shadow puppet performance. If so, you will need to make one or two characters, a setting (where the story takes place) and props (the objects that help you tell your story).

Shadow puppets are performed behind a screen. A light is used behind the screen. You could use a bedsheet as your screen or a large sheet of lightweight paper. A sheet is **translucent**, which means it will allow some light to pass through. Your puppet will be made of card paper or cardboard, which is **opaque**, meaning that no light will pass through the cardboard.

When the shadow puppet is placed against the screen blocking out the light, it will create a **silhouette**. In the same way, we can stand outside on a very bright sunny day and block the light creating a shadow on the ground. Silhouettes and shadows are different. You can hold a silhouette; you cannot hold a shadow; but they both need light to make an image.

## About this resource

Thanks for accessing our Online Learning resources! These step-by-step instructions will help you and your family to express their own creativity and build connections to the Ontario Arts Curriculum.

## About us

Harbourfront Centre School Visits is an experiential, hands-on learning program that offers curriculum-focused, inquiry-based programs that explore all aspects of contemporary arts and culture. Every year, we host 26,000 students onsite for meaningful engagements with the arts. We trust you will find the step-by-step guide outlined below will allow creativity to shine through!

## Suggested Grade Range:

Grade 2 and up

## Curriculum Links:

The Arts – Visual Arts and Drama

## Key vocabulary words

- **SILHOUETTE:** A dark shape or outline of something visible against a lighter background.
- **TRANSPARENT:** Allows light to pass through so you can clearly see through it.
- **TRANSLUCENT:** Allows some light to pass through, but objects on the other side cannot be seen clearly.
- **OPAQUE:** Does not allow light to pass through.
- **PUPPETEER:** The person who moves the puppet. A person who entertains with puppets.

- **POSITIVE SPACE:** Shapes or forms on a two-dimensional surface.
- **NEGATIVE SPACE:** The empty or open areas within or around an object, form or shape (in two-dimensional and three-dimensional art work) - the empty or open space around an object that defines it.
- **SETTING:** Where a story takes place
- **PROPS:** Objects used in stage or screen performances that help you tell your story.
- **CHARACTER:** A person, animal, being, creature, or thing in a story. Writers use characters to perform the actions and speak dialogue, moving the story along a plot line.

## Required Materials

- PENCIL
- SCISSORS
- CEREAL BOXES
- PAPER FASTENERS
- POPSICLE STICKS
- TAPE
- HOLE PUNCH
- COLOURED TISSUE PAPER
- GLUE
- A LIGHT
- A BED SHEET OR A LARGE PIECE OF PAPER
- SKETCH PAPER

\*Additional materials for older students: an X-acto knife and board (X-acto knives should be used under adult supervision)

# History

Han shadow puppet, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis



This week, we will be working with the idea of moving images on a screen by looking back in time at the ancient art of shadow puppets. We will learn how to make simple shadow puppets, the very first moving images on a screen. Shadow puppets originated in China over 2,000 years ago. There is a legend that tells the story of how the first shadow puppets came to be. Long, long ago in the time of the Han Dynasty, the beloved wife of Emperor Wu died of a sudden illness.

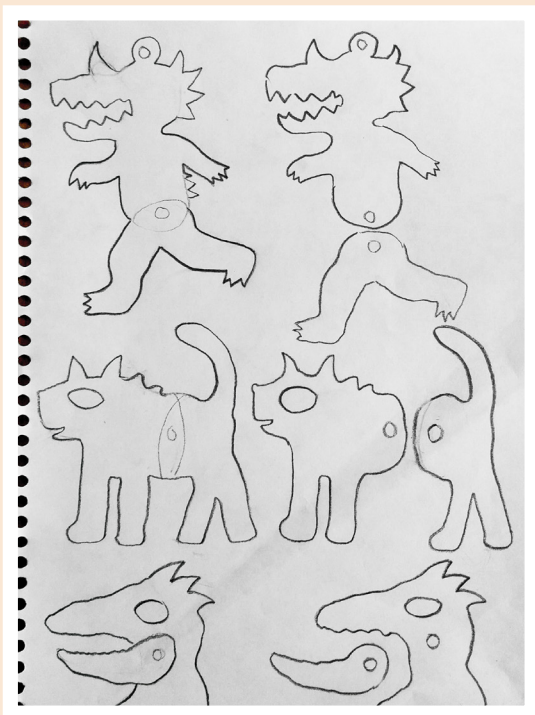
The Emperor was so distraught that he was unable to rule the empire. The situation was very dire. All the wise artists of the land were summoned to the city. On the way, one of the wise artists saw a child playing with a doll and making its shadow dance on the wall of the city. The wise artist was struck with the idea of making a silhouette or cutout in the likeness of the beloved Empress. The wise artist held up the silhouette of the Empress behind a curtain and placed a candle further back. The Emperor was then invited to see the shadow delicately moving on the curtain. The Emperor was so touched by the likeness of the moving image of his beloved that his desire to carry on was restored.



# Step-by-step instructions

## Step 1:

On a piece of sketch paper, draw your character. Now decide which parts you would like to move. You only have two hands so limit yourself to two moving parts.



## Step 2:

Redraw your character on card paper, cereal box, cracker box or any other lightweight cardboard box you can find. Try to avoid creases. Make it as large as possible. Make each moving part a separate piece. Include an area for the overlap. You will need space to punch a hole in both pieces that overlap.



## Step 3:

Using scissors, cut out your character.



## Step 4:

Fit the character back together, overlapping the two parts. Mark where you will make the hole on the top piece. Make sure the hole is not too close to the edge. It may eventually rip if there is not enough cardboard between the hole and the edge.



## Step 5:

Using a hole punch, make the first hole. Overlap again and mark the placement of the second hole.



## Step 6:

Punch the second hole. You may want to use the hole punch to make some decorative holes or eyes. The holes or the negative spaces are the transparent part of your shadow puppet. The negative space, or cut away parts, will allow all the light to pass through.





## Step 7:

Using a paper fastener (butterfly split pin), attach the two parts together. Make sure the round part is on the front side of your puppet and it opens on the back. If you don't have a paper fastener, you could make something similar out of a pipe cleaner or wire twist tie.



## Step 8:

If you have tissue paper at home, you may want to add colour to your puppet. Tissue paper is translucent (it allows some light to pass through). Glue tissue paper to the back side of your puppet over the negative or cut out parts.





## Step 9:

Popsicle sticks are used to hold and move the shadow puppet, but there is another important reason sticks are used. If your hands were holding the puppet, they would be part of the silhouette of the puppet. The sticks allow the puppeteer, the person who works the puppet, to move the puppet without being seen.

On the back of the puppet, place the end of a popsicle stick in the middle of each moving part. Tear a piece of tape and place half of the tape on the popsicle stick and half the tape on the puppet. Flip the stick over and place another piece of tape half on the popsicle stick and half on the puppet.



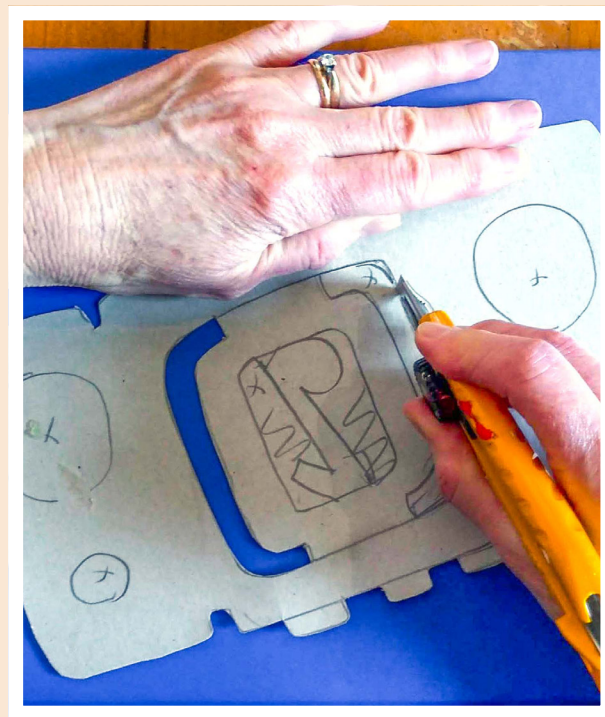
## Step 10:

Reinforce the stick by wrapping a third piece of tape around the base of the popsicle stick. Now you will be able to hold and move your puppet.



## Step 11:

Props are objects that help you tell your story. This image shows the negative space being cut out with an X-acto knife.



### SAFETY RULES FOR X-ACTO KNIVES:

An X-acto knife is a very useful tool, **but** it should **only be used under adult supervision**. This image shows that the cutting is being done on a board to protect the table. **The holding hand's** job is to hold the prop very securely at the top. The **cutting hand** is always moving the knife down and away from the **holding hand**. **STOP**. The holding hand will move the prop so the **cutting hand** can comfortably cut down and away from the holding hand and then hold the prop securely. The **cutting hand** basically stays in the same place and cuts down. **STOP**.

### THE STEPS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Hold securely, cut down. STOP. Move.
- Hold securely, cut down. STOP. Move.
- If you are cutting in a circle, the movements are smaller.
- Move a little. STOP. Hold. Cut. Move a little. STOP. Hold. Cut.



## Step 12:

You may want to glue tissue paper to the back of the prop to add colour.



## Step 13:

A large sheet of paper has been taped to the outside of a window. The boom box (prop) and the two trees (representing the setting) have been taped to the back of the sheet of paper. The puppeteer is holding the puppet. The image is taken from the Dancing Dino video.





## Extensions:

Consider how the elements of drama can be used to change the story you are telling, even without making new props.

- **CHARACTER/ROLE:** Consider if your character is a hero or a villain in your story. Change the character to consider what might happen if the character was the opposite.
- **FOCUS/EMPHASIS:** Consider what might happen if you tell the story from the point of view of another character or one of the props you created. How might that change the story?
- **PLACE AND TIME:** Consider what might happen if you change the time period and/or the setting of the story. How might this change the way the characters relate to one another and to their environment?
- **RELATIONSHIPS:** Consider the dynamic between characters: Are they friends? Members of the same family? Characters who have never met before? Characters who have known each other for years?
- **TENSION:** How can you create tension in the scene? What will be the main conflict that your character needs to overcome? Is the conflict person vs person? Person vs nature? Person vs themselves?



Watch  
here!

**Watch this video to see the story of the Dancing Dino! Use this as an example to create your own shadow puppet video**