



CHAPTER 19

STORIES OF SHADOWS AND STRINGS—PUPPETRY

All of us have played with dolls, cars and rockets, creating stories and characters, right? We have made our little toy save someone in distress or have an adventure in a chocolate dreamland. This is exactly what puppetry is!

Puppetry is the art of using inanimate figures or representations to create a performance. Puppeteers manipulate these figures through various techniques such as hand movement, strings or rods, to tell stories, entertain or convey messages in front of an audience.

SCENE 5: HAND PUPPETRY — FINGER, SOCKS AND GLOVE

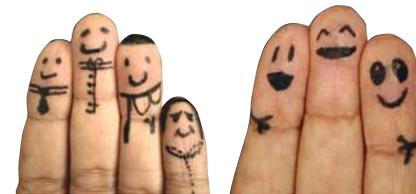
Puppets come in all shapes and sizes. There is no specific rule about how a puppet should look like. It can be as unique as your creative imagination. Let us start with the simplest of



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all—your hand! Make simple faces of the characters you want to create (from your family or friends) and make them talk!

Alternatively, you can also draw your hand on a paper and create characters.



Let us now go to a step further and create simple **finger puppets**.

Use paper to create a simple cup with scissors and glue, wear it on



Simple finger puppets



Concepts introduced

- Hand puppetry
- Stick and shadow puppetry
- Puppetry in India
- Voice modulation

your finger, draw different faces, hands and legs. Now, you can give these characters a name and create a story of your own!

Since there is no limitation or rules to how the puppet has to be made, try different ways to make your puppet come alive!



Animal characters



Special characters



Characters from purana and itihasa



Use your fingers as legs

Sock and Glove Puppets

Another way to make puppets which adds more character to your imagination — sock or glove puppet.

Here is a step by step guide to make a simple socks puppet of your own.

Give it a name and create your own conversation!

				
Take any sock you have at home.	Wear it on your hand till it is firm.	Put an elastic or rubberband around the four fingers and the separately thumbtr.	Alternatively, you can cut, and open the mouth area and stick cardboard.	Add eyes, tongue, hair, nose and other features as you want.



Glove puppet conversation



Finger puppet conversation

Activity

Create two characters. Use your imagination. It can be people, animals or imaginary characters like aliens. You can also create combinations like a tiger and a ghost, or old man and a dog.

List out characteristics. Give a name and emotion — are they funny, angry or sad?, assign a style of talking.

Write a simple conversation. Remember the three parts of a script? Make sure that you have a situation and a conflict where these two characters talk.

Showtime

Present this show in your class or to your family. You are now a puppeteer!



Sock puppet conversation

Hand Puppets in India

While you are thinking of new ideas for your next puppet show, let us explore different states of our country associated with puppetry.

1. *Sakhi Kunderi* and *Sakhi Nach* — Odisha

- Made of papier mache, wood or cloth and have bright, cheerful faces.
- They love to dance and sing, and their stories are often filled with humor and joy.
- They are a popular part of festivals and celebrations in Odisha.



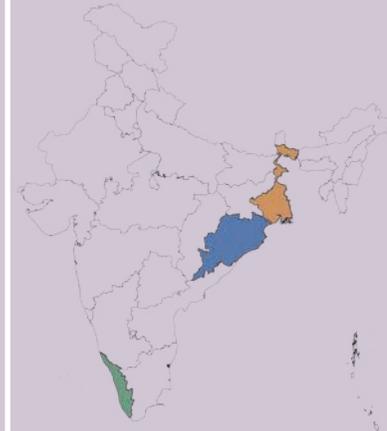
2. *Pavakathakali* and *Pavakoothu* — Kerala

- Inspired by the colourful and dramatic dance form called *Kathakali*.
- Made of wood and decorated with intricate costumes and jewellery.
- The stories they tell are often based on *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.



3. *Putul Nach* — Bengal

- Made of clay and have a unique style of storytelling.
- They often tell stories about Krishna and Radha, and also current events.
- They clap to rhythm and can garland each other. They are great fun to play.





Puppetry Trivia

- Puppets were used to tell stories in India for more than three thousand years. There's an interesting story by Rishi Vyasa in the *Bhagavata Purana*. This talks about wooden puppets being controlled with strings.
- Farmers, after working whole day relaxed by performing and watching puppet shows.

SCENE 6: STICK AND SHADOW PUPPETRY

This is a form of puppetry that requires some basic set up. It can be done by you either in the class or at home. You will need some basic material that you can find around you.

While you could do hand puppets and sock puppets on your own, these two forms require you to work in teams. So, go find your gang of puppeteers!

Class is to be divided into teams of five to six children. Each team will decide a concept or a story they want to narrate. Each group will create a simple script with three to four characters in it. The team then works together to make the puppets.

Stick Puppets

Stick puppets are the easiest to make and will also let children have lots of fun.

- Draw and colour pictures of all the characters in your story and cut them to shape.

- Find sticks that are at least six inches or longer. It can be twigs from a tree, ice-cream sticks or even cardboard strips that are stiff.
- Glue the pictures of the characters you have drawn to one end of the stick such that, you hold one end and the puppet is on the other end (see picture).

Your stick puppets are ready!



Puppet Show Frame

Cut out a cardboard in a simple rectangle, big enough to fit in all the characters you have created.



Optional: You can decorate the frame with suitable pictures according to your script.

You can also add a suitable background picture of a forest or a street, etc.

You are ready for the show!

Each team member takes up one character and the team enacts the puppet show.

Now that you have the stick puppetry show ready, shadow puppetry is just one step away.

Shadow Puppets

You can add a white cloth on the cardboard frame and use a pointed single source of light, like a torch. Some points to keep in mind for shadow puppetry —

- Make sure the light doesn't spread too much as the sharpness of the shadow depends on it. The light should be placed on a stable surface, so it doesn't move.
- The outline of the character is the most important as the

colour, facial features, etc., are not visible in the shadow. The outline should be able to tell your audience the character.

As you try working your way by creating stories through shadow puppetry, let us find out how much progress we have made as a country, in the art of shadow puppetry.



Stick and Shadow Puppets in India

Shadow puppetry in India has existed for more than 2000 years. Stories of Rama and Krishna have

been the most popular ones. In the following pictures, observe the level of detailing and the intricate designs of each puppet. This is how talented our artisans were!

1. *Tholu Bommalata* from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

- Intricate leather puppets, carefully cut and painted.
- These puppets can dance really very well.
- Hanuman stories are very entertaining in this style of puppets.



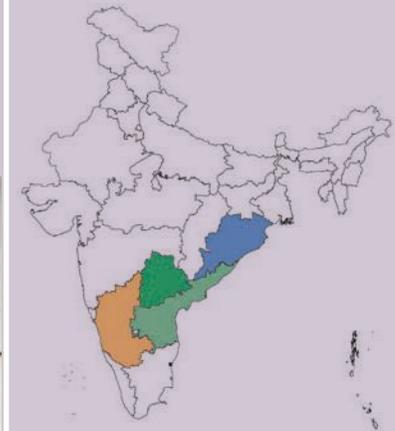
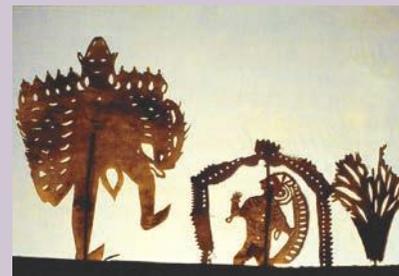
2. *Togalu Bombayata* from Karnataka

- They are made of leather and use colour.
- Have eyes of profile and front view together.
- The puppeteer sings and makes sound effects to bring the characters to life, making the stories even more exciting.



3. *Ravan Chhaya* from Odisha

- This style has beautifully designed black and white puppets.
- The puppets retell the story of *Ramayana*.
- The Ravana puppet is usually 1 ft bigger than the remaining puppets.





Activity— Make your own puppet show!

Puppets — ready ✓

Frame — ready ✓

Backdrop — ready ✓

Script — ready ✓

But who will deliver the dialogues? Do Puppets talk? No! Can you talk? Yes! But that will sound like you ... How will you 'sound like' your character?

Answer: Voice modulation

Voice modulation in puppetry is giving your puppet different voices to match its feelings or the story it is telling. So, when your puppet is happy, you can make your voice sound cheerful and high-pitched. If it's telling a spooky tale, you can lower your voice to make it sound mysterious just like how you play with different voices when you pretend to be different characters.

You can do the same with your puppet to make the show more exciting and fun!

This is very important when you are playing two characters yourself. Won't it be boring to hear the same voice for both characters, which also sounds like your regular voice? So, both characters should sound different from each other and from your own voice.

This is true for any kind of puppetry, whether you do sock puppetry, stick puppetry or shadow puppetry. You have to work on your voice. Remember, it has to suit the character the puppet is representing!

Example—An old man cannot have a high-pitched squeaky voice!

Keep practicing the lines from your script for the puppet show with the puppets you have made. You are now ready to put up the puppet show. Get your audience ... ready ... GO!



Puppetry Trivia

- Indian kings like Krishnadevaraya and Vikramaditya were so fond of puppetry, they had their own special theatres for these amazing shows.
- Puppetry can be an effective method to create awareness among the students on values such as gender sensitivity as well as awareness on safe and unsafe touch.
- Today, Indian puppetry keeps the tradition alive by bringing in new techniques and technologies to make it even more exciting.

Find a voice for the following and say the lines below in that voice:

“Have you had your lunch?”		“I want to play in the park!”	
“Hello! Do you want to go on a running race with me?”		“Do you want to play with me?”	

