

Shadow Puppets

Shadow puppetry is a very, very old art. It has probably been around for as long as people have been making shadows. Shadow theatre has thrived in Turkey, India, Southeast Asia, Egypt, and Europe. Even today in the Indonesian islands of Bali and Java, master puppeteers bring to life many different characters in traditional, epic legends that sometimes last all night long.

Many of these stories concern the origins of the moon, the constellations people see, and the mystery of the starry sky.



Through puppets children learn about these myths and legends and can have fun making up their own.

All you need is a darkened room, some cut out shapes and a screen in front of a light source.

Shadow puppetry gives children a chance to 'touch the sky'

- *GOAL:* To discover one's own and other cultures' different stories and legends about the sky.

- *MATERIALS:* cardboard, tracing paper, a graphite pencil, scissors, a fine scalpel, tape, paper fasteners, straws, or fine sticks
 - a screen (a white sheet)
 - a light source
 - a script



- **AGE GROUP:** Supervised, group activity for 6 years and up

Download the activity sheet here
[Shadow Puppets](#)(PDF22.9 Mb)

- **What to do**

- **Step 1.**

- Choose your story or inspiration.

- If you have found a story in an illustrated book, you can photocopy the pages and ask children to choose which characters and objects they will need to tell the story (the weaver, the princess, the moon etc..)

- Or, you can ask children to make up their own puppets and draw the characters directly onto cardboard.

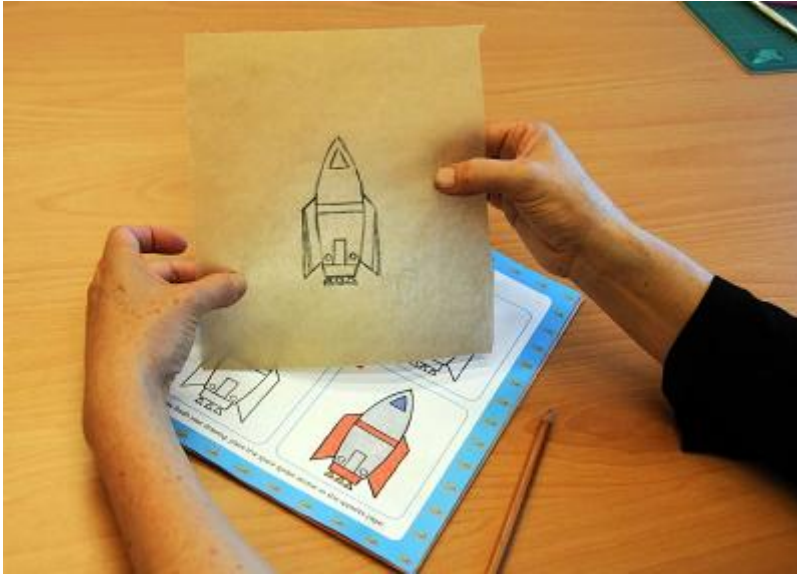
- **Step 2.**

- If you have found an image in a book, place translucent paper such as tracing or baking paper over the image you wish to copy.



- **Step 3.**

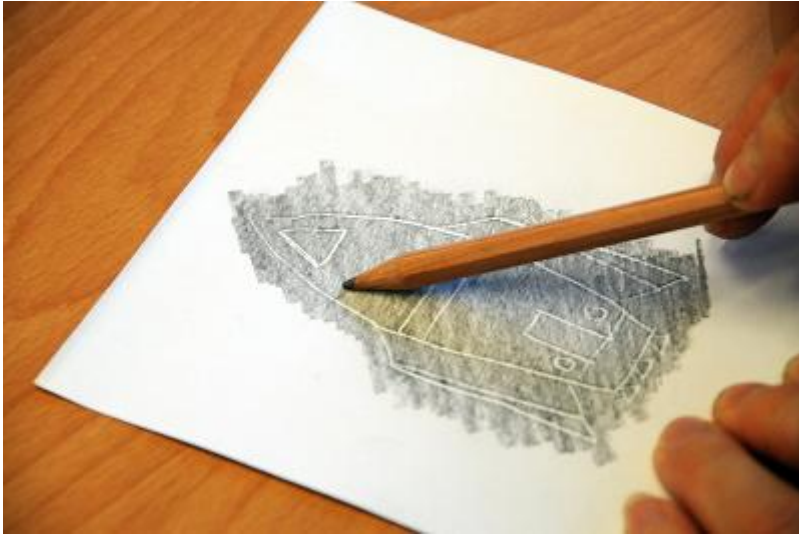
- When you have finished your picture, hold it up to make sure that the outline is clear. You may want to add some detail, or features, but keep it simple.



- **Step 4.**
Place your tracing on a piece of cardboard and retrace the outline, pressing down hard with the pencil.



- **Step 5.**
Scribble over the cardboard until all the outlines of your image appear.



- **Step 6.**
Carefully cut the puppets out of the card (or else get an adult to do it.)



- **Step 7.**
For more fine detail, use a fine scalpel blade to make holes for eyes or windows (**ADULTS ONLY PLEASE!**)
Note how the detail is minimal and does not weaken the overall structure of the puppet.



- **Step 8.**

If you want a character to move its limbs, cut at the joint in elbow, knee or shoulder etc. Overlap the two sections and fix a paper fastener in the middle. This will create an axis from which the whole limb will move.

- **Step 9.**

For the simplest puppets, you can use a bendable straw to attach to the back. You can also use fine bamboo sticks, or chopsticks for your puppeteer handles.

If you are using straws the slight bend will give you flexibility with how you hold the puppet against the screen.

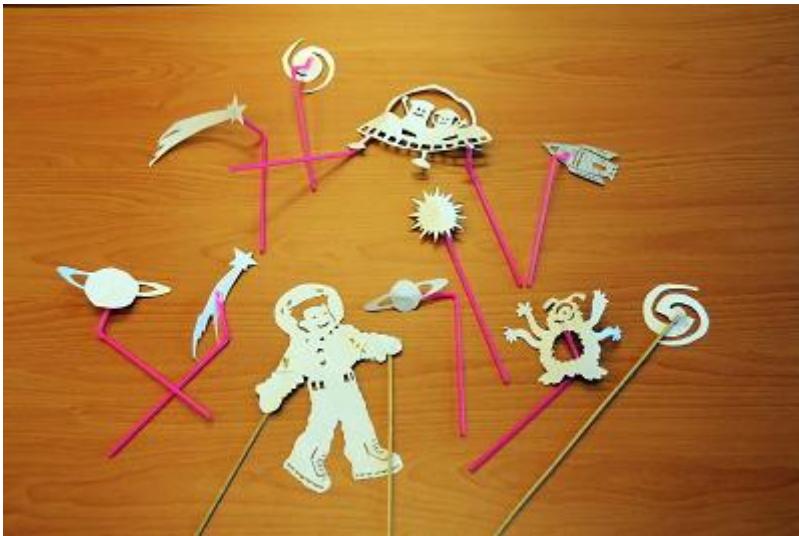


- **Step 10.**

Place the very tip of the straw or stick at the centre of the puppet and tape down securely. If you are manipulating the limbs, attach another stick not to the joint but to the end of the limb, such as the hand or foot.



- **Step 11.**
Assemble the cast and the puppeteers



- **Step 12.**
Once you have decided on the story it is the light that will bring the shadow puppets alive on the screen. You can darken a room and hang your scree in front of a window. Stand behind the screen and press your puppets against the sheet.



- **Step 13.**

Alternatively shine the light at the wall and move the puppets between the light and the wall. Remember light travels in straight lines, so the closer a puppet is to the light source, the more it blocks the light and the bigger the shadow becomes.



Source: UNAWE Italy