

## Shadow puppetry

### *Art and Design*

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand the techniques and effects of shadow puppetry
- To work together in groups
- To create scenes from *War Horse* using shadow puppets

#### SKILLS TARGETED

- Art and Design
- Co-operation
- Structuring a narrative
- Characterisation

#### TIME SCALE

- Four sessions

#### RESOURCES

- Shadow puppet templates
- Black card and paper
- Scissors
- Split pins
- Glue
- Florists' wire, to hold the puppets with
- Acetate – for the backgrounds
- Small amounts of brightly-coloured gel and tissue
- An OHP, or light box and camera, to project the scenes.

#### Step 1

Introduce the class to the idea of shadow puppetry. First, remind them of the production design, in which Major Nicholls' sketches are projected onto a screen at the back of the stage shaped like a torn piece of paper from his sketchbook.

You could also show pictures or clips of the shadow puppet films of the German director Lotte Reiniger who was working with shadow puppetry 1920s-1950s you can find these if you type her name into Youtube.

Explain that shadow puppets work in silhouette so they don't rely on drawing or having any detail on them except through cutting out.

Demonstrate how to use light to project shadows onto a wall or screen – it is the shadow that we see. You can do this using an overhead projector, a lightbox, if you have one, or simply by putting a torch or angle poise lamp behind a white sheet and holding the templates up against it.

Explain that because of this, interesting shapes can be made by tearing paper and making very rough silhouettes of figures and shapes

#### Step 2

Ask the children to work in groups of four. Each group is going to create their own scene. These could be the scenes used in the 'Five freeze-frames' exercise, other scenes from *War Horse*, or the children could create their own imaginary scenes

#### Step 3

The children could use the storyboarding exercise to construct the narrative of their scene and agree the events and characters

#### Step 4

Give each group a sheet of acetate: this is the background for their scene. Because it is clear, it will not show up on the OHP. The groups are going to make the shadow setting for their scene.

The children can use black card to create a landscape, and stick it onto the acetate. They should think about how much of their landscape is ground and how much is sky. If there is too much ground, there will not be much space for figures to move across their scene.

Show the children that something as simple as tearing a strip of black card and laying it across the bottom of the acetate can create the rough terrain of a battlefield.

Tearing at an angle will create a hill. Ripping a hole in the strip will make a pool of light that looks like water or perhaps a trench below the surface of the ground.

Tearing the card into wavy strips can represent the sea.

**IT IS VERY HELPFUL FOR THE CHILDREN TO HAVE LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE THEIR WORK PROJECTED**

Keep the light source available at the front of the class so that groups can come up and try out their landscapes to see what's working. They may need to experiment a few times before they fully understand that shadow puppets work in negative, and that drawing on the black card will not be seen. Only cut-out shapes will show up

#### Step 5

Once the children have created their landscapes, they can start to make the characters and figures that go into them. These could be horses, soldiers, tanks, field ambulances, explosions etc.



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The children can either draw their own shapes, or use the templates included.

Remind the children that the shadow shapes can be very simple, and that only cut-out details will be seen. For example, a cart shape can have a cut-out cross in the side and this will show up when the cart is projected, transforming it into an ambulance

#### **Step 6**

The children can use split pins to create joints in their figures so that they move – eg, in a horse's legs or head – or to attach two shapes together, such as a horse and a cart or gun.

They can add florists' wire to the back of their figures so that the puppets can be held without hands being seen

#### **Step 7**

Now the children can start to rehearse the action of their scenes using their puppets and moving them on their landscapes. The movements should be extremely simple – travelling from one side of the scene to the other works well

#### **Step 8**

The children can choose music to add to their scenes

#### **Step 9**

If you have a light box and camera, you can film the scenes. Otherwise they can be projected on the classroom wall using the OHP.

#### **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

- Children will work together to create a shadow puppet scene using simple materials
- Children will understand the concepts and techniques of shadow puppetry.

