

Making Puppets from Classroom Materials

By Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist Penny Russell

I define a puppet as anything inanimate that you animate. Therefore, anything in the classroom can become a puppet. Anything that can be given some life—maybe a walk, or a voice, or eye focus—can become a puppet character.

Found Object Puppetry: Use found objects to tell a story.

- What will happen when the hammer and the toy car meet? What will they say to each other?
- What objects could be chosen to tell a favorite fairy tale?
- What kind of voice, movement, and personality could the objects have?

Toys: Use toys for storytelling.

- Children tell stories with their toys every day. Use these skills to tell stories to the children, and use the children’s skills to tell stories to the teacher and each other. Encourage the children to write their own stories.
- Take coffee can theater to new heights with a bit of puppetry.

Masks: Create masks with cardboard, craft sticks, felt, fabric, foam, or paper.

Rod Puppets: Puppets on sticks are easy for small hands to manipulate.

- Use your mask on cardboard shoulders with a recycled shirt to create a rod puppet. Alternatively, use sheet foam or stiff paper, and craft sticks, straws, and chopsticks, to create any rod puppet.
- Glue a foam ball to a stick. Add googly eyes and anything else you can imagine.
- Use sheet foam, craft sticks, and markers to create letter puppets. Each child can create a puppet using the first letter of his or her name. The puppets will “listen” for the letter sound while the class is singing a song, reciting a poem, or reading a nursery rhyme. The puppet will identify its sound as it hears it.
- Create fish or shape puppets and use them to identify shapes and/or colors and patterns.
- Create a two-dimensional puppet or print pictures to suit the lesson, and allow everyone to be his or her favorite character in a story. Create moving parts with a paper fastener.

Find many more ideas in *A Show of Hands: Using Puppetry with Young Children* by Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist Ingrid Crepeau.