Storytime Connection’s

Puppetry Guide

Incorporating puppets into storytime!

Last revised: 15 August 2012
WORKING WITH PUPPETS

PUPPET TYPES

Each puppet comes with a unique way of moving and different requirements of the puppeter.

I. **Hand Puppets.**
Rest the puppet on their free arm and keep the entry hole tilted away from the audience. Keep the limbs of the puppet close in for the majority of the time, reserving the "Y" (hand open) stance for expressing happiness or surprise.

II. **Mouth Puppets.**
These allow for greater expression when the puppet talks or makes sounds. Concentrate on opening the mouth on the large vowel sounds and closing the mouth on the consonants. Open the mouth in an irregular rhythm emphasizing mainly the important words.

III. **No-Mouth Puppets.**
With these, the puppeter can still convey emotion and expressiveness through the tilt of the head or a manipulation of the limbs.

IV. **Finger Puppets.**
Rest these puppets on your free arm or in the palm of your hand (by bending the finger on which the puppet lies.) Keep your fingers bent to tilt the entry hole for the finger away from the audience. Since emotion/personality is limited with these puppets, they are especially well-suited to counting songs.

V. **Glove Puppets.**
The fingers of the hand are encased in a glove which either makes up the animal's limbs or which has strings and then a dangling puppet attached, like a marionette. Also with limited expression, these puppets are best suited to singing a song or doing a finger play.
BRINGING A PUPPET TO LIFE

1) Select a character/personality for the puppet. If it is a talking puppet, create an easy-to-perform voice that suits its personality. Some personalities you may want to play around with include:

- **Shy Puppet**
  - is a great choice for a large or "scary" puppet that might otherwise scare children
  - often won't speak at all, or will only "whisper" in the puppeteer's ear
- **Seven Dwarves**
  - If you're stuck, try giving your puppet the personality of one of these guys: Sleepy, Bashful, Dopey, Doc, Grumpy, Happy, Sneezy
- **Helper Puppet**
  - can help find books for you
  - can help the kids guess the theme for the day
  - can sing a song (and if it gets a word wrong, the kids can have fun helping it!)

2) Work with the puppet in front of a mirror until you are comfortable interacting with it. Practice changing voices and making and breaking eye contact.

- Look at the children when you are talking and have the puppet look at you.
- Look at the puppet when it is talking and have the puppet look at the audience and back and forth at you.
- When using a mouth puppet concentrate on opening the mouth on the large vowel sounds and closing the mouth on the consonants. Open the mouth in an irregular rhythm emphasizing mainly the important words.
- If the puppet’s mouth is soft, use it to add expression but do not overuse that “crumpled up” look. Save it for really appropriate times. It makes it more effective.
3) Write up some simple scripts. Puppets can be entirely silent, they can respond to your questions with silly sounds or animal noises, or you can give them a voice of their own. To get you started, here are a few puppet scripts of each type:

**Bashful Baby (a mostly silent puppet script)**

**STORYTELLER**
I have a special friend here to meet you. Would you like to meet her? [Children: “Yes!”]

Okay, but you'll have to be very, very quiet because she's very shy.

Bonnie, would you like to come out and say hello? I have a lot of nice friends out here who would like to meet you.

Now Bonnie, there's nothing to be scared of! Come on out and meet our new friends!

**STORYTELLER**
Poor Bonnie! She's really scared. [ask children]
Have you ever been scared of anything before? [Kid’s will say “yes” or “no”]

Well, whenever I'm scared, I like to sing a song… that always makes me feel much better. Would you like us to sing you a song, Bonnie?

Let's sing and see if we can help Bonnie not be so scared any more. [sing a song here with the children ... Twinkle Twinkle Little Star]

Looks like it worked, kids! Bonnie felt so safe with you all that she fell fast asleep!

Let's put Bonnie to bed now... say “goodnight Bonnie” very softly now, so we don’t wake her up... Now that she’s asleep, let's read a story....

**PUPPET**
Bonnie, the bashful baby dinosaur, is hiding in the storytime bag during this exchange.

Open the mouth of the bag and look inside, as if talking to Bonnie.

Jiggle the bag, as if Bonnie is trembling. Then reach gently into the bag, putting the puppet on your hand before pulling it out. Cradle the visibly trembling puppet in your arms carefully.

Bonnie looks at the children, makes an EEP! sound, if desired, and buries her head against your chest.

As you sing, let Bonnie get more comfortable in your arms… have her peek out and hide her head again a few times throughout the song, but eventually have her look out at the audience, and sway back and forth with the music.

Towards the end of the song, Bonnie gets sleepy and lays down in your arms. When you finish singing, you may want to add some “snoring” sounds for her.

Lay Bonnie gently back inside the bag and hold your finger up to your lips to indicate silence.

**Mortimer: Book Too Heavy (a silent puppet script by Jan VanSchuyver)** This script is from Storytelling Made Easy with Puppets by Jan VanSchuyver. Jan also has several other puppet scripts in the Mortimer series (including “Can’t find book”, “Book Upside Down” and a great one about getting Mortimer dressed for storytime in his special hat….which he starts out putting on his foot!). Her book is a wonderful resource if you need more ideas!

**PUPPET**
Look inside the story trunk or bag as you reach in and put Mortimer on your hand.

**STORYTELLER**
The next book I’m going to read is (title)

My friend, Mortimer, lives in my book trunk/bag, and his job is to bring out each book for storytime. Would you please bring out our next book for me, Mortimer?

Mortimer’s head peaks over the top of the story trunk lid, he nods “yes” and disappears into the trunk. Leave the lid open. With your hand still inside Mortimer, make more crashing sounds. Look at the children, then back inside the trunk.

What’s the matter, Mortimer? Having trouble?

Look in again as you speak to him… Mortimer’s head reappears over the top of the lid. He nods “yes,” more vigorously this time, and then disappears again. Make more crashing sounds. Look at the children, and then back into the trunk.

Lean over the trunk and reach in with your free hand to help. Mortimer’s ears and the top of his head slowly appear above...
Pull… pull…

Ohhhh!!!

Gosh, Mortimer, that big book got away from you!

Here, let me help you get ahold of it again. Now you can do it. Bring it up for us. Pull… pull… pull…

Oh no!

Mortimer, I do believe that book pulled you right back into the trunk!

May I help you with the book?

Together, I know we can do it! Here it comes … keep on pulling. Don’t give up!

There, we got it!

Mortimer, thank you for your help in bringing this big storybook out here!

You really deserve a rest now. Go down into the trunk and get comfy

You can listen to the story in there. …

Abruptly Mortimer’s head disappears and crashing sounds are heard again.

React with lots of surprise, looking into the trunk then at the children.

Again, lean over the trunk and reach in with your other hand to help. Mortimer’s ears and more of his head slowly appear above the trunk lid. Everyone can see that Mortimer has a book in his mouth.

Abruptly, he disappears again and even louder crashing sounds are heard.

React with more surprise

Look into the trunk as you speak to Mortimer. Mortimer’s face reappears, and he nods solemnly.

Together, you and Mortimer muscle the book out of the trunk. The book almost pulls Mortimer back in a few times, but you both hang on.

Once the book is in your lap, Mortimer sits on the top of the lid for a minute, panting.

Mortimer takes a bow, still panting.

Mortimer wearily goes down into the trunk. Look in the trunk to make sure he’s comfortable. Close the trunk and begin to read the book.

Silly Sounds (gibberish puppet script)

STORYTELLER
I’ve brought along one of my best friends in the whole wide world today. His name is Scat. Do you want to meet him?

Okay, I’ll bring him out… he talks kind of funny sometimes and I have a hard time understanding him. Maybe you can help me understand what he’s saying….

Hey Scat! Come out out and meet everyone!

Hi Scat! How are you doing on this lovely morning?

Huh? Scat, I don’t understand what you’re saying.

I still don’t get it! (ask children if they understand)

Can you give us a hint?

Something in my bookbag?

Reach into the bag….

Scat pops out of the bag and spreads his arms wide and sings: Skidat-doodlie-o-doooooh!

Skidat skidat boppa didlio-dooooh!

Dooba dooba day didlio daaaay!

Heebie jeebie lip ip doobie doobie doo zip bop doodlie oh doo!

Scat points into the bag and then at you, while singing:

Shooba dooba ding doodle ding doodle ding doodle ding!

Diddlee doo shabba dooba doy dah
Do you want a snack?
Do you want to take a nap?
What can it be? Do you know (ask the children)?
Oh! I know! You want a story!

Well I happen to have a lot of stories in my bag today, Scat. Why don’t you go back in the bag and get comfortable, and I’ll read a story to everyone.

**Singing Partner (a talking & singing puppet script)**

**STORYTELLER**
I have a very musical friend who’d like to come out and sing a song… would you like to meet her?

This is Brunhilde… but I call her Hildy… and she is the most beautiful singer you’ve ever heard…

Would you like to sing for us today?

We love new songs! What is the song called?

But, but… but Hildy… we all know Row Row Row your boat… don’t we? (kids nod)

Okay… let’s give it a shot everyone!

(sing)

Conduct? How do you do that?

Can you all remember that?

Wait, when do I get to sing?

Oh, okay… I’ll try and remember. So when do we sing everyone? When Hildy points at us… good!

How’d we do Hildy?

That was a lot of fun. Thanks, Hildy!

Okay Hildy. We’ll just stay here and read one last story while you have your nap. Sleep well!

Wow! She’s asleep already! Let’s read that last story….

**PUPPET**
(singing)

Scat shakes his head, singing: Doo bop doodlio bop

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Scat dances and nods, singing: Ding doodlio doo ding dong doo boppa doo wop doodlio-dee!

Scat nods, and dances back into the bag, singing: Linglie doo lingly do dwee dah… doi doi dwee dah

Scat shakes his head, singing: Doo bop doodlio bop

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Bows! Why thank you (or Thank you, thank you very much… Elvis-style!)

I’d rather teach you a song!

Row row row your boat.

Not the way I’m going to have you sing it!

I’ll sing it first… then you can sing it

(sings)

Now you all sing it once with me.

Now, you all will sing and I will conduct!

When I point at this half of the room, they sing, and when I point at this half of the room, then they start to sing! But the first half of the room, you keep on singing!

When I point at you, of course!

(you sing while the puppet waves his arms around like he is conducting an orchestra)

You all did splendidly! Bravo bravo! Encore Encore!

YAAWWNN…. All this conducting has made me very sleepy. I think I’ll take a little nap…

Yawns again… place her in the bag… let out a little snore…
PUPPET PRECAUTIONS

Remember to always maintain the illusion of the "live" puppet in front of your audience.

I. Avoid Puppet-cide
   - when the puppet is on your hand, keep it engaged and alive... looking about, nodding, etc.
   - when you're done with the puppet, avoid dropping or laying the puppet down in such a way that it looks like it's dead—
   - ALWAYS put your puppet in its house when you’re done with it, -- NEVER store it in your lap, or use it to read with!!

II. Puppet Houses
   - anytime a puppet isn’t on your hand, it should be inside its house!
   - puppet houses must be opaque so the children can't see the puppet and close-able so the children can't touch it while it's in its house
   - you can decide whether your puppet has a simple, temporary house (like a bag or small box) or a more elaborate house (a mailbox, castle, or trash can, for example)

III. Into the Dog House (Sometimes you need to regain control of your audience...)
   - Shy puppets might run off and hide if the kids are getting rowdy or grabbing for the puppet. Explain to them that the puppet got scared because everyone wasn’t sitting in their place, but if they promise not to scare it again, the puppet may come out again later.
   - Loud puppets might storm off to their house because they "get frustrated" when children aren’t listening. Explain to them that the puppet refuses to come back out until everyone is sitting in their places listening nicely.

IV. Puppet Interaction with Children
   - You will need to establish some ground rules for the children: keep your seats until the puppet finishes; only gentle pats, or maybe none. No kisses (children have runny noses) but you can have the puppet throw a kiss to all the children.