



LIGHTS, CAMERA, SHADOW PUPPETS!

Targeted age group/level: 3rd grade English Language Arts and Visual Arts, adaptable for other grades

Brief description of activity: In this activity, students will create an original video that will highlight their own story, music, shadow puppets, and stage design. Students will begin by writing a short story in response to book or a prompt. They will consider mood through the creation of original music using found objects to accompany the short story. They will then explore line, shape, and contrast as they create shadow puppets and a stage. The performance can then be performed in front of an audience of other classes and parents or video recorded to share with others beyond the school community. This activity can be managed and modified to take under an hour or be spread over multiple class meetings.

Inspirational resource: [Chinese Shadow Puppetry](#) (documentary on YouTube, 10:07)

Materials needed:

- black cardstock paper (or other dark colored paper)
- sticks (i.e. craft sticks, chop sticks, wooden skewers, sticks, etc.)
- paper fastener brads
- white copier paper or tissue paper
- cereal box (or small cardboard box)
- scissors
- tape and/or glue
- table lamp
- Silhouette Studio software (optional)
- Silhouette Cameo machine (optional)
- video camera (optional)

Student learning objectives:

- Students will compose a short story that has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Students will generate musical sounds to compare and contrast with the mood of the writing.
- Students will use line, shape, and contrast to create shadow puppets that represent the characters from the writing.
- Students will construct a shadow puppet stage that includes a light source and a screen.
- Students will produce a multimodal storytelling performance that includes narration, music, and shadow puppetry.

Standards-based content connections (Texas TEKS for 3rd grade):

- Writing Process – ELA 17a, 17b, 17c, 17d, 17e
- Perception – ART 1a, 1b
- Creative Expression/Performance – ART 2c
- Perception – MUSIC 1a, 1b
- Creative expression/performance – MUSIC 2a
- Historical/cultural heritage – MUSIC 5c
- Responsive – MUSIC 6b
- Creative expression/performance – THEATRE 2c, 3c
- Response/evaluation – THEATRE 5a, 5b, 5c

Practical classroom integration plan:

1. Students will individually write a short story related to the book or prompt. Teacher will lead students through brainstorming exercise and remind them to use colorful and descriptive words to highlight the setting, characters, and action as well as to be sure that they have a beginning, middle, and end of their short story.
 1. Suggested Books: [Pinduli by Janell Cannon](#) (insecurities, diversity, acceptance)
 2. Suggested Prompts: everyone is different because...
 3. [Scholastic Story Starters Interactive Prompt Generator](#)
2. Students will share and discuss their short stories with the class. Teacher will facilitate constructive feedback by asking classmates to say one thing they really liked about the story, one thing they think could be changed, and one example of a way to change it.
3. Students will form small teams to work collaboratively to expand and revise one of their short stories to be produced as a shadow puppet performance.
4. Once the final draft of the short story is ready, each team will read theirs to the class. As the teams read, the teacher will facilitate a demonstration and discussion of mood through the comparison of musical sounds and spoken words. Student teams will experiment with musical sounds that accompany their short story.
5. Student teams will work together to create shadow puppets that represent the characters from their writing. They will explore the use of line and shape to create silhouetted images for each shadow puppet. This can be done using traditional handcut silhouettes out of opaque paper/cardstock or can be done using Silhouette Studio software and Silhouette Cameo machine. Shadow puppets can have movable joints using paper fastener brads controlled by separate sticks or can be static forms attached to sticks. ([video tutorial](#), YouTube, 1:28)
6. Simultaneously, student teams will create their own shadow puppet stage using cereal boxes (or small cardboard boxes) and thin paper. Student teams

- will determine which light source will function best for the mood and actions of their short story. ([cereal box stage](#), [fancy stage idea](#))
7. Student teams will practice a “run through” of their performance for the class. Again, the teacher will facilitate constructive feedback by asking classmates to say one thing they really liked about the story, one thing they think could be changed, and one example of a way to change it. Student teams will be given extra time to refine and revise their production in final preparation for the video recording.
 8. Student teams will video record their performance. The video file can then be edited using software (i.e. Movie Maker, iMovie, Magisto) and/or can be uploaded to a video sharing website (i.e. Vimeo, YouTube).
 9. Red carpet premiere of completed videos (or final performances) can be shared with other classes or on a parent night.

Assessment strategy: Individual Reflection: Please address the following in your journal –

- Briefly describe the beginning, middle, and end of the short story your team composed.
- In what way do the musical sounds that your team generated complement the mood of the short story?
- What are the defining characteristics of the characters in your short story and how are they represented by the shadow puppet creations?
- Briefly describe the process your team used to create the functioning shadow puppet stage.
- What was your favorite part of the project? Why?
- What was your least favorite part of the project? Why? How could it have been changed?

Example artifact: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCmFWJjc4RA>

Differentiation strategies: If time is limited, students can work as a whole class on one single short story and produce it as a shadow puppet play. If technology is inaccessible, shadow puppets can be handcut and the production can be performed live for another class instead of being video recorded. If some students prefer to work alone, they can complete all of the required components on their own and/or ask fellow classmates for assistance as needed.

Extension: Students can extend this activity by composing additional short stories, which can be produced as additional episodes or sequels of the shadow puppet performance. Or, try out stop-motion animation techniques using the paper cut outs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t4Aq6UcdqY>

Multidisciplinary connections:

- [The Science of Shadow Puppets](#)
- [Investigating Shadows](#)

Additional resources:

- [Interactive Shadow Puppet Presentation](#)
- [Puppet Master How-Toon Visual Guide](#)
- [Literacy Lesson by Branan Freeman](#)
- [Collaborative Team Roles for Shadow Puppet Theatre](#)