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Puppets, A Teaching Tool for Skill Development: One Teacher's Experience

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Skill Development: One
Teacher's Experience

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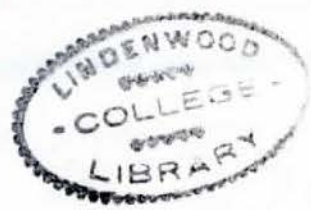
by

Helen G. Bogener

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts in Education degree

The Lindenwood Colleges

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Abstract

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Education, The Lindenwood Colleges, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Education degree.

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Abstract

This study was developed to solve recognized problems in reading, grammar and social attitudes.

As the study began, it was meant to involve as much variety as possible to induce reasons for reading. When the enthusiasm for puppetry was noticed in children, it was decided to place a major emphasis on creating a variety of puppets for the classroom.

Special people became involved, some members of St. Louis Puppetry Guild, Connie Borgmeyer and Mrs. Gilman, art supervisors, Virginia Terry, library science teacher, and parents who became interested along the way as the study progressed.

From prescribed reading stories, the class moved to their own creative attempts at writing and illustrating. Dramatization was enhanced by the puppets. Enthusiasm grew along with self-direction, initiative and required skills as students went from prescribed reading to creating their own stories and poetry.

Other results involved better attitudes toward reading attentively and for personal enjoyment. Social attitudes were certainly promoted toward school climate.

Through this study it was found that the use of puppets in a classroom provided a therapeutic tool of learning that should be utilized more by teachers. Sesame Street has proven the effectiveness of puppets as a valid means of teaching. The common denominator of puppets and puppeteering is that puppets are fun and they hold the children's attention while learning.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

One little pebble of information from a shared book can drop into a pond of a child's consciousness and start the circles of search and discovery broadening out into infinite joy, discovery and achievement. Research then becomes not only an achieved skill and useful tool, but results in a natural exhilaration which comes from all true learning.

...books are peeks into life.

...every child deserves to be exposed to the stimulus which is uncovered when the print is peeled off the page to reveal the ideas locked within. Released, these ideas are a natural catapult into activities.

...when the focus is taken beyond phonics and drills, beyond the format of glue and cardboard, and the book is used as a building block to climb upon for new views of the panorama of life, eyes will begin to sparkle.¹

The quotation above states so well what this author would like to do for children to make learning not only palatable but irresistible and fun at least part of the time for every child in the class. The author seeks to justify the use of puppets as a tool of learning in the classroom comparable to the pebble dropped into the pond.

The definitions for puppets and puppeteers from Webster's Dictionary are: A puppet is a figure to be moved by attached strings, or wires or hands.² A puppeteer is a person who operates

¹Nancy Polette and Marjorie Hamlin, Celebrating With Books, (Metuchen, New Jersey, Scarecrow Press, 1977), p. 9.

²Webster's New World Dictionary, College Ed. (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1955), p. 1181.

or designs costumes, puppets or produces puppet shows.³

If the child reads with no knowledge or experience, it is difficult to get the average child to read further, even if he has time to try to understand more. But if children have puppets to dress that they have made for a purpose, they will read both to learn and to enjoy the puppet. Once the puppet is made, it must be dressed appropriately and used. In these areas the child feels the need to research further.

Saylor and Alexander cite a need for a variety of teaching techniques and materials to stimulate learning. Certainly the use of puppets meets this need.

Many processes, from the most casual to the most highly organized, are utilized in curriculum planning for American schools. ---Ideally these products include changes in the behavior of the teachers and the training environment.⁴

Purpose of the Study

This study culminates some thirty years of search for better techniques to improve standards of classroom learning through diversified methods of teaching. One method which appears to have been most effective has been the use of puppets. Work with puppets in the classroom has helped this writer's students to:

1. Improve listening skills.
2. Develop oral expression.

³Webster's New World Dictionary, p. 1181.

⁴J. Galen Saylor and William M. Alexander, Planning Curriculum for Schools, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), pp. 47-48.

3. Improve communication.
4. Expand vocabularies.
5. Appreciate stories and poetry.
6. Write better stories and poetry.
7. Increase creative abilities in art.
8. Become knowledgeable in their understanding of characterization.
9. Improve grammatical ability.
10. Discriminate between good and bad oral expression.
11. Better share ideas and experiences.
12. Improve problem solving techniques.
13. Observe and use courteous response to other speakers.
14. Appreciate the ideas and work of their peers.
15. Further interest in seeking information.
16. Enjoy more leisure reading.
17. Develop better attitudes and satisfaction in classroom activities.
18. Foster increased skills of application.
19. Improve conceptualization of problems by drawing upon their own experiences.
20. Make better value judgments.
21. Practice self-discipline in group situations.
22. Increase enjoyment and meet their educational needs in the classroom.
23. Improve dramatization and feeling for the printed word.

The author's recent introduction to Celebrating With Books⁵ combined with the puppets enriched the whole experience of the author's use of puppets to stimulate learning. The preceding list gives only a broad view of the range of ways that puppets, in their creation and development, can stimulate learning in the classroom.

The experiences of this author and those of her colleagues, as related during many teaching years, indicate that too much concentrated book-oriented learning becomes intolerable and stultifying to the child. That this fact is noted by so many teachers is evidence that all teachers of language arts, reading and other subject areas must enhance their own teaching techniques to include hands-on techniques of learning to directly involve children.

Recognition of this kind is also evident from the following passage from Stanford Research Center in their Second Annual Report, April 1968.

Teachers teach today in much the same way that they have for generations. The basic style is didactic, with the teacher dispensing information to passive pupils.⁶

Didactic and passive methods are quite possibly crippling culprits to many children. Too much reading in the classroom, the use of various worksheets in all areas plus workbooks on top of reading, reading and more reading in each of the subject areas is simply too much for children. Though they understand what has

⁵Nancy Polette and Marjorie Hamlin, Celebrating With Books, (Metuchin, New Jersey; Scarecrow Press, 1977), p. 9.

⁶J. Galen Saylor and William M. Alexander, Planning Curriculum for Schools, (New York, N.Y., Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 47-48, citing Stanford Center for Research and Development, Second Annual Report, Palo Alto, California, April, 1968. p. 146.

been assigned, they cannot concentrate. Their eyes and bodies being weary, they unknowingly slide into a magical world of fantasy. The child's body is equipped for protecting itself in this way. Because of such activities the child may soon be given a label.

Each year children come to the classroom labeled. These labels include underachiever, discipline problem, learning disabled, or perhaps, if lucky, gifted. Over the years this author has observed these children. She has observed that the underachiever is often shy and insecure and seems not to relate to the school environment. Such a child is also often labeled a day-dreamer. Hiding behind withdrawal, he/she is usually not a discipline problem, but is failing to complete assignments and is failing to succeed. Through no fault of his/her own, the child becomes a problem in the classroom. Such problems bring this poem to mind:

The Loaded Ass

I saw an ass who bore a load
Of sandalwood along the road
And, almost with the burden bent
Yet never guessed the sandal scent.
So pedants bear a ponderous mass
Of books, they comprehend not--like the ass.⁷

Currell states that education through art has been possible in recent years in that it gave free reign to the imagination letting the child come to terms with everyday experiences, shed

⁷Bhartrihari, One Thousand and One Poems of Mankind; Memorable Poems from World's Chief Literature compiled by Henry W. Wells, Atlanta, (Tupper and Love c 1953), p. 118.

inhibitions and make way for social and emotional development.⁸

For juniors (seven to eleven) English, drama, poetry, art, music and social or environmental studies can be enhanced by puppetry and various techniques of teaching and learning can be stimulated.

Currell, also refers to an experiment carried out by the New York School Board to determine the effectiveness of using puppetry in the classroom to enrich and aid the language arts program. Some results of that experiment are listed below.

The children became aware of sequence in story telling; they enriched their vocabularies, held discussions on the plot, script and production; they took an interest in classical music in order to find appropriate music for their plays. They also had to carry out research for their topic and this included geography, history and current affairs. There was evident eagerness to improve their speech, and the problem children, eager to do their share, did a good job.⁹

Freedom to do something on their own and perhaps receive warm recognition from surprised teachers, may have turned these children loose to be creative, and without doubt, both teachers and students were happier.

Currell says there are no rules for using puppetry and the only test is, "Does it work?" "If it does," he says, "use it. Part of the fun of puppetry is to try new ideas and to develop old ones."¹⁰

⁸David Currell, The Complete Book of Puppetry. (Massachusetts: Plays Incorporated, 1976), pp. 9-11.

⁹David Currell, The Complete Book of Puppetry, p. 11.

¹⁰David Currell, The Complete Book of Puppetry, p. 11.

The author has generally found that discipline problems arise from bright children who have finished their work as assigned yet feel unmotivated to pursue further activities. Such children appear to achieve minimally. Such behavior seems to be inadequate in terms of permanent identification or labeling. These are only a few of the reasons attributed by teachers to children who do not work up to their potential.

Further observance, by this writer, reveals the boredom children experience with a continuous diet of activity sheets, drill and reading. All of these plus textbooks to be read, workbook assignments to be done, gets to be mind-boggling. There is a need for something appealing to build these skills, for the most pathetic thing a teacher ever sees is a bored, unmotivated child in his/her own classroom.

The most popular learning centers in the room are those that offer the child something creative to do--something that uses the child's hands, mind and imagination. Some of the techniques this author has used to try to break this monotonous routine over the years are: a wide variety of games, puzzles, tape recorded work (or instructions) as well as stories, books, student comments, art projects, creative writing, and more art projects which she has always enjoyed due to her appreciation of children's art. A puppet center has become one of the most profitable spots in the room because it motivates and appeals to every child's self-expression and creativity. This author is no longer surprised when children come up with an activity or correlation more apropos than those in the

daily plan book.

The author's purpose, therefore, is: to help children make and enjoy their puppets, to sense the feelings and emotions of the printed words and how they are related, to become aware of sequence in story telling, to enrich their vocabularies, to provide for research, to use numerous other basic skills in language arts, and to try new ideas for the puppets use in other areas.

Justification of the Study

While using puppets, this writer noticed the enthusiasm the children showed in them; therefore, it was decided to make puppets a major emphasis and incorporate them with reading and language arts or wherever they worked in best in other subject areas. Some earlier experiences in the classroom gradually opened the writer's eyes to the benefits of using puppets as a therapeutic vehicle of learning and self-expression. Some of these incidents, though not recognized at the time, later showed how some of these puppets could have become an integral tool between the child's tactile sense and his/her emotional involvement with the printed word.

On occasion, puppets came to visit the classroom. More than any other toy the puppet was touched and it traveled from desk to desk, from child to child. It was soon noticed that children stroked the furry ones, explored the mechanism of stick puppets and tried out the marionettes. They tried them all one way or another.

In first grade, three years ago, Snoopy was to David what a baby blanket is to Linus of Charley Brown fame. Though David was always willing to share Snoopy at school with the teacher and all or any of his classmates, the writer realized two things, too late: Snoopy definitely had to be taken care of, (Snoopy-sitting was carefully pre-arranged by David for noon hours and recesses) and the puppet definitely had to return home with David at the end of the day, only to return to school again and again to everyone's delight all year. By second grade, he came by invitation only.

In first grade that year, Snoopy accepted a good many of the children's tasks; he drew pictures, wrote stories and poems, made riddles and pictorally signed his name on each. These were cosigned by David or one of his Snoopy-sitters. Snoopy collected papers in order, passed out materials, handled other tasks all in stride, during the year, more knowledgeably than this author realized at the time. Looking back, Snoopy was such an enjoyable part of the classroom, that he was simply taken for granted.

Some children, both the gifted and the underachievers are sometimes behavior problems. Again, looking back, David was sometimes called a behavior problem. He asked specifically to be in the writer's fourth grade class. Could our enjoyment of Snoopy in the first grade have prompted him to do this? Has Snoopy gone on unrecognized by second and third grade teachers even more than the author, who enjoyed him and his antics, but failed to take advantage of his awe-inspiring ability to motivate children in her class? Let's hope not.

It was discovered, too, that the shy child projected himself into the puppet and was better able to participate in related activities, while the child who lacked self-discipline, disciplined his puppet, therefore, unknowingly becoming more disciplined himself. Not only did the fourth graders use and enjoy puppets but they especially enjoyed making their own. The puppet created by the child soon became an extension of the child him/herself, showing his/her personality, needs and interests.

While first grade children had not used those puppets provided by the teacher to her satisfaction, the fourth graders certainly used their own creations with only the slightest provocation and even before the teacher suggested such a thing. The following paragraph exemplifies this:

Even before the puppet is completed, it begins to come alive to the child, and he extends himself into such other areas of self-development as story telling, speech and group relationships. Communication barriers, like shyness and even retardation, are often breached through puppetry.¹¹

Through his/her own puppets, the child could become, for the moment, an enormous monster, a conniving witch, or an endless variety of other characters as he/she tried on other personalities.

A second example of the ability of puppets to change moods was demonstrated for the author when Big Bird and Hippy became a vehicle for encouraging a youngster to happily accept bedtime after much resistance with only his father's encouragement. The

¹¹Nancy Renfro, Puppets for Play Production, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), p. 99.

appearance of the puppets enabled him to laugh and relax, forgetting his anger at being dismissed from the family's activities.

A third child, who was obviously an overeater, was another case in point at school. Brian was slow, awkward, complacent, inattentive, quite lazy and extremely talkative. With this description the writer must admit another description to also be truthful. Brian could be lovable, outgoing, pleasant and easy going in the face of either criticism or teasing. Tests showed that he had a vision problem and his verbal ability had far overcompensated for his lack of ability to read; though he could read orally fairly well, he just didn't do it. Neither did he like to read silently. His writing was not in cursive, until he learned in fourth grade at this writer's insistence. The writing was small, cramped and unreadable on most occasions. However, his book report, given orally on a Charley Brown story, was an animated thing, holding everyone's attention and drawing laughter from teacher and class. His descriptions were vivid, his actions reinforced with his words.

Brian loved to work with his hands. Any art work was done immediately. When he made his soft puppet, it turned out rather shapeless and heavy like himself but he added movable eyes, yarn hair and a baseball cap. He patiently stitched it's costume to dress it, then he began to poke fun at it for eating too much, for being too awkward to play baseball. "You couldn't run even if you could hit the ball," he told it, "because you're like me. Too fat and awkward." At this point, his classmates told him that at least his puppet could be seen by the audience. Fortunately

for Brian, he could identify with the puppet's shape.

Broadly speaking, the semiotic function gives rise to two kinds of instruments: SYMBOLS which are "motivated" --that is, although they are differentiated signifiers, they do present some resemblance of the thing signified; and SIGNS which are arbitrary or conventional. Symbols being motivated, may be created by the individual himself.¹²

So Brian's puppet became a motivation for him. Through it, he released the hurt that he felt but covered up so well, except in his eyes.

Children must fashion their puppets, give them names, and physical characteristics, themselves. During this process, the puppet becomes a unique teaching tool. By working with the characterization of the puppet, the child develops new facets of his own personality and character because he/she has tried on the different characterization himself that he tried on his puppet.

Numerous articles and studies attribute a variety of puppet qualities to change behavior patterns. Already the child has exercised patience in developing the little character and soon after it begins to shape up, it's uniqueness becomes evident to the child. Then come the features and the personality tryouts and the clothing. Already the puppet has become a motivator because it has become real to the child. It is real; it is his own. The child talks to his puppet, cares for it and reveals himself to it. The child should better bridge the gap between play and learning because of the assets of puppets mentioned above.

¹²Jean Piaget and Barbara Inhelder, The Psychology of the Child, (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1969), p. 57.

Obliged to adapt himself constantly to the social world of elders whose interests and rules remain external to him, and to a physical world which he understands only slightly, the child does not succeed as we adults do in satisfying the affective and even intellectual needs of his personality through these adaptations. It is indispensable to his affective and intellectual equilibrium, therefore, that he have available to him an area of activity whose motivation is not adaptation to reality but, on the contrary, assimilation of reality to the self, without coercions or sanctions. Such an area is play, which transforms reality by dissimilation to the needs of self, whereas imitation (when it constitutes an end in itself) is accommodation to external models. Intelligence constitutes an equilibration between assimilation and accommodation.

---Furthermore, the essential instrument of social adaptation is language....The child, therefore, needs a means of self-expression, that is, a system of signifiers constructed by him and being capable of being vent by his wishes. Such is the system of symbols characteristic of symbolic play. These symbols borrowed from imitation as instruments but not used to accurately picture external reality. Rather, imitation serves as a means of exocathexis to achieve playful assimilation. Thus, symbolic play is not merely an assimilation of reality to self, as in play in general, but an assimilation made possible (and reinforced) by a symbolic "language" that is developed by the self and is capable of being modified according to its needs.¹³

Based on the experience of the author and the evidence of educational experts and developmental psychologists, the author found justification in developing and using puppets as a method of stimulating and motivating students to become more involved with learning. The development of communication and social skills, not totally addressed by the written page, became, therefore, the central purpose of this project.

¹³Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder, The Psychology of the Child, (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1969), pp. 57-58.

CHAPTER II

Related Literature and Research

Like anything in teaching, some techniques for teaching are better than others. To find those that we are comfortable with and that we can feel are worthwhile learning situations for children is no easy task. When this writer feels something different is basically good and acceptable, she is anxious to try it gradually and work it in for a trial run. This she has done with puppets and in making this study, she has searched for ways and means other teachers have used with puppets and their results.

Some of the general arguments seem to meet children's needs very well. Negative opinions have been found in only three instances. These will be examined first. From the March-April, 1975 Puppetry Journal, this letter to the editor appeared:

"West Burke, Vermont

"An Open Letter to Punch and Judy Puppeteers

"Dear Friends:

"If your show is fairly true to the original Punch and Judy, please do your audience a favor and let it be known that your show is not for children.

"Last fall I gave a "Halloween" marionette show and the day before, an acquaintance phoned me to ask if my show was too scary for a three year old. (No, of course not. It's funny.) Well, it seems she had taken her small children to see a Punch and Judy show and, what with throwing-the-baby-out-of-the-window and killing-the-mother, a scary devil, etc., her three-year-old was badly frightened and the mother was angry. "I don't know why they put that stuff on as children's shows." (I told her it wasn't originally.)

"So if your show is scary or very violent, why

not publicize this fact? Perhaps if you gave your show an "R" rating, you might even get a bigger turnout.

"Sincerely,

"Elaine Woodall"¹

This author spoke with several teacher puppeteers about this and these were the conclusions: the show had not been tastefully presented for children, the three-year-old was too young for Punch and Judy even in it's original form.

Doris Benz, past president of St. Louis Puppetry Guild, said the only thing she could have heard was where vocabulary had gotten out of hand due to inexperience of the teacher in setting the stage for letting children dramatize. Perhaps they should have planned the play together and set up some ground rules for using the puppets first. Some preliminary training is essential for the teacher in the use of puppetry.²

The second criticism is a general cry from teachers, "If only it didn't take so much time." These teachers complain that by the time the puppet is finished they've finished their unit or story and are into something else. In this case, their puppet is too elaborate for an impromptu dramatization. Children come well equipped with imagination and curiosity that doesn't stop. They can take a paper cup and a square of cloth and make most any character that will fit their needs, especially if there are

¹Elaine Woodall, Letter to the Editor, The Puppetry Journal, (Fenton, Missouri, Vol. 26, No. 5, Mar. April, 1975), p. 31.

²Doris Benz, Past President of St. Louis Puppetry Guild, St. Louis, Missouri, Interviewed by telephone, June 2, 1979.

some puppets available in the room such as a father, mother, boy, girl, baby, grandfather and/or grandmother. Most anything else can be fashioned quickly, and is adequate in representation for the child's satisfaction. Many authors of children's books on puppetry utilize the very simplest of puppets that even a non-reader could make quickly from the scrap box.

A third criticism was reported by Ron Powers in TV Guide concerning columnist Jack Anderson's charge, in the Washington Post, that Children's Television Workshop spent too much government money. David V.B. Britt, Vice President of C.T.W., says the Office of Education gets its money's worth; nine million children get 130 hours of preschool education a year in Sesame Street and seven million more get about the same from Electric Company. "So Big Bird remains unsullied," says Ron Powers.³ Anderson must never have been a child.

Speaking with Marilyn Meyers, a kindergarten teacher in the Kirkwood Public Schools, also a member of the Puppetry Guild, this author asked what benefits children five years old could be expected to derive from puppets. Mrs. Meyers explained carefully a number of ways she used them and said in her experience puppets increased creative ability, improvisation, storytelling, counting, and listening skills. They help the child synchronize actions with a narrator, singing or music. "A great motivation device," she said.⁴

³Ron Powers, "Say It Ain't So, Snuffle-Upagus". TV Guide, (May 19, 1979), p. 6-8.

⁴Marilyn Meyers, Kindergarten teacher Kirkwood Public Schools, telephone interview, June 4, 1979.

Nancy Renfro, author of Puppets for Play Production, says young children are natural actors and before a puppet is finished, the children extend themselves in other areas of self-development such as storytelling, speech, and group relationships.⁵

It is obvious that those involved with puppets are extremely positive about their potential as a learning device. Reading and hearing these positive things causes one to want to classify this information for further use.

We have seen how the young father and son in chapter one found their moods changing with puppet play. Ken Bierly has an article on monstermania that is a part of all children's lives today from T-shirts to T.V. Bierly realizes the fear that children sometimes experience far too much monsteritis. He presents lessons to protect children from monsters and turn King Kong into a full-time aide.⁶

Nancy Renfro elicits puppets to "convey any mood; they can be sad, gay, mysterious, or transparent — but best of all, they can evoke ideas to brighten dull lives."⁷

A retired widower, not a classroom teacher, who was lonesome and alone, found that he brightened his own life as well as those

⁵Nancy Renfro, Puppets for Play Production, (New York, Funk and Wagnall, 1969), p. 99.

⁶Ken Bierly, "Bierly's Taxonomy of Monsters," Instructor, (January, 1977), pp. 74-79.

⁷Nancy Renfro, Puppets for Play Production, (New York, Funk and Wagnall, 1969), p. 99.

of hospital patients in the St. Louis area, whether they were six or sixty, by taking a raccoon puppet into their rooms and having it ask in typical John Aibel fashion, "What's your gripe today?" By doing this, lonesome people, with no one to talk to, at least got to visit with someone and talk away to their heart's content. Since Sesame Street entertains and teaches nine million preschoolers and seven million more view the Electric Company, a two way love affair could be lost between teacher and child for want of a puppet. Can't teacher's puppet also say to any student, "What's your gripe today?"

Since puppetry seems to do so much for attitudes, many authors have much to say about motivation. Early in June, this writer visited Ginny Weiss, a teacher in Parkway School District, who is at present, President of St. Louis Puppetry Guild. Of course, she uses puppets with her own children and with her school children, too. Mrs. Weiss visits in each room twice a week for thirty minutes. Over a period of weeks, she motivates children in a workshop called "Springboard to Learning." She spoke of a very quiet child who had not spoken one word during the second grade year. Mrs. Weiss said that one morning the child, whom we will call Dayna, brought a tattered rabbit and laid it on the desk. Picking it up, Mrs. Weiss slipped it on Dayna's hand and asked it's name. To the amazement of the classroom teacher and the children, the rabbit answered, "My name is Big Ears." "And where do you live, Big Ears?" "I live in Jackson's garden."⁸ Everyone was

⁸Ginny Weiss, President of St. Louis Puppetry Guild and teacher in Parkway School District, interview in her home, June 5, 1979.

excited and happy in that classroom just to hear Dayna speak.

Mrs. Weiss continued, saying that children went home and asked for scrap materials for the puppets, came back and made them, used them, went home and talked about using them until parents became interested and the school was able to get some positive feed-back from both children and parents all year.

Puppets are magical, colorful, manipulable, expressive, entertaining, and fun to use. But if we had to say in one word why puppets can work for you, the word would be MOTIVATIONAL. Puppets motivate children because kids are attracted to them and credit them with real and believable personalities.⁹

The motivational strength of the puppet as a teaching tool, as stated above, is its versatility in that it can work in any subject area and with the usual classroom materials: books, posters, textbooks and library books. The puppet can get children's attention, then it can usually maintain and direct it.

This writer mentioned in chapter one that Snoopy encouraged writing skills. Snoopy motivated children to write little stories, poems and draw or paint pictures. Some were written about Snoopy's life and activities; other times children wrote him letters or made cards for him. Couldn't one student's puppet write letters to another student's puppet?

Koenig told about a teacher whose disposition soured upon occasion so she employed Oscar the Grouch. He lived in her desk drawer and when she thought she had the urge-to-kill, out came

⁹Barbara Koenig and Jeffrey Peyton, Puppets, "Great Props for Teaching", Instructor, March 1977, pp. 57-64.

Oscar who sat on the front edge of her desk. The children knew that he was there as their friend saying, "Cool it, kids. Your teacher has only a short supply of patience today." Koenig feels it is fair to let children know how one feels; then they know it is time to buckle down to work and be quiet without cross words or severe discipline.¹⁰

Another teacher, as described by a second teacher, unsure of how she was going to use a clown puppet as a story teller, couldn't make it talk. Therefore, it automatically stayed silent and the only way children could communicate with it was in writing. It became a tool in developing the writing abilities in her class. Snoopy had this ability in this writer's class, also.

A child in nursery school was making talking puppets and writing letters on them. At one point he was asked why he put letters on The Talker. As he carefully continued with his felt tip marker, he explained that this type of puppet was Miss A and her sound was "a" like in cat. Simple but yet an attention holder for a lively preschooler who really liked folding and making the talkers.

On another occasion this child, then four years old, came running to the author for an envelope which was given to him. Quickly he made a puppet by creasing the bottom half and putting an eye on each side of the top half, as he said, "I learned it on T.V., I learned it all by myself. It's a puffet." And this was

¹⁰Koenig and Peyton, "Puppets, Great Props for Teaching", p. 62.

a child said to be hyperactive who had watched and listened and then produced quite on his own. This child did have listening skills. This is illustrated in appendix B.

From a film used by the Null School library to teach library skills, several children made Quick-wick, the little firefly who was used on the film to teach children skills in using the card file. Their teacher made a huge mask to look like him. He was used to direct library work during the year. The writer heard Mrs. Polette say once that, "Everybody wants to learn but nobody wants to be taught."¹¹ Someone said that if a puppet tells a first grader to use a toothbrush, he probably will. Let the teacher or mother ask him to do the same and he would neither hear nor would he care.

Other skills are enhanced the same way. Children love to draw and use paper mache. They love to write stories. They have a natural unquenchable curiosity, which leads them to be good story tellers and story writers if they have a good subject and plenty of encouragement.

A puppet called Sam Subtractor with subtraction sign eyes enhances tackling subtraction problems, says Koenig and Peyton. Also Mike Multiplier persistently calls for better knowledge of multiplication tables.¹² Social Studies through a puppet travel club, with a guide for each country studied, holds children's

¹¹Nancy Polette, Speaker at Children's Books and Authors Workshop, St. Charles, Missouri, 1978.

¹²Koenig and Peyton, "Puppets, Great Props for Teaching", pp. 57-64.

interest. Health and dental health could employ the puppet gainfully as well as language arts.

Puppet makers of the all-of-a-sudden variety should have materials at their disposal at all times. These easily collected items cited by Margaret Weeks Adair include: scissors, showcard colors, contact cement in tubes, tongue depressors, ten inch lengths of doweling, and water soluble glue.¹³

For creative children, puppetry is an outlet for talent and creativeness. For prosaic children, the world of the little theater is a glimpse into the world of magic. Troubled children may find their own release with a puppet on their hand.¹⁴

Puppets can be made specifically as an art project, to dramatize a book or story. As cited in Celebrating With Books, Nancy Polette asks,

The art project finished, is the puppet to be put on display, hands off attitude or is it to be dressed and used to develop good stories?¹⁵

A book review given with the help of puppets will be much more interesting for everyone than one written out time and time again by the child. Children are quick to ask to dramatize a story using puppets but do teachers let them? Or do they let children bear the load of sandalwood and like the ass, never smell the scent? as claimed in the poem by Bhartrihari.¹⁶

¹³Margaret Weeks Adair, Do-It-In-A-Day Puppets for Beginners, (New York, The John Day Co., 1964), pp. 13-14.

¹⁴Adair, Do-It-In-A-Day Puppets for Beginners, (New York, The John Day Co., 1964), p. 9.

¹⁵Nancy Polette, Celebrating With Books, (Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1977).

¹⁶Bhartrihari, One Thousand and One Poems of Mankind, p. 118.

Nancy Polette says,

The use of puppets in the classroom can turn shy little girls into haughty queens and boistrous little boys into quiet elves. Wonderful things do happen when children create their own puppets and develop the scripts for puppet plays based on favorite stories.¹⁷

A cardboard theater for individual use, as described in appendix D, is easily stored. The children find this one fun to use. Sometimes two or three of these theaters can be in use at the same time in the same skit.¹⁸

A simple refrigerator box theater can be available for group scenes with a little work from the teacher. A description of this theater is also given in appendix D. This stage can be used by two or three puppeteers at the same time, since it has a larger stage.¹⁹

Why not accentuate the positive in the classroom and let children assume the magic of being another shape, another character, or even a person from another age?

¹⁷ Nancy Polette, E is for Everybody, (Metuchen, N.J., The Scarecrow Press, 1976), p. 124.

¹⁸ Connie Zane, "Portable Puppetry", Instructor, September, 1978.

¹⁹ Larry Engler and Carol Fijan, Making Puppets Come Alive, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1973), p. 93.

CHAPTER III

Procedures for the Project

Naturally, the writer would like to present statistics showing improvement for the class using the puppets as a tool of learning. The reader must be informed of the fact that the writer expected to be a first grade teacher as she had been for twenty plus years, but after two days of school was sent last year from a first grade to fourth grade class. The project was originally designed with first graders in mind. This jump seemed stupendous after twenty-some years with six year olds. Feeling her way with this new class, the author began by inviting those children and their parents who wished to do so, to attend a workshop under the auspices of the Puppetry Guild at Florissant Valley Community College one Saturday in September. Two little girls attended. The day was spent in making puppets of various kinds, seeing puppet shows, and in the "little store" shopping for puppets and ideas.

Barbara must have been busy the following day. She came to school on Monday with her Saturday achievements plus some she had made on Sunday because she didn't have time to do all the things she saw done on Saturday. As soon as the teacher had completed the lunch count, the girls were invited to come up and tell about their experience. Gretchen was first. She stated where they went, what they did and showed what she made and what she bought. That was it.

Barbara, usually insecure and looking to the teacher for approval, was ready to talk. She had a box of things so the class sat around her on the floor to expedite passing objects around.

Never once did she look at the teacher as she talked. By this time, the children were heard saying, "Gee, I wish I had gone."

We talked about the puppets as she put them back in the box. Other children told about their own if they had any. We talked about where they kept them at home. Most of them were in drawers in their bedrooms. Children were asked where puppets could be kept in the classroom. After several suggestions, a sturdy five foot cardboard tube, such as linoleum is rolled on, was brought out. This had been drilled full of holes, painted black and set in a bucket of plaster-of-paris. Eighteen inch dowel rods were inserted into the holes like branches. The puppets were then placed on these dowel arms. The class was told that they would be making some puppets and that this tree house would be the puppet's home so we could see them. This is illustrated in appendix C. Dolls had doll houses but their own puppets would have a tree house.

Before the children returned to their desks they were asked to close their eyes and think about the puppet tree apartment house in front of them. The following questions were asked:

1. If you were a puppet, would you like to live there?
2. If you could be a puppet, what would you like to be?
3. Would you rather be a marionette and be worked with strings, or would you rather be a soft cuddly puppet worked by little hands?
4. If you were a puppet, who or what would you want to be?

5. If you could be a famous person puppet, who would you want to be?
6. If you were that person and lived in the tree house, who else would you want to live there?
7. If you were an animal puppet, what would you want to be?

When they opened their eyes, they answered questions similar to these. There were some good answers as they stretched their minds to think about someone no one else would think of. Answers, like my dog, my cat, a mouse, my mother, my father, were forthcoming. It took some work to get them out of their little shells and ready to turn into a noted person, but, finally, they understood, and were asked to return to their desks to write.

"Imagine that you are now, at this very moment, being turned into a puppet by a witch whose name is Witch Hilda. Pretend that Witch Hilda is angry with you because you have climbed into her tree house as boys and girls and that you are all changed into puppets and in the tree house you must live. Write who you are, how you feel and what you are going to do."

On a day too hot to breathe, who cared if lesson plans were forgotten? The children enjoyed this assignment more than the three R's and that afternoon we made our first puppets from six inch plates and then took them home. The written stories and plate puppets were only fair but enthusiasm was high. Refer to appendix B.

The next morning the tree house looked as if the Good Fairy had brought it to life. It was covered with puppets which were

touched, taken to desks, introduced by their owners and talked to and about. Puppets went to the playground if permission was granted by their owners because it was too hot to play. The puppets stayed all week and went home on Friday.

Early in September, Library Science training for fourth grade was begun by Virginia Terry, Librarian.¹ This was a joy for teacher and students. Pat Gilman, Art Supervisor, deserves much credit, too, for the interest and help she gave this writer and her classroom.²

On September twenty-first, Pat came in and showed us some flat masks. The class tried this project on a rainy noon hour on their own. Gluing together three circles of newspaper for durability, they cut head and ear shapes and maybe hair, then they used scraps to decorate the mask, making eyes, noses, beaks or snouts or whatever they chose. After these were painted, the children made openings for their eyes and holes in sides to hold the masks on their heads with strings. They then came up and introduced themselves, as they finished, in groups of three or four. This proved to be fun and their rainy day activity provided a bulletin board.

As Mrs. Terry continued her Library Science class on Tuesday they appreciated her more and more. Tuesday was their long day with no breaks so the writer had arranged for these classes as

¹Virginia Terry, Library Science teacher, St. Charles School District, classroom interviews, 1978-79.

²Pat Gilman, Art Instructor, St. Charles School District, Interviews 1978-79.

well as our art classes with Mrs. Gilman on Tuesday afternoons.

Mrs. Terry showed a film one day about a little fourth grade boy who was having nightmares concerning the card file in the library. A tiny firefly, named Quick Wick, appeared in the dream and took him alone to the library to help him until he mastered the file before he awoke and found it was a dream. The same day, Mrs. Gilman, by coincidence, came in to teach rolled newspaper masks. Barbara immediately wanted to make Quick Wick and two or three others followed suit. The idea suddenly appealed to the teacher and she too got into the act and made a huge Quick Wick half mask.

We learned that white tempera with a little red added with a touch of brown could give us a good color for skin. As soon as the masks were dry, the children painted them. They could hardly wait to see how they would turn out when the final touches were completed. They were not disappointed. Though children told about their masks, as each was completed, the author wishes she could say they used them right then in an activity. But alas, she can not. She simply could not wait to get them on the bulletin board and take a picture of them. However, the children did use one or two from time to time later in little productions before they took them home. Some wore them on Halloween in the school parade.

On Columbus Day the children did some research on Columbus and did some little skits they prepared. Written book reports had been required in September but in October children were asked to do a diorama. They went all out. Shoe boxes took on a glamour never intended for shoeboxes.

During this time the class was experimenting strictly on their own, whenever time permitted, with faces on the flannel board as described in "The Eyes Have It", appendix A. Circles of felt, eyes, brows, ears, hair, mouths and noses made of felt were cut out in a small box.

Since Barbara, Gretchen and the writer had attended the Puppetry Workshop, the little girls talked endlessly about their experience there. They, with other class members had also made rolled newspaper puppet heads as a result of Mrs. Gilman's conversation with the author during their mask making time. The class had also made the paper plate puppets as described in appendix B.

All this time we waited for Mrs. Gilman's third class period for instant paper mache puppets on tissue rollers. The day finally came and Mrs. Gilman did not.³ A death in her family caused her to be out of town but when she returned she saw to it that we had her posters and examples and puppetry book plus a bag of instant paper mache. We decided to learn together without her. Barry's mother came to help. She kneaded batch after batch of the mache over and over and happier children you never saw. The teacher and mother were also pleasantly surprised as the children had been asked to create a character from history or from a book they had read for a book report. Abe was recognized first, then one by one, we could recognize others. There were Uncle Sam, Snoopy and Quick Wick, all hanging from the puppet tree to dry. The supporting

³Gilman, Art Supervisor, October, 1978.

model is in appendix C. What fun the children had painting them. As they painted, the children were asked to try out voices for their puppet and then decide how they wanted them to be finished and dressed. These puppets were not to go home. They were to be used at school by the children. By now, too, so many puppets had arrived, as if by magic, that we had to put a box under the puppet tree to hold them because they had come back to stay.

Among those in the box was the caterpillar the writer had bought. She hoped to use the butterfly hanging on the tree and this caterpillar. This bit of teaching never occurred as planned. Barbara and Gretchen had been busy at the scrap box making leaves, sun, moon, egg, apple, two pears, three purple plums, four strawberries, five oranges, a piece of chocolate cake, an ice cream cone, one pickle, a slice of Swiss cheese, a slice of salami, one lollipop, a piece of cherry pie, one sausage, one cup cake and one slice of watermelon for caterpillar to eat. Also there was a big brown cocoon house which he crawled into (a leg from a pair of brown jeans). They did the lesson before the teacher could decide how to make the cocoon.

Another little one heard a teacher ask the writer to make a card with a warm fuzzy on it for a teacher in the building. The child asked what a warm fuzzy was. The class heard the definition that was given that morning. At noon, they were told that they would have a substitute that afternoon. A voice from the back of the line said, "I hope she has a sense of humor."

That remark went to the dentist office and to bed that night

with this writer. Could he be hinting? Was something wrong? Troubled, the writer assigned the children their puppets the next morning. The puppets were asked to write a letter to the teacher telling what they did or didn't like about her as a teacher. While they were writing, she found them. In a box, beside the books were thirty-two warm fuzzies. There were only twenty-seven children in the class. Some had made two. How thoughtful and how delightful.

By those puppet letters, this writer learned a lot. The puppet could speak out, with feelings as he read his letter to her and to the class. She had a sense of humor all right, the best thing about her was letting the letter-writer puppet be born and be alive and stay in the room to help. The worst thing about her was that their teacher of two days had promised them a pizza party at the end of the year, if they would be good and work hard and the new teacher had not promised anything. They liked their art classes and art's correlation with class work. The best thing about the teacher was that she liked art and the puppet did, too. Abe Lincoln even remembered dried apple dolls, clothespin dolls, and cornhusk dolls he had made in the first grade three years before he himself had come to life in the fourth grade.

By the time those puppets had finished reading twenty-seven letters, the teacher had alternately laughed and cried and laughed again. The warm fuzzies and the letters had overtaken her with an impact that left her weak but in love with twenty-seven children, and certainly more knowledgeable about what makes fourth

graders tick. They were asked to criticize, to be honest and not to be afraid to say what they felt and as puppets, they had done just that. The pizza was ignored verbally by the teacher and not until the last week of school did she do what she knew that day of the warm fuzzies, she would do. However, she certainly made no promises.

Already those puppets were paying rent for a home in the tree house. The children used the puppets to write letters, invitations and thank you letters. The children were sometimes invited to do a skit or story for the kindergartens or other classes and they loved that. They made quick puppets on their own. They researched the history of puppets to tell about different kinds. They brought books from St. Louis libraries and St. Charles libraries.

The long cold winter found them inside at recess. Many of them used the puppets and made new ones at this time and there were no behavior problems.

The children used the puppets for their third book reports. Shy little Jarrod made sure he read a book about Abe Lincoln and assuming the character of Abe, he gave the report in first person. When he came to telling why he liked the book, Abe said, "I really, really like this book. I like it because someone wrote about me for kids to read everywhere."

By now, groups of children, usually headed by Barbara, had found time and time again that the puppets were useful for skits and for acting out their stories and poetry. This writer used Barbara as a springboard all fall to help others because of her high interest and her ability to see an assignment through. The

fourth book report was to include the story of the author's life for which the class chose to use a puppet speaker.

As the weather became more severe, the teacher worried about long days in the room and bored children. The teacher replenished the scrap boxes, put out needles, thread, paper plates and boxes, bottles and puppetry books from the library as well as Mrs. Gilman's book. The idea caught on without assignment. They worked with surprise skits, made new puppets and tried out new kinds from reading the puppetry books. Grandmothers and neighbors began sewing or crocheting new characters for the room. There was always a new neighbor in the tree house to be introduced and given employment.

The teacher was keeping a low profile and the children were going great. Linda's mother brought in a puppet from India (a rod puppet). Fragile with age and use, the mother let Linda introduce "Bema" and tell who brought it to her, how it had to be worked and all she knew about it. She also told why they were used. Brian brought a National Geographic telling about the use of rod puppets in India and he explained it all over again the next day with pictures.

A neighboring classroom teacher bought a puppet theater for a quarter and very courteously brought it for us to use. This put new blood into the activity as children created skits, stories and poetry, to say nothing of some children singing in a chorus line and puppeteers doing an improvised show. Sometimes the chorus line danced in the background the steps their music teacher and physical education teachers were teaching them. Other times they used

records or tape recorders. There were no bored children or teachers.

The truth of the whole matter lies, we believe, in a sense of values and Learning magazine's cover in February, 1978, expresses this well in this message:

Learning proceeds best when we rely less on sophisticated techniques and material and more on native equipment: eyes, ears and the oldest instrument of knowledge human beings possess---- ignorance and the curiosity that is associated with it. All of us who work with children are so anxious about helping that we forget about looking and listening. Given the chance, the children around us can make us more comfortable, in our setting, more competent in our tasks and, indeed, better educated.⁴

If puppets have all the potentials as a teaching device, that the reference in this chapter had suggested, it would seem reasonable that teachers would take advantage of the opportunity to accentuate the positive points that puppets can engender in developing skills, attitudes, communications, and competency in the classroom. Theaters described in appendixes D and E are easily made for the classroom.

Early in February, Quick Wick had the students draw a name from his box for research in the library. Some of the names could not be found so they drew another. This list of names appears in appendix F, and the recommended references are in appendix G.

Children were asked to write a paragraph or two about their drawn person. As they read these reports, they discovered that they were all black Americans who had contributed to the history

⁴Robert Cole, "The Confessions of a Premier Child Specialist", A citation of unknown author on the cover of Learning magazine, (February, 1979), pp. 40-47.

and development of our country. Not just Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver, but children discovered that our history was star-spangled with notable Americans. And thus, we learned about Black History Week. We drew pictures of the famous persons and put each with a paragraph on our Black History bulletin board.

A stipulation for February book reports was made. Each student must read a book about a famous American and make and/or use puppets representing these persons. Some did skits, others reported alone, in first person if they could. The class always did these book reports sitting in a semi-circle on the floor close to the reporter.

Before they knew it, it was March and time for the "little people", the leprechauns. Oddly enough they had been reading tall tales about Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan and their drawings of these characters enhanced the entire front of the room. They never tired of admiring them. The children's stories were attached behind the pictures. Aside from the fact that they stayed up too long, no one would have guessed how much they were enjoyed. Everyday someone would make a favorable comment about something he/she liked about one of them.

But, as stated, it was now March. Being a wee bit Irish, the imagery of St. Patrick's Day has always intrigued the author. Many leprechaun stories saved for years were read to the class. Pictures that were used to motivate the six year old children motivated the fourth graders, too, only they were a bit more sophisticated. They were well into everything by now and knew much more about what

tickled the sense of humor in stories. In the midst of this, they made ogres and trolls of paper mache from the January Arts and Activities.⁵ This magazine was recommended by Connie Borgmeyer, Elementary Art Supervisor at Central School in a personal interview.⁶

It was intended to use them with the make-believe scene but Mrs. Gilman marched them off to the display case and that was that. Such variety had not been seen from the class as those personalities turned out to have. The author honestly would have liked to keep every one of them. They stayed on display for the Art Fair and went back on display again for Spirit Day. They were properly introduced with imaginary names and suitable voices but never used. The poor little things never made it to the puppet tree house, but went to live in the glass castle in the entrance hall. The stories were so imaginary and so much fun, we tried to make a collection of them but soft leaded pencils didn't zerox. The stories didn't stop with assignments for some children, nor did the poems. Some of the ogres and trolls visited Central School in the county as examples for another art supervisor's class. Miss Borgmeyer had given us the idea for making them earlier so the children let her borrow some of theirs to use as examples with her classes. Miss Borgmeyer gave the writer more good ideas for fourth grade art from time to

⁵Agnes W. Schlievert, "Ogres and Trolls", Arts and Activities, (January, 1979), pp. 40-41.

⁶Connie Borgmeyer, Art Supervisor, Central School, personal interview in my home, 4 March, 1979.

time. It was a pleasure to lend the ogres to help her. The children felt honored, too.

It was time to do the soft puppet. Barbara didn't get to do this in the workshop and she had begged to do so all year. So everyone brought old nylon hose and the project was begun. Some one got an idea for tying a knot on each side of the head for pig-tails and they were off to different things and different ways again. "Different strokes for different folks", is a phrase not to be ignored with soft puppets--everyone started with a black, white or brown hosiery leg and a wad of cotton. But as they pushed and tugged the cotton inside of the hose and stitched with their needles to hold their shapes, the children became enchanted. They had only been instructed as to what to do and the procedure. Some one had brought an old lady puppet with a wrinkled face and ermine wrap made by this method. She was examined over and over again.

This was supposedly to be the last lesson for the year in puppetry because testing, testing and more testing was coming and the children were worn out from reviewing and attempting to finish fourth grade. So in the midst of academic pressure, here they were letting loose fatigue with a silk stocking and a ball of cotton. As the character and personality of each developed there was laughter all over the room. Tension was gone and, by accident, there could have been no better time for this soft work. These puppets were ideal for jewelry, furs and feathers and the next day fabulous items began to arrive: baseball caps, top hats, cowboy hats, more material for dressier clothing, suits and dresses

stitched at home and decorated at school. No, the children had not lost their love of puppets. They talked to them. They exploited them, they poked jokes at them as Brian had done when he told his puppet why it couldn't play ball.

One little girl introduced a wrinkled old lady saying she was Grandma Toothless. She hadn't taken care of her teeth so they came out and the Tooth Fairy took them. These were wonderful health lessons. One called Freckles had had too much sun and suffered a sunstroke. The sun had caused one puppet's skin to dry and wrinkle up with age. It became an Indian of the Southwest. The one with white pearl teeth from a dime store necklace, carried a toothbrush in her pocket, and she discussed dental health.

Classroom limericks were suddenly done by puppets. Stories and poems were signed by puppet owners as Snoopy had done, maybe only an "I love you" with a picture. Still the teacher kept a low profile, throwing out a suggestion here and there, and it all seemed to carry over into other art work.

Haiku lines were delicately written and illustrated, then mounted and displayed. When the children studied figures of speech, they illustrated idioms and also cinquain lines. The children's lettering and writing showed so much improvement. These, too, were mounted and displayed. The idioms in the hall always had some admirers reading and laughing at them. They were funny.

Were these poems, idioms, stories written and illustrated by those same children who came to fourth grade last fall? Several mothers were telling the writer that they were framing the mounted, illustrated work. What a challenge 1978 ended with for this teacher and class, but what a joy. As 1979, "The Year of the Child",

began, it turned into mutiny against retirement for the teacher by the time school was out. Exhilarating became a better word for "The Year of the Child."

Mrs. Gilman asked permission to use these children for two special lessons. Mrs. Moss visited with Mrs. Gilman as she taught water color work. It was then that Mrs. Gilman asked if Mrs. Moss could teach a class in the room. When Mrs. Moss came to teach stitchery, she was observed by Mr. Rocchio from Lindenwood. Later they chose to use our room to teach when Mr. Owens was to observe her. Mrs. Moss came, but Mr. Owens didn't; however, the children got two extra art classes and they appreciated the honor. Mrs. Gilman became a real Superwoman in their eyes.

Now it was testing time. The writer's sympathy went out to the children during this time as they sat day after day and labored too long at a time over tests. As the children got more and more tired, the writer picked up Squeaky, the mouse puppet and approached the children. "What's your gripe, today?" she asked. That did it. Laughter popped out once again as they gave their answers and their eyes sparkled.

Will the writer use puppets again? You can bet she will. She'll teach the lessons--and in the winter, she'll see that they are free to create. The class must start over again because the puppets all went home with the children and the tree house is bare.

CHAPTER IV

Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

As the year progressed, the writer began to assess the changes in student's school work and social attitudes. Also the children themselves talked about how fast the year was going and how much they enjoyed school. From apprehension about the value of using puppets, the end of school brought positive gains for both students and teacher.

The first assignments after the Puppetry Workshop had left much to be desired. With the help of Mrs. Gilman, Mrs. Terry, Barry's mother and other mothers, Linda McKinzie, the music teacher and the children's puppets, the year had flown.

Barry had caught up with his classmates for the first time in four years. Brian had learned cursive writing and no longer had to print.

The puppets were certainly not a cure-all but they had helped. Children had learned to first draw a design of how they wanted to make their puppets according to who or what they wanted them to represent. They had designed and made puppet clothing. Mrs. Gilman was always ready to help with examples she had made, but best of all, she gave children encouragement. Because of her interest and enthusiasm children worked hard to improve their puppets, and to be more creative and individual in their design.

Children had to take their time, read again, and do some things over. They learned patience and perserverance. As their puppets neared completion, they developed their voice patterns, their characterizing action and names, as well as their dresses

or costumes.

All of the above completed, the character needed settings or backgrounds for their natural habitat or scenery for a skit. Back to the books they had to go in order to use the little characters. Once the children had been given the techniques, the privilege of using their imaginations rested with them to complete the puppets and use them.

As stories unfolded in reading, it was not unusual for someone to ask if they could use the puppets to act them out. The puppet theater, though small, had proved useful. (Small individual theater useful for one puppeteer was very popular.)

In language arts, communication skills improved due to the fact that children spoke more before their classmates. Vocabularies were enriched as they did their research. Research skills also improved. They knew their characters, so they could dispense information without trying to remember exact lines of the stories.

Book reports became more varied and, therefore, more fun to do than writing so many. Though they enjoyed the books, they disliked the written reports. Children's ability to relate sequence as well as their recognition of character traits and story plots also improved.

In writing their own stories and poetry, they definitely showed growth and maturity of imagination. They were soon illustrating their own work. Their stories, oral and written, began to show evidence of the three-step plot: introducing a problem, developing the problem and solving the problem.

They were complimented on their Criteria Reference

Also their grammar improved as their communication improved. They wrote stories, poems, letters, descriptive paragraphs and specific directions. Their illustrations showed a certain delicacy in many instances, for in other stories, they were outgoing, vibrant and strong. Word sequence in sentences was much better. Paragraphs were paragraphs. Finally, punctuation became a part of their work, as they became concerned with communication with their peers, rather than rushing through the assignment. Voice and diction were favorably considered because the puppet was so small, he had to speak clearly to communicate.

The audience learned better listening habits as the speakers motivated their puppets. The puppets, being small, centered attention.

It was obvious that the puppets were motivating the children, not only in their creation, but by the student's increased interest and attention to the various skill areas and activities required by the use of the puppets. Trips to the teacher's desk became less necessary as they learned to reread for information and became self-directing.

Special people became interested. Parents were now sending or bringing items they had saved for us to be "recycled" into puppets or art classes. They voiced appreciation. Only two came to suggest "more work in basics and more drill."

In conclusion, it was obvious that the puppets fired the enthusiasm of the children. As a result they showed evidence of growth in the skill areas as they pursued the use of their puppets. They were complimented on their Criterion Reference

Test reading scores by the principal, Mr. Owens. Puppets had created a unique atmosphere in the classroom, more or less, providing a pivot or springboard from which to work. They had created unusually good attitudes as a diversified aid to learning.

Because of their diversity, it would seem that more teachers should take advantage of the puppet as a teaching aid. It is obvious that if children are taught the techniques of puppetry, the puppets will lend themselves to the purpose of learning. Puppets also give children a unique privilege of using their imagination. Used in this way, puppets in the classroom, should be recommended as another facet of teaching to stimulate learning.

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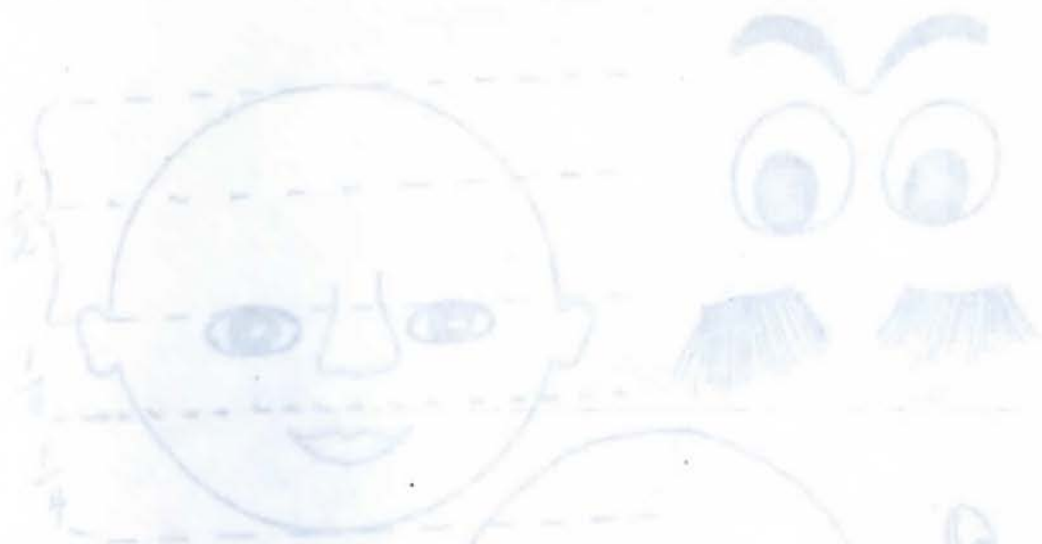
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Use the cut out parts below and make a face.



APPENDIX A

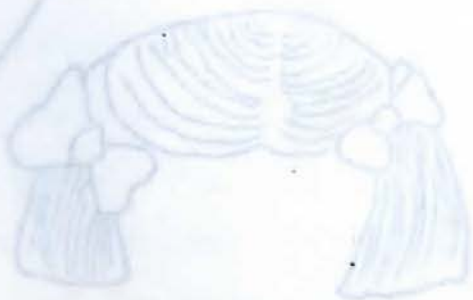
"The Eyes Have It"



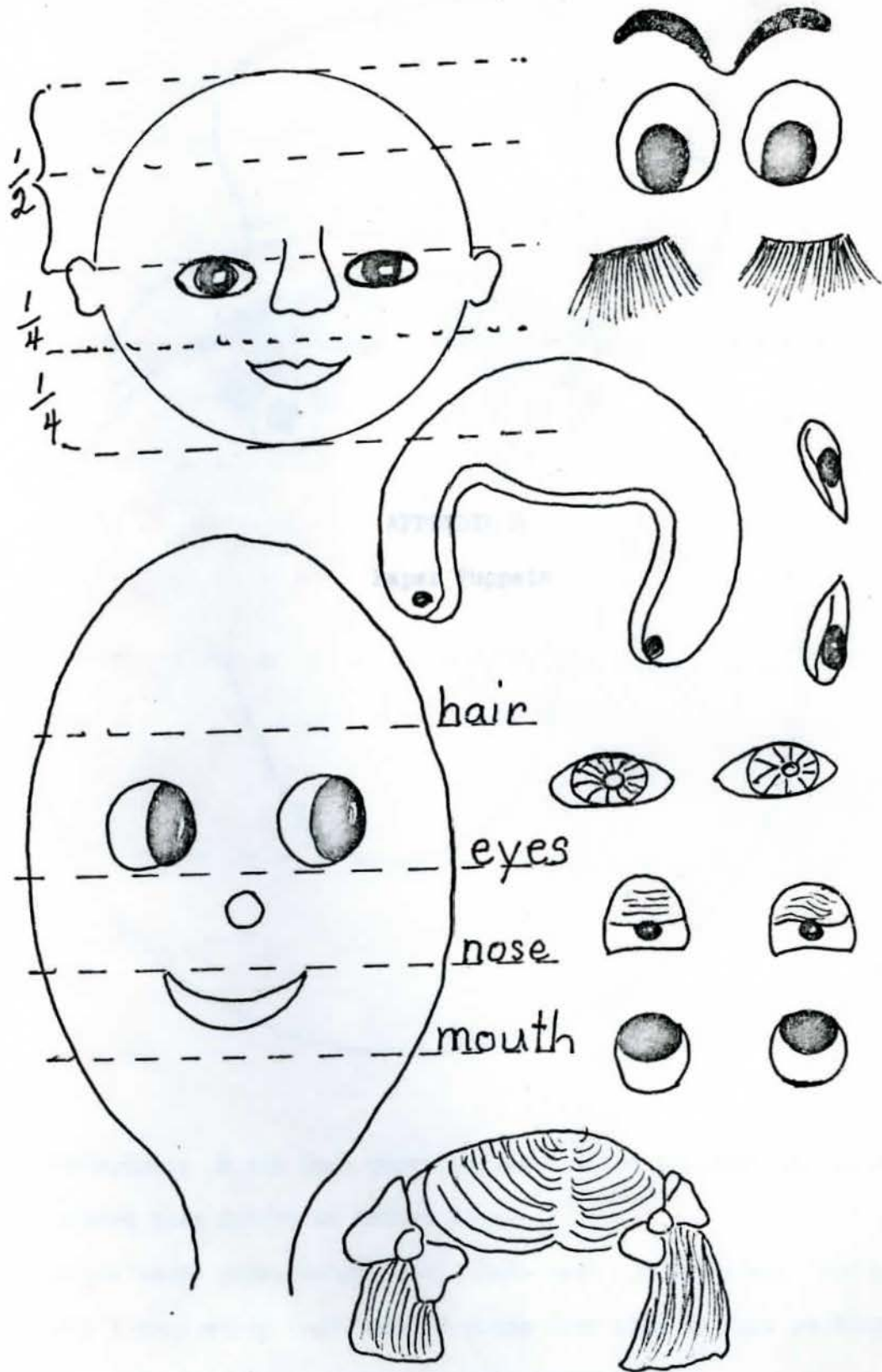
eyes

nose

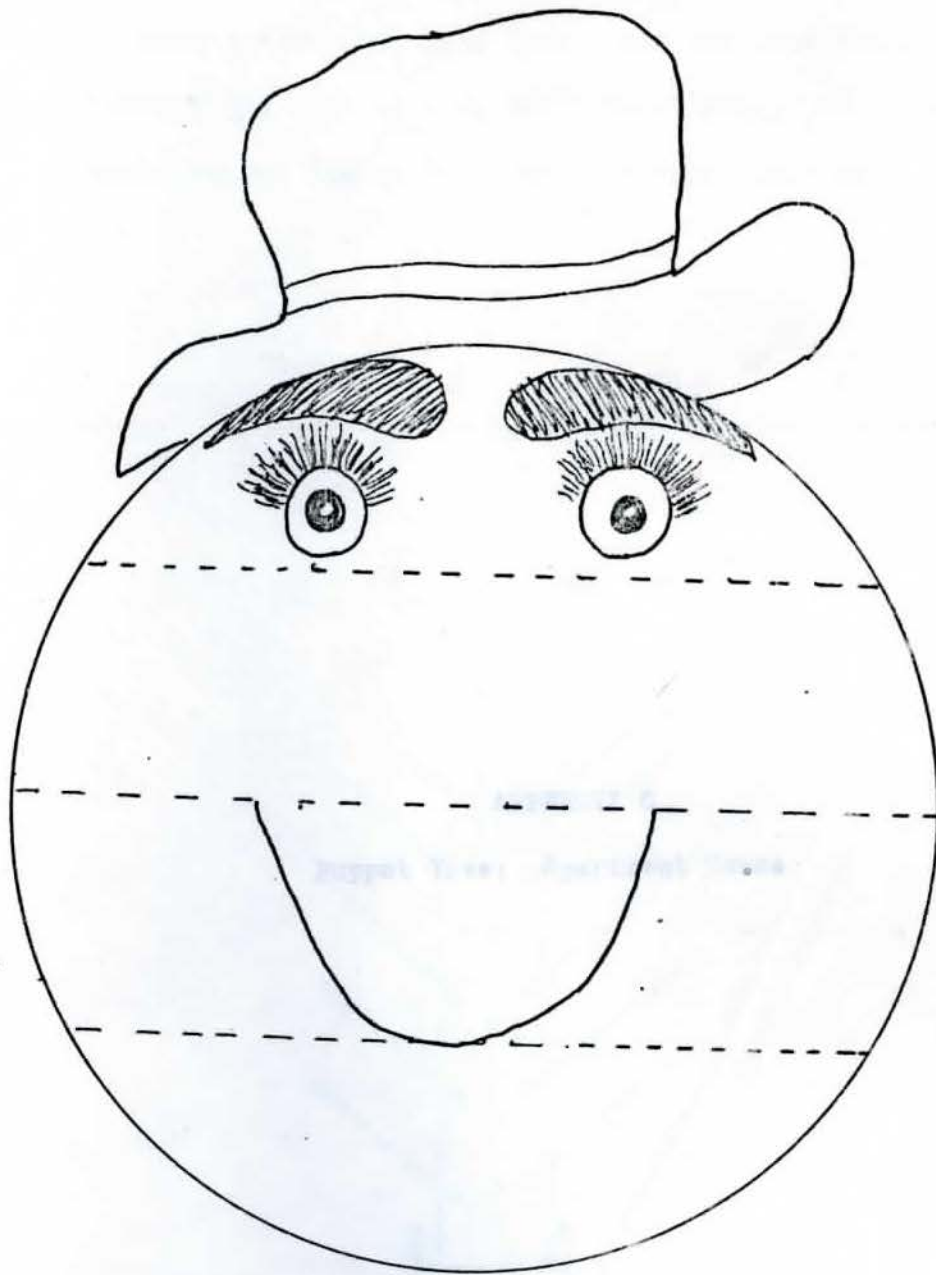
mouth



Use the cut outs below and make a face.



Paper Puppets



Materials: 2 six inch paper plates stapled together at top and bottom then folded on dotted line.

Color mouth pink; tongue red. Make eyes and eyebrows. Add a hat. Cut 1 inch strip from back of plate from side to side so fingers can clip into both pockets to move the mouth.

Puppet Tree: Apartment House

Using a cardboard tube from a rug and tile store, drill holes all around the size of very small dowel pins. Cut dowel eighteen inches long and insert in holes to display puppets.

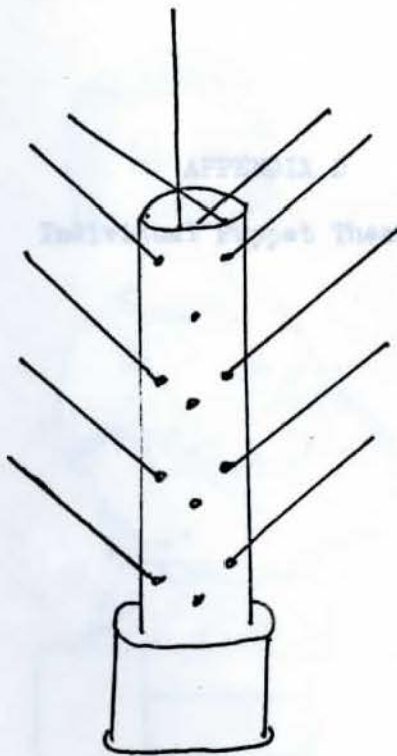
APPENDIX C

Puppet Tree: Apartment House



Puppet Tree: Apartment House

Using a cardboard tube from a rug and tile store, drill holes all around the size of very small dowel rods. Cut dowel eighteen inches long and insert in holes to display puppets.



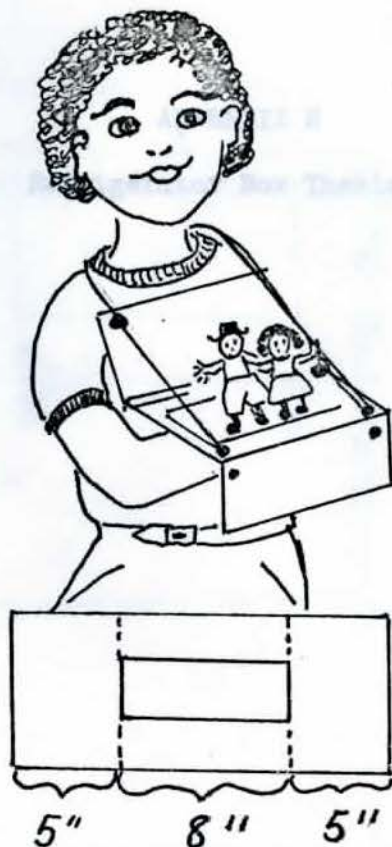
Individual Puppet Theater
 Portable Puppeteer

- I. No room for a puppet stage? Try making a one person puppet stage for students to use. When longwalling hour.
- II. Divide 18 x 12 heavy cardboard into three sections: each end 9" wide 8" center section, cut 4 x 7 opening in center then cut 2 lengths of heavy string knot 2 end - see diagram.
- III. Fold up cover with paper. Fold flat for easy storage when not in use. Storage the behind child's neck so he wears stage which leaves both hands free.
- IV. Supply large mirror for practice sessions.

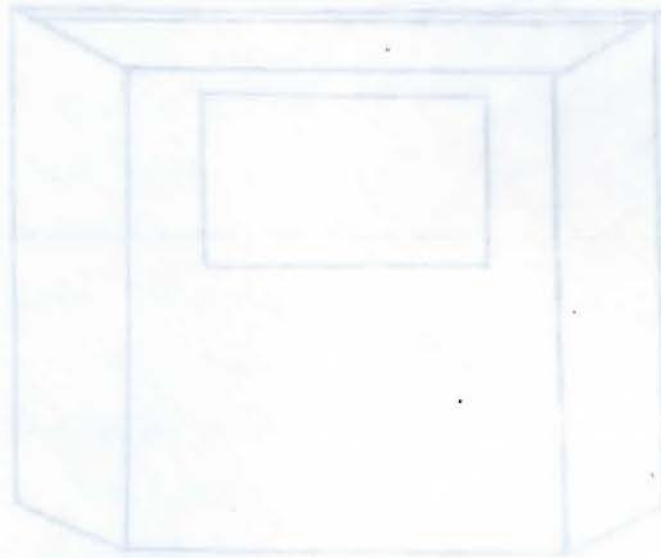


Individual Puppet Theater
Portable Puppetry

- I. No room for a puppet stage? Try making a one person puppet stage for students to use. Watch imaginations soar.
- II. Divide 18 x 12 heavy cardboard into three sections: each end 5" wide 8" center section. Cut 4 x 7 opening in center then cut 2 lengths of heavy string knot 1 end - see diagram.
- III. Paint or cover with paper. Fold flat for easy storage when not in use. Strings tie behind child's neck so he wears stage which leaves both hands free.
- IV. Supply large mirror for practice sessions.

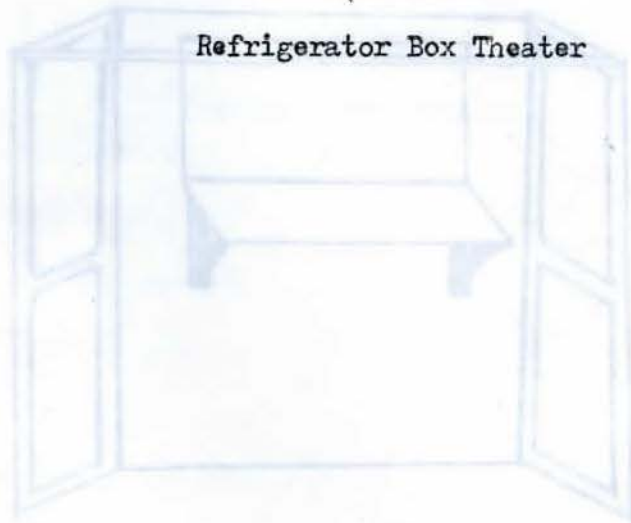


Refrigerator Box Theater for Stage



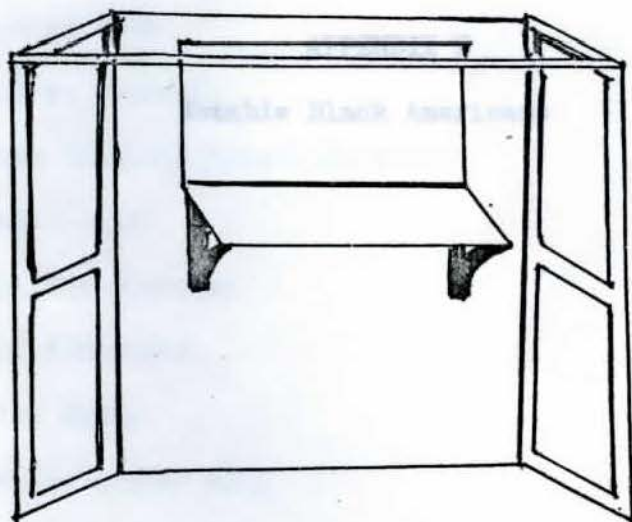
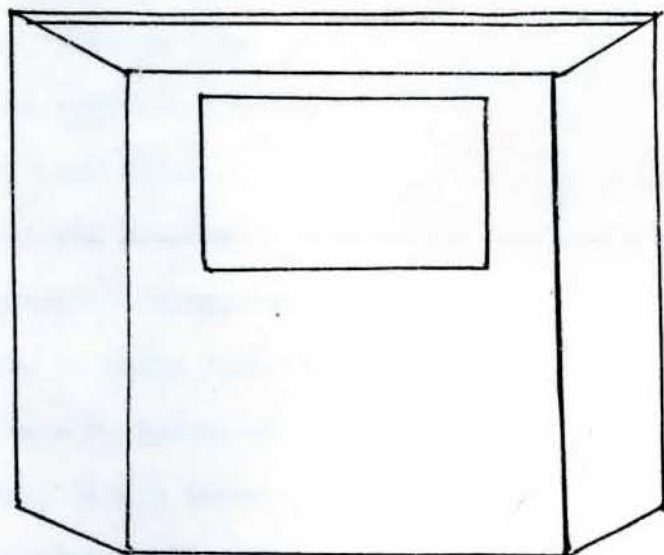
APPENDIX E

Refrigerator Box Theater



Box about thirty-six inches wide. Topset stage should be thirty inches wide and eighteen inches high at the proper height for the puppets. Leave sides as for support. When window is cut out, leave bottom half turned inside for stage.

Refrigerator Box Theater for Group



Box about thirty-six inches wide. Puppet stage should be thirty inches wide and eighteen inches high at the proper height for the puppeteers. Leave sides on for support. When window is cut out, leave bottom half turned inside for stage.

Notable Black Americans

1. George Washington Carver
2. Ralph Bunche
3. Garrett A. Morgan
4. Dr. Charles Drew
5. Sen. Frederick Aldrich
6. Richard Allen
7. Ossipus Attucks
8. Howard K. Bannister
9. Ida B. Wells Barnett
10. James F. Beckwith
11. Mary McLeod Bethune
12. William Wells Brown
13. George Bush

APPENDIX F

Notable Black Americans

14. Oliver Cromwell
15. Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable
16. Stevanino
17. Phillis Wheatley
18. Nat King Cole
19. Alex Haley
20. Martin Luther King
21. Lou Brock
22. Fannie Jackson
23. Booker T. Washington
24. Bill Cosby

Notable Black Americans

1. George Washington Carver
2. Ralph Bunche
3. Garrett A. Morgan
4. Dr. Charles Drew
5. Ira Fredrick Aldrich
6. Richard Allen
7. Crispus Attucks
8. Edward M. Bannister
9. Ida B. Wells Barnett
10. James P. Buckworth
11. Mary McLeod Bethune
12. William Wells Brown
13. George Bush
14. Oliver Cromwell
15. Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable
16. Estevanico
17. Phillis Wheatley
18. Nat King Cole
19. Alex Haley
20. Martin Luther King
21. Lou Brock
22. Mehalia Jackson
23. Booker T. Washington
24. Bill Cosby

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APPENDIX G

Sources for Information About Black Americans

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Black America: Yesterday and Today (a discussion-picture set with teacher's guide), David C. Cook Publishing Co., Elgin, Il., 1969.

APPENDIX II

List of Sample Pupils Included in this Study

List of Sample Puppets Included in this Study

A. Paper

1. Tailed puppets

a. Flats

b. Back

c. Folded paper

2. Shadow

B. Paper Backs

1. Newspaper

2. Cellulose

C. Wax

APPENDIX H

D. List of Sample Puppets Included in this Study

1. Back

2. Stocking

E. Plaster Casts Over or Trill

F. A Simple, Flexible Wax Puppet for Manipulation Lesson

List of Sample Puppets Included in this Study

- A. Paper
 - 1. Talker puppets
 - a. Plate
 - b. Sack
 - c. Folded paper
 - 2. Shadow
- B. Paper Mache
 - 1. Newspaper
 - 2. Celluclay
- C. Foam
- D. Stuffed (Soft Puppets)
 - 1. Sock
 - 2. Stocking
- E. Plaster Cast Ogre or Troll
- F. A Simple, Faceless Felt Puppet for Manipulation Lesson

Tentative Puppetry Schedule

Springboard to Learning

- I. Introduction
 - A. The Eyes Give It.
 - B. Preparation | † †
 1. Top † forehead and brows.
 2. Top † eyes, nose, ears.
 3. Lower † mouth and chin.
- II. Making a Simple Puppet.
 - A. Paper plate, paper cup, paper bag.
 - B. Each child must introduce puppet.
- APPENDIX I
Tentative Puppetry Schedule
- III. Manipulation of Puppet as to Posture.
 - A. Take turns moving faceless puppet in various ways.
 - B. Reproduce nursery rhymes.
- IV. Exploring the Voice.
 - A. Paper mache puppet tissues roller.
 - B. Develop man- and voice for your puppet.
 - C. Learn how voice work.
 - D. Experiment with using different voices.
- V. Manipulation of Puppet Plays, Storage, Theaters.
 - A. Introduce several plays.
 - B. Students choose and select parts out.
- VI. Making Villainous Horror Figures.
 - A. Drawing.
 - B. Dressing it - Research characters.
- VII. Revival of the Puppet Club.

VIII. Rehearsing the Puppet Show.

IX. Tentative Puppetry Schedule

X. Springboard to Learning

XI. Details: Black American Pop. Black History Week.

I. Introduction

A. The Eyes Have It.

B. Proportion $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$

1. Top $\frac{1}{2}$ forehead and brows.

2. Top $\frac{1}{4}$ eyes, nose, ears.

3. Lower $\frac{1}{4}$ mouth and chin.

II. Making a Simple Puppet.

A. Paper plate, paper cup, paper bag.

B. Each child must introduce puppet.

III. Manipulation of Puppet as to Posture.

A. Take turns moving faceless puppet in various ways.

B. Pantomime nursery rhymes.

IV. Exploring the Voice.

A. Paper mache puppet tissue roller.

B. Develop name and voice for your puppet.

C. Learn how voice works.

D. Improvise skits using different voices.

V. Discussion of Puppet Plays, Storage, Theaters.

A. Introduce several plays.

B. Students choose and select parts one.

VI. Making Celluclay Famous Person.

A. Painting.

B. Dressing it - Research characters.

VII. Blocking the Puppet Show.

- VIII. Rehearsing the Puppet Show.
- IX. Presenting the Show.
- X. Foam Heads.
- XI. Notable Black American: Feb. Black History Week.
 - A. Ice Cream spoons for puppets.
 - B. 3 x 5 card description.
- XII. Start Blocking Famous American Production.
- XIII. Shadow Puppets.
- XIV. Trolls and Ogres.
- XV. Proportion Review.
- XVI. Story: Did I Use Puppets as a Tool of Learning?
- XVII. Review of Work.
- XVIII. Cornhusk Dolls.
- XIX. Clothespin Tree Decorations: Clothespin Pilgrims.
- XX. Dried Apple Dolls.
- XXI. Origami - Kimi - Christmas Birds - Barbie Romberg - Stars.
- XXII. Painting Theater Background.
- XXIII. Rolled Paper Puppets.
- XXIV. Burmese Stick Puppets: Shadow Play.
- XXV. Tall Tale Puppet.
- XXVI. How Else Can You Use Puppets?
- XXVII. Quilt Block.