



# Teaching and Learning **WITH PUPPETS**



## Introduction

This guide is intended to support teachers in the effective use of puppets to enhance teaching and learning. It is a summary of some of the main opportunities... but there are many more!

The important thing to consider is what we want to achieve in terms of learning and then to decide whether the puppet could enhance progress towards that outcome. The puppet could become a feature of classroom conversations or it could be used regularly at certain times of the day. Alternatively, it could be used for special occasions only, such as introductions to new topics or during celebrations.

It is up to each teacher to decide how much they should use puppets in the classroom. There are many factors which can influence this decision, including how confident the teacher feels about using puppets for teaching, how well learners respond to the puppets and the extent to which other teaching and learning materials are available.

The materials in this guide are designed to be of particular use to teachers in lower primary (Grades 1 – 4) and in kindergarten. The focus is for the puppet(s) to aid language development and build social and emotional resilience and competency. Teachers of learners in upper primary classes may also benefit from considering the approaches described here in relation to teaching and learning, particularly in language lessons.

It is worth noting that masks could be used and developed in much the same way as puppets.

This guide is organised into the following sections:

**Puppets in Africa past and present**

**Why use puppets?**

**Using puppets across the curriculum**

**Tips for using puppets effectively**

**Using puppets to improve language learning**

**Using puppets to improve learning in Mathematics**

**Using puppets to improve learning in Environmental Science**

# Puppets of Africa past and present

There are many stories of how puppetry became popular across Africa. In this guide we will just provide a few examples which are intended to give a context for using puppets, but they are certainly worthy of further investigation!

According to a myth of the *Ibibio* people of south-east Nigeria, the puppet theatre was born in the land of the dead. One day, a man descended into the land of the dead and witnessed one of these puppet shows. When he came back to the land of the living, he taught them this art... and then he died.

In another tale in Angola, an *Ambundu* legend tells of a woman who died but just before she was about to be buried, she came back to life and started speaking. She returned to her village to visit a carpenter. She gave magic powers to a small statue, which came to life and began to produce images showing hidden objects.

In Guinea, the birth of the puppet is said to be caused by the discovery of an object in water, which started to speak. A woman took the object to her village but it did not speak again until the men were sent away. The object then explained that her husband had vanished, which is why she stayed hidden in the water.

A *Chewa* legend in Malawi describes a man with no children, who modelled two children out of clay. The models came to life one night and lived for a while, but then they left their home one night after disobeying their adopted mother. As they left, they were drenched by a cloud burst and were turned back into clay.

The first African puppet theatre to be known in Europe was the *Bambara* of Mali, which was discovered towards the end of the nineteenth century. The show brings to life the spiritual beings that govern the destiny of the community, so that hunting and fishing can be successful and so that peace is maintained in the village.

## More recently...

In 1980, Yaya Coulibaly from Mali formed his own puppet company, the Sogolon Puppet Troupe, which has since become the leading custodian of one of the oldest puppetry traditions in Africa, Bambara puppetry tradition.

In the city of Ketù, close to the border between Nigeria and Benin, the Yoruba operate the mask-puppets, called *gledé*. These puppets appear in

rituals celebrated at the end of the rainy season and at the start of the dry season.

In Kenya, Chrispin Mwakideu uses puppets to teach children, making them aware of AIDS, malaria and human rights, both on the streets and by way of TV programmes.

In the Congo, together with other sorts of puppets, we find the *kebe-kebe* of the *Mbochi* and the *Kuyu* that celebrate great personalities of the past.

**Maybe you have seen 'Tsehai Loves learning' – an Ethiopian TV and Radio series where a giraffe puppet promotes health through songs and storytelling.**

## Masks

Traditional African masks are one of the elements of African art that have influenced Europe and Western art in general. Common subjects in African masks are animals whose spirit is represented by the mask so that the mask-wearer becomes a vehicle to speak to the animals themselves. Common animal subjects include the buffalo (usually representing strength, as in the Baoulé culture), crocodile, hawk, hyena, warthog and antelope. Antelopes have a fundamental role in many cultures of the Mali areas, representing agriculture.

A common variation on the animal-mask theme is the composition of several distinct animal traits in a single mask, sometimes along with human traits. Merging distinct animal traits together is sometimes a means to represent unusual, exceptional virtue or high status.



African Puppets from the International Puppetry Museum

## Why use puppets?

Puppets are a great way to add a new dimension to the classroom. The humour, colour and story that accompanies each puppet helps to make learning fun, often removing barriers to learning. The key benefits of using puppets that will be explored in this guide relate to language, social and emotional development.

Puppetry is one of the oldest forms of performing arts and is often used as a tool for exploring sensitive issues.

Teachers can do all that puppets can do... but the new voice, shape and character of a puppet provides a different aspect of learning that often makes learners more eager to participate in dialogue especially.

The Curriculum Framework for Ethiopia suggests where teaching is good:

***Teachers make use of a good variety of activities. This helps to engage and sustain students' interest. (Appendix 2)***

## Developing student competencies

The Curriculum Framework for Ethiopia also outlines a set of competencies that are to be developed across the curriculum. Using puppets can support the development of student competencies in the following ways:

### 4.1 Life skills

***Students should learn to communicate and interact effectively with a diverse range of people. They should have the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate and share ideas.***

Puppets can provide a range of opportunities for learners to talk, ask questions and listen attentively. The puppet can model good relationships from which learners can learn to respect the views of others and observe for example, how to negotiate and challenge ideas.

### 4.3 Higher-order skills

***Students should develop critical thinking and creative thinking skills in the context of solving problems.***

Puppets can help learners to develop higher-order thinking skills by further demonstrating lines of inquiry. Often, learners will ask the puppet

a question or suggest a solution that they might not have asked their teacher, for example, because there seems to be less of a worry about 'getting it wrong'.

### 4.4 Participation and contribution

***Students should display a positive attitude towards their own education by showing a willingness to play an active role and contribute in lessons and practical activities.***

Using puppets to encourage conversation and creativity with younger learners helps to build confidence and to build communication and cooperation skills. As learners move through school, they are more able and willing to participate in and contribute to lessons and learning due to their prior positive experiences.



## Supporting positive social and emotional development

It is important for children to feel comfortable and secure in order for them to be able to learn well. Using puppets helps to create a nurturing environment, making children feel happy and more open to change and challenge. For younger, and shyer children in particular, the puppet can often encourage dialogue when adults or peers are unable to make sense of behaviours.

Helping children see the good side of getting things wrong is key for their development, building resilience and tenacity. The puppet can be a huge confidence booster to learners, showing them that it's perfectly normal to make mistakes. The puppet can show learners that it doesn't understand everything – and that's alright!

Using puppets allows children to develop empathy for others. When children are encouraged to take the role of others, they learn to empathise. This is very important in helping them experience compassion and respect for the feelings of other people.

## Promoting good behaviours and routines

Establishing predictable routines is extremely important in the classroom for younger learners. The puppet can support this by giving specific commands at certain times of the day or by asking questions at particular points in a lesson.

The puppet can help with classroom management by adding humour and clear cues for learners to move, to begin specific tasks, for example, or to move between activities. Even moving the puppet silently into a particular location in the classroom can be enough for learners to notice that an instruction is being given.

To model good behaviours and relationships, the puppet can be used in a variety of ways to help learners see the benefits of speaking politely and to show respect to others. The puppet can show for example the consequences of inappropriate behaviours by narrating how it is feeling.

## Developing Language and Communication

Puppets are a great way to encourage and motivate younger learners to develop their own language. The Curriculum Framework for Ethiopia states that:

**If students learn in their mother tongue, they can develop self-reliance and psychological motivation and retain social and cultural values (7.1.1)**

By using puppets across the curriculum in lower primary and kindergarten in particular, you have a creative opportunity to develop rich language learning. The more learners talk, question and converse... the better they will be able to read and write.

Puppets can also be a great tool for learning a new language. The puppet can practise saying new English words, for example, and the learners can repeat. The puppet can struggle with a new sentence in English, and the learners can correct the puppet etc.

## Developing imagination and creativity

Playing with puppets opens up a new world for children where they can be anyone they want to be! The roles are endless, so it is helpful to discuss and model for children ideas that they might use when playing with puppets to help expand imagination and motivate new learning. It

is also helpful to use storybooks as a springboard for puppet play ideas. Puppetry can also give students a tangible understanding of abstract topics in this way.

## Supporting a learner-centred curriculum

Using phrases from the wheel below to describe a learner-centred curriculum, we can see that using puppets is a useful way to place children at the heart of their learning. The puppet can, for example, become an 'expert' in a particular subject, modelling key vocabulary which the children can copy and use in their own way. The puppet can also encourage learners to explain ideas and to lead others by offering a model of how this can be achieved. A 'Thinking Puppet' can be used to help learners reflect and evaluate, particularly at the end of a theme or sequence of learning.



# How to use puppets across the curriculum

## Social and emotional development

- a) Learners can **express affection** towards the puppet by stroking it, patting its head etc. This contact can be extremely important in breaking down barriers, relaxing the children, and enabling physical expression.
- b) The puppet can **comfort children** if they are sad. For example, they can sit with the puppet. The puppet keeps children comforted and includes them in the class.
- c) The puppet can be used as **a reward** for improved learning or better behaviours. Some ways you could use the puppet as a reward or prize include:
  - » holding the puppet for the rest of the class
  - » leading the class in a song as 'the puppet'
  - » saying 'Goodbye' to everyone as 'the puppet'
- d) The puppet **can be emotional when the teacher can't**; it can, for example, show anger or cry. This is a great way for children to learn about different emotions.
- e) The puppet can **model how to solve problems**, and model consequences of good and bad choices. Let the puppet explain how to solve a problem by first identifying feelings and then describing the problem, before moving on to discuss different solutions. Use the puppet to help learners anticipate what to do next when one solution doesn't work.
- f) Use puppets to **model talking about feelings** and help learners to clearly define the problem and to recognise the feelings involved.
- g) Let the learners **play at being the teacher, using the puppet**. This is a good way for learners to develop their confidence. As the puppet teacher, they can give instructions, correct mistakes, ask questions and provide explanations etc, as well as importantly, encouraging others to participate more in the lesson.
- h) The puppet can **model polite and respectful language and behaviours** through conversations with others. Learners benefit from witnessing these positive relationships, including skills such as good listening and seeing the effect that these interactions have on the way they and others feel. Allowing learners to use the puppets themselves to demonstrate this is also very powerful. Particular phrases and situations that are useful include:
  - » Please
  - » Thank you
  - » Can I help you?
  - » That's kind of you
  - » I'd like to know more!
  - » Can you tell me about...
  - » Let's share these...
  - » Could I please have a look at...?
  - » You have listened really well
  - » What else would you like to know?
- i) Use puppets to encourage learners to **role-play situations from different perspectives**. For instance, learners might role-play a disagreement that needs to be resolved. Have them repeat the role-play situation so that they have an opportunity to experience the situation from both perspectives. This is an excellent activity for teaching empathy. Parents can also use this strategy to help children understand a parent's point of view. They can be asked to take the role of their parents or other family members in different situations.
- j) **Learners need to develop the skill of asking for clarification**. Many learners just continue to listen without actually understanding or even hearing accurately what the speaker has said because they are afraid to interrupt. This could become the 'norm' for learners if they are not encouraged to make sure they fully understand through the use of 'checking questions'. Revealing that you don't understand can feel uncomfortable, but it should be presented as a 'healthy habit' in order to progress towards success. For some learners, it will be easier to ask the puppet for clarification rather than the teacher. Over time, all learners should be confident enough to ask questions, but it does take practice. The teacher should help learners develop some specific

language associated with checking for understanding, which may include:

- » Can you repeat that please?
- » Excuse me....
- » Please can you tell me that new word again?
- » What was the special ...?
- » Why did that happen?
- » How do you know that?
- » Sorry. I don't understand. Can you help me?
- » I'm a little bit confused. Can you go over that part again please?



Anansi, Spiderman of Africa created in 1999 by Crabgrass Puppet Theatre

## Developing language

Language needs to be developed across the curriculum so that learners build knowledge and understanding of how to use language. It is important to remember once again that learning to speak and listen well is a prerequisite for reading and writing effectively.

Learners need to be able to recognise rhymes and rhythms through songs and repeated refrains in poems and stories. The puppet can 'perform' these language opportunities in contrast or as a complement to what the teacher presents.

Here are a few activities to do with the puppet to develop language:

**Question Time** - Ask a learner to come to ask the puppet questions such as "What is your name?", "How old are you?" and so on. The puppet can then respond and ask the child the same question.

**New beginnings** - The puppet becomes an expert in a new topic. Learners listen to what the puppet has to describe and then prepare a quiz for each other to see if they have understood what has been said.

**Mind Reading** - Ask a learner to come to the front of the classroom and think of a word, phrase or number that the puppet could think about, linked to what they've learned that day. The other learners must ask questions to guess what the puppet is thinking.

**Story Time** - The puppet could sit on your knee when you're reading a story to your class. It can help to emphasise key points in the story with exaggerated movements. It could also be your assistant - turning the page or passing props, for example.

**Read with Me** - Reading to a puppet is a good way for shy or less confident learners to practise reading out loud. For those who are not yet able to read words, they can use picture clues to tell the story to their puppet instead.

**Puppet Postcards** - If the puppet visits another class, school or home, the teacher can create a letter or postcard to describe what they have seen and done. Learners can read this letter together and prepare a response.

**Writing to the Puppet** - Learners can use the puppet to practise writing in the target language. Maybe they could send the puppet a birthday card, or invite him or her to the school's festival or end of term celebrations.

**My mistake** - The puppet has a habit of misreading or mispronouncing words. The learners have to listen carefully to identify these errors and then correct them. This works well too with numbers.

## Developing imagination and creative thinking

Building on language development, there are many things that puppets can do to encourage and enable imaginative and creative thinking. The puppet can enthuse and engage learners so that they are more able to explore and investigate something new. Here are some things a puppet can do and learners can copy, adapt and develop further:

- Act out a storybook and create a new ending
- Practise scripts to perform as a puppet show
- Create a secret that the puppet tries to keep...but fails! (This could be the answer to a maths problem or the name of a place in an Environmental Science)
- Construct a puppet theatre using classroom furniture, boxes and a curtain where possible
- Use the puppet as a tour guide around the classroom and school
- Use the puppet to suggest and demonstrate moves in a dance session
- Use the puppets to make a new song or rhyme about a topic or theme from the lesson

## Developing classroom routines

The puppet can **welcome learners** as they arrive in the classroom. These greetings can vary and require different responses to build vocabulary. Learners can be welcomed individually or as a whole class. A short song or rhyme could be used also for variation and it is a good way to introduce new languages.

In the same way, the puppet can **conclude the day** with a 'goodbye' song or a sequence of phrases: *thank you for your hard work today... you did especially well in... tomorrow will be another great day... great team work today, everybody... etc*

**Transitioning between activities** or whole lessons can be a useful opportunity for the puppet to direct behaviours. The puppet could have a 'moving on' song or could appear in a certain position in the classroom which the children know means they have to move to a particular place. When the teacher wishes to simply signify 'stop, look and listen' or 'all eyes on me' and other useful commands, these can be accompanied by a particular movement of the puppet.

## Tips for using puppets effectively

1. **Model good relationships by demonstrating your respect for the puppet.** Hold and speak to the puppet appropriately.
2. **Balance the number of times that you use either a single puppet or groups of puppets.** Part of the success of using puppets is due to their 'special occasion' and 'something a bit different' quality.
3. **Establish some kind of distinct role, character and personality for each puppet that you use regularly.** Maybe one puppet is over enthusiastic, another mispronounces words and another is very shy.
4. **Practise using different voices for different puppets, linking this to the development of a personality for each puppet.** But don't overdo this! A very unusual or silly voice should be reserved for special activities when you feel you will be able to 'keep up' the drama.
5. **Practise making your puppet speak.** Don't be tempted to use a snap or bite action to show talking. Instead, move the lower jaw of the puppet open and outwards for a more authentic way of speaking.
6. **Ensure your puppet maintains 'eye contact' with the audience** (learners for authentic and more engaging communication).
7. **Allow learners to use the puppets also but ensure there is a routine and clear guidelines about how puppets should be used.** Consider creating some class rules for using the puppets. This will help to create a sense of pride and wonder about using the puppets.
8. **Don't worry about whether you move your lips or not when making the puppet speak!** The learners will focus on the puppet, provided that you face the puppet while it is talking.
9. **Balance speaking FOR the puppet and speaking TO the puppet.** This needs some practice. Practise using your puppet to ask a question to the class or responding to questions/answers.
10. **Don't move your puppet around too much, but do always move the puppet with purpose.** Practise simple movements that reflect common responses and phrases such as 'Why?' and 'That's good!'
11. **Use your puppet to teach particular aspects of the curriculum as well as during free play periods and to establish some classroom routines.**
12. **Making puppets** can become a great cross-curricular activity in itself. By investing with the actual making of these puppets, role play or storytelling will become a lot more personal to the learners.

## Using puppets to improve language learning

Many aspects of this have already been explored in 'Developing Language across the Curriculum'. There are, however, specific aspects of the English and Mother Tongue curriculum that could benefit from the use of puppets. Below are some examples of activities to explore.

### Story telling

Learners act out stories or situations. Of course, learners can be the actors themselves, but if they use puppets, it liberates them and gives them greater creative licence. The next step is for children to create their own stories or follow on from an existing one – maybe the teacher gives them the first line of the story and then the class negotiate the second sentence and one learner takes the puppet and the puppet says that sentence out loud. For this, you may need more than one puppet. It can be very casual and short, or more involved and set up with props, depending on your class size, the confidence of your learners, or the learning outcomes you have set.

### One meaning – many words

How many ways can a puppet welcome a learner to the front of the classroom? Hello! How are you? Come and sit by me! Nice to see you!

How many ways can the puppet describe moving along? Scramble, run, walk, skip, hop etc.

How many ways can the puppet say goodbye, describe how they are feeling, say thank you etc.?

### Guess my animal

The puppet allows children 5 questions to guess the identity of an animal. The puppet is only allowed to answer yes or no! This can also be done with children trying to guess the name of another child, the type of food that has just been eaten, the book that has just been read or the favourite colour etc. This game can be tailored to the topic or unit theme.



### I say, you say, we all say together

This can be a way of learning new vocabulary or phrases and it benefits from using simple rhythm in the exchanges. The puppet can begin leading the pattern but a learner can take over the role of the leader after a while, and other learners can check that the puppet can manage to repeat the words and phrases accurately.

### Silly sentences

The puppet can use new words in the wrong way so that a sentence is rather silly. Learners then correct the puppet with the correct version. This can be directed according to the unit theme. For example:

Puppet: The pencil is sitting on the chair.

Learners: No! The boy is sitting on the chair!

Puppet: The table has 20 pages.

Learners: No! The book has 20 pages.

## Letter hunt

Write some new words or phrases on the board and ask the children to read all of these aloud. The puppet then moves to the board and points to one word or phrase and asks the children to explain where this word or phrase might appear. For example, the puppet might point to the word 'car' and the learners explain where cars might be seen. The puppet responds with: Ok! I'm going on a car hunt – **c a r** spells car.

## I like, but I love...

Use the puppet to model sentences that encourage learners to make comparisons. This can be linked to unit themes such as food, the school day, clothes, animals etc. *I like apples but I love pears. I like frogs but I love ducks. I like blue but I love yellow.* This can be developed further to use connectives such as because. *I like cars but I love scooters because you can go faster. I like running but I love skipping because you can bounce!*

## But what was the question?

*The puppet suggests an answer to a question and learners have to formulate some questions that would require that answer. For example:*

*Puppet: The Hospital*

*Learner: Where do you go to see a doctor?*

*Puppet: That's right. You go to a hospital to see a doctor.*

*Puppet: Sunday*

*Learner: What day do we go to church?*

*Puppet: That's right. On Sunday we go to church.*

## Singing songs together

The puppet listens to learners singing a song they know well. The puppet stops the singing, however, using an agreed action or movement. When the song stops, the puppet makes up the next phrase to the song or asks a question about the song. Another agreed action signals the children to continue singing etc.



## Using puppets to improve learning in mathematics

Puppets can bring some 'colour and character' to mathematics, which helps learners to more eagerly participate in calculations, counting and problem solving. The puppet can help create links from topics into mathematics, so that numbers and patterns are seen as essential elements in all areas of learning.

The following activities can be adapted across all grades so that they are appropriately challenging. The numbers and calculations should be taken from the Mathematics curriculum.

Mother tongue is used to teach mathematics in kindergarten and lower primary, but the puppet could be used to teach numbers in English on occasion in maths lessons.

### Speed up, slow down counting

The puppet should lead learners in number sequences, directing the speed of the spoken sequence through gestures and signals. The learners should try to 'keep up' with the sequences or maybe race the puppet to try and complete the number sequence first. Sequences could be multiples of 2 or 3, for example, or counting in ones from different starting points.

### Forwards and backwards

The puppets can help learners practise their counting by directing whether the sequence increases or decreases. The sequence can start from any number, but the puppet should use a particular gesture or signal to tell learners to 'turn around' so that counting increases rather than decreases etc.

For example:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 puppet 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 puppet 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 etc.

or

30, 29, 27, 26, 25, 24 puppet 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 puppet  
30, 29, 28, 27 etc.

## How many ways...?

The puppet provides learners with a number greater than 10, and learners are challenged to calculate this number in as many ways as possible. The puppet should repeat a request of 'Tell me another way!' in a humorous voice if possible.

### Copy me

The puppet can be used to help learners listen attentively by challenging them to copy patterns of numbers. Patterns can be familiar patterns or more random and should increase in complexity. Learners should also be asked to explain patterns if they are able to, or the puppet can describe the pattern correctly, or incorrectly and learners have to distinguish whether or not the description is correct. Learners could also use the puppet themselves and lead each other in 'copy me' patterns.

Example patterns to copy:

2, 4, 6, 8 then 4, 6, 8, 10 then 24, 26, 28, 30, 28, 26 etc.  
These are doubles or multiples of 2.

11, 14, 17 then 2, 5, 8, 13, 16 then 2, 7, 21, 8, 5, 15 etc.  
These are random numbers.

5, 8, 11 then 7, 10, 13, 16 then 19, 22, 25, 28, 31 etc.  
These number increase by 3 each time.

### Add up and take away

The puppet can support calculations by suggesting numbers to add or take away to numbers presented by learners or vice versa. This can be done in order for learners to recognise the relationship between numbers in a calculation eg  $3 + 4 = 7$ ;  $4 + 3 = 7$ ;  $7 - 3 = 4$ ;  $7 - 4 = 3$ .

For example:

Puppet: I have 6. Learners A: Add on 4. All Learners: That makes 10!

Puppet: I have 4. Learner B: Add on 6. All learners: That makes 10!

Learner C: I have 10. Puppet: Take away 6. All learners: That makes 4!

Learner D: I have 10. Puppet: take away 4. All learners: That makes 6!

These numbers can be represented on the board to help younger learners.

## Hop, skip...carry on

The teacher should write a number sequence on the board or ask learners to hold cards with numbers in a sequence. The puppet should hop or skip along the sequence and learners should say the numbers as the puppet arrives at each number, missing out one number along the way. After the sequence has been completed, learners should say which number has been skipped, doing a little jump when they say the number that was skipped.

## What's my shape?

Using some shapes previously cut out by learners, the puppet should hide a shape in a bag. Learners have to ask questions in order to find out what shape has been hidden. Questions should include vocabulary that refers to properties of shapes such as number of sides, angles, symmetry etc. These questions should lead to discussions about collections of shapes and how they can be classified.

## Measuring our world!

Learners should present the puppet with an object that it has to estimate the size of. Learners will subsequently measure the object and make a judgement as to the accuracy of the estimate made by the puppet. Sometimes the puppet can be very close...and other times it can be a long way off!) This activity can be reversed so that the puppet presents learners with something to estimate and then measure instead. Over time, objects to be measure should vary so that many aspects of the environment are explored through measurement. Units of measurement should vary so that the whole range of units are explored according to the curriculum expectations for each Grade.



## Using puppets to improve learning in Environmental Sciences

Puppets can be used to ask questions in Environmental Science to support learners in developing their skills of enquiry, analysis and reasoning. Encouraging learners to explain their thinking and ask further questions for clarification develops language, builds confidence and contributes to the development of listening skills.

Environmental Science is a subject that is taught in mother tongue, but puppets can be used to support learners develop English and Amharic vocabulary specific to a topic, where appropriate. This will help language to be developed across the curriculum and help learners to apply what they know in one subject to other subjects.

### Question Stones

Preparing and displaying question stones for the puppet to pick up and show the children is a fun way to develop questioning and reasoning. The children can select a stone too and present it to the puppet so that they can also ask the puppet a question about a topic.

### Meet the expert

This can help learners to develop essential vocabulary in a new topic. Either the puppet can be the expert so that learners (importantly) prepare and ask the puppet some questions, or a learner can take the role of the expert and the learners can ask pertinent questions of the puppet. This could be done as a whole class or in groups. This kind of activity links well to role-play, which may be developed further in Arts lessons, where drama is used to engage learners in language development.

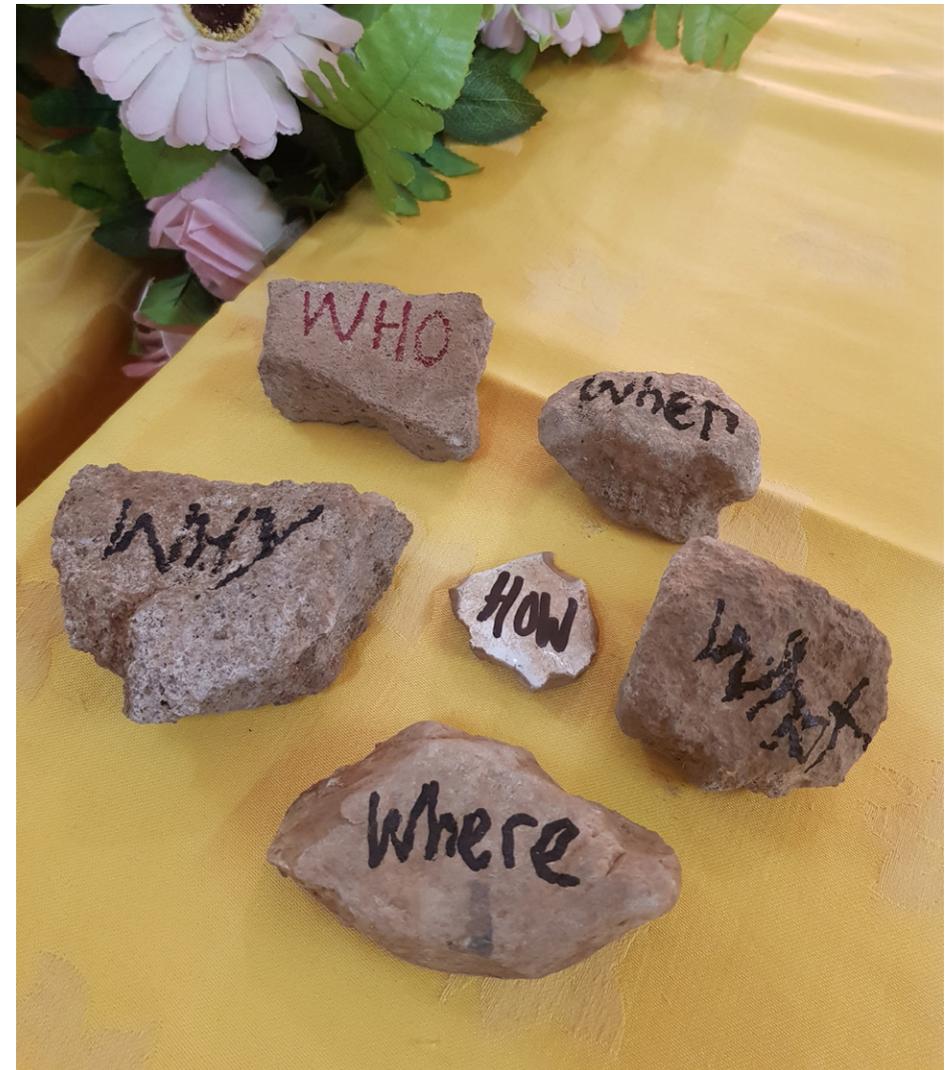
### Making connections

Puppets can be used to help learners appreciate the connections that exist between different aspects of science and the wider curriculum. If for example, a Science lesson is exploring health, the puppet could challenge learners to make as many connections as they can across the curriculum. They could form a human chain for every example, eventually creating a circle of connected ideas.

For example:

Puppet: Let's talk about our senses.

Learner A: We have 5! Learner B: Animals have some senses that are the same and some that are different!; Learner C: The word 'senses' starts and finishes with the letter 's'; Learner D: I know I like things that taste sweet; Learner E: I know a song called 'I hear thunder'!



## Using puppets to improve learning in the Arts and Physical Education

**Using puppets has natural links to the visual arts and drama. It would be very useful for children to see a full puppet show if possible, to help them appreciate this art form in their community.**

It is more difficult to use a hand-puppet to demonstrate dance, but it would be useful to show, if possible, videos of string and cane puppets dancing, rather like marionettes. A hand puppet can still move in time to music, however, and could be used as a good starting point for a dance piece.

### Singing puppets

It takes a bit of practice to use a puppet so that it looks like it is singing, but it is worth the effort because a singing puppet is particularly engaging! Remember to look at the puppet while it is singing. Using a song to describe and express emotions is particularly powerful, and the puppet can exaggerate this very well for dramatic effect. Try to link to songs to topics and themes from other subjects or to local, national or recent events.

### A puppet theatre

Creating a puppet theatre is quite simple and can be created by simply hooking two pieces of fabric over a pole – the ability to ‘draw the curtains’ of the stage adds a great deal to the authenticity of the puppet show. Learners should be given time to watch puppet shows and then create their own shows – these can be extended pieces of drama or short skits to describe a particular event. Developing simple props is also fun for learners, but they will need to be shown how to incorporate props effectively before they add too many of their own!

Giant puppets such as the ones shown in this photograph are a wonderful way to involve the wider community in the Arts and Theatre, and they are quite a feature of cultural celebrations around the world. Making giant puppets benefits from advice and support from professional artists, but it is worth considering if it is possible to achieve this for a special community event.

## Creating their own puppets

Providing the opportunity for learners to create their own puppets is a useful way of engaging learners in the use of puppets in the classroom. Puppets can be made simply from bags, packets, socks and/or other spare pieces of fabric. If learners are able to explore and investigate other puppets, this will help to give them some good ideas for their design. Creating puppet shows using ‘their own’ puppets is a great way for learners to develop language, imagination and creativity. If a puppet show is linked to another theme or topic in another subject, it provides a good opportunity to practise new vocabulary especially.

### Physical Education

It requires careful thought for a puppet to be involved in a Physical Education lesson! But a puppet can offer ideas for movement, can give praise for effective team work or improved performance and can be used as an expert to talk about the health benefits of physical activity.



*Janni Younge Productions*

Produced by Victoria Pendry for Rainbows4children  
and The Nicolas Robinson School in Mekele, Ethiopia.

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