



Theatre and Culture for Early Years

Theatre Direct Canada Teacher Resources - *CutOuts*

Big Questions:

- How can we move beyond language to tell stories?
- How can art, light, and shadow shape what we think and how we feel?
- How do our experiences and memories influence our thoughts and actions?

FDK Curriculum Links:

1.10: Retell experiences, events, and familiar stories in proper sequence

8.5: Demonstrate spatial awareness by doing activities that require use of small muscles

21.1: Express their responses to drama and dance

21.5: Express responses to visual art forms by making connections to own experiences

30.2: Explore a variety of tools, materials and processes to create movement, drama, and visual art forms in new and familiar ways

Pre-Show Discussion/Activities:

- Are we able to tell and understand stories without any words? How can this be done? Discuss some of the methods that storytellers may use to nonverbally convey messages and meanings.
- Explore concepts of light and shadow with students prior to viewing the performance. What happens if you place a shape cut out of a piece of paper on an overhead projector? What are the qualities of different materials as they appear as shadows? How can you manipulate the materials or the light to change the quality of the shadows?

Post-Show Discussion:

- How did the artist create a story? What were some characters, settings, plot points that you noticed? Explain.
- Do you think the cut outs/puppets seemed alive at any point? What did the artist do to create this illusion?
- What different materials/types of paper did the artist use for different characters and settings? How did this change the story, or help it to move forward?



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The following is an activity guide intended for use in the classroom after viewing the performance of *Cut Outs*. Any number of these activities may be explored, based on children's interests and inquiries following post-show discussions. Also included are adaptations to make the activities more suitable for children of varying ages.

Creating Puppets

After attending Cut Outs, children may be interested in the concept of creating puppets with moving parts to compliment dramatic play and to tell stories. A puppet centre in the classroom would be a way to allow children to explore different materials, and create simple puppets, or more complex puppets that have moving limbs or hinges. Children can be encouraged to create characters and stories using the puppets they have created. The centre can also include a simple shadow puppet theatre to explore, or children can make shadow puppets and display them for the class.

Curriculum Links:

- 8.4: Demonstrate control of small muscles when using various materials or equipment
- 23.2: Use problem solving skills and imagination to create visual art forms
- 24.3: Make predictions and observations as part of process of creating and designing

Materials:

- Thick paper (card stock, bristol board, etc.)
- Sturdy, thin stick to hold up puppet (skewer, chop stick, etc.)
- Scissors
- Brass fasteners (to create moving parts on the puppet)
- For shadow puppet theatre:
 - Cardboard box
 - White tissue paper
 - Light source (flashlight, lamp, etc.)

Exploration:

- After the centre is organized, have a brief discussion with the children about what is available to them when exploring puppets
- Present options of single-pieced puppets as well as moving-piece puppets (using brass fasteners and various sticks/skewers)
 - Ask the children what may happen if they were to move one stick but not another
 - Pass an example around, allowing children to play and explore with the puppet



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- In the centre, allow children to explore the materials, providing guidance for construction and fastening of pieces of the puppet if required
 - Remind children that they can have one single piece puppet, but encourage them to think about how their puppet will move
 - As a modification, provide templates of different animals or characters to cut out, with indicators of where the fasteners and sticks would go to allow the puppet to have different moving parts
- Provide a simple shadow puppet theatre for children to explore elements of their puppet as shadows
- Encourage children to explore and play with their puppets
- Ask questions such as
 - What would your puppet sound like?
 - How would your puppet move?
 - What adventures would your puppet go on?
 - What kind of story would you like to tell with your puppet?
- Once children have built and explored these questions with their puppets, have them share their puppets within smaller groups, or with the whole class
- As an extension, children can be encouraged to create a story with their puppets individually, or in groups
 - Prompt children to explore elements such as plot, setting, and characters
 - Encourage children to use the shadow theatre to explore their story

Reflection:

- Encourage children to build and create as many puppets as they would like
 - There could be specific time allotted to building puppets, but keep a centre open to allow for free exploration of the materials and elements of puppets and storytelling
- Ask children about how they came up with the ideas for their puppets
 - Did they use their imagination?
 - Were puppets based on real people/things they have in their life?
- Did children have an idea about the character the puppet would be before or after it was created? What helped them to decide?



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Adaptations:

- For younger children:
 - Provide pre-made puppets for the children to explore with, and practice animating
 - Ask children to select a picture book, and use their puppet to act out the book as you read it together. Ask them to consider:
 - What character is the puppet representing?
 - What does the character move and sound like?
 - For older children:
 - Older children can actually make their own shadow puppet theatres to take home. See the link at the bottom of this resource to find a simple tutorial on making homemade shadow puppet theatre out of cardboard.
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Cut-Out Self Portrait

The artist in Cut Outs uses his scissors to cut shapes that resemble characters that come to life on stage. This technique is called *papier découpés*. Using a variety of art materials and scissors, this activity will allow children to explore shapes and figures, and how they may be assembled together to create characters. The children will be able to practice creative self-expression, as well as fine motor skills, while considering other methods of creation beyond drawing with a pencil, marker, or paint brush.

Curriculum Links:

8.4: Demonstrate control of small muscles when using various materials or equipment

23.2: Use problem-solving skills and their imagination to create visual art forms

31.3: Explore different elements of design in visual arts



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Materials:

- Various types of paper (whatever is available; eg. construction, foam, tissue, card stock) in a variety of colours and textures
- Scissors
- Glue
- Any other accessories desired (pom poms, yarn/string, pipe cleaners, googly eyes, etc.)
- Pattern blocks for students to trace shapes before cutting out if needed ****Modification****
 - Pencil for tracing

Introduction:

- Discuss Cut Outs with the children. How did the artist create the shapes that were used in the production? What tools did he use? How did the shapes become, or appear to become, different figures and characters?
- In an art centre, create a small group invitation with the above materials for children to explore techniques in cutting, and using scissors to create shapes that come together to form a character

Activity Exploration:

- In small groups, children will be seated at a table with the various paper materials, scissors, glue, accessories, and pattern blocks
- Encourage the children to use scissors to cut various shapes out of the paper materials that they may piece together to create a self-portrait
 - This does not have to be a self-portrait! For children who might have trouble coming up with a character or figure, this can be a guide. However, children



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should be encouraged to create something meaningful to them, using their imagination

- If children are having difficulty, or would prefer to not cut free-hand, they can draw the shapes first, or trace them using pattern blocks
- Children will cut out shapes, and glue them onto a full sized piece of construction paper to create a self-portrait
 - If they would like, they can place all the pieces before gluing

Reflection:

- When children are finished their cut out pictures, have them share their work, either in small groups or with the whole class. Did they make a self-portrait, or did they choose to create another character? How did they choose what shapes, colours, and textures to use?
- Was it easy or hard to cut out the shapes? Were some shapes more difficult than others? Why
- Was there a shape selected to represent certain facial features? How come?

Adaptations:

- For younger children:
 - Provide pre-cut shapes and materials for the children to glue to their portraits
 - Place larger tools to glue the materials at the table, such as thick paint brushes
 - Provide mirrors at the centre for children to observe their own features as they create the portrait.
- For older children:
 - If the children do not want to create portraits of themselves, encourage them to create another character
 - This can be connected to other learning or stories that are occurring within the classroom

Shadow Tracing

The sun is an amazing tool to help children to explore and understand the cause and effects of light and shadow. A bright, sunny day is a great opportunity to help children understand how light impacts shadow, and how the two are inherently connected. By tracing shadows and discussing how they may change over time, children can begin to understand these elements, as well as concepts surrounding math and angles, as well as science and astronomy.



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Curriculum Links:

13.2: Make predictions and observations before and during investigations

13.4: Communicate results and findings from individual and group investigations

14.1: Ask questions about and describe natural occurrences

Materials:

- Chalk
- Outdoor cement space

Introduction:

- Discuss with the children what they noticed about the production of Cut Outs. What did they observe regarding the characters and their shadows? What did the lighting look like, and where was it positioned on stage? What if the lights were moved somewhere else?
- Encourage children to share their ideas with partners, and then share with the larger group
- Ask the children if they know of a light source that everyone has access to, that naturally moves on its own, that they may use to explore light and shadow

Activity Exploration:

- Take the children outside to a space that has direct sunlight, and where the ground can be drawn on with chalk
- Children can work in pairs or groups of three
- The children should trace their feet, and write their names in the tracing so they can return to the same spot during the next section of the activity
- One child will stand on their footprints and hold a creative pose with their whole body (it can be anything they would like)
- Another child will trace the child's shadow with the chalk, and write the time of the tracing inside the shadow
- The children can switch places, so that each child has a turn to have their shadow traced
- Choose a time later in the day to return and do another tracing
 - Ideally, try to do one tracing in the morning, one around lunch, and one in the afternoon if possible
- Have the children find their footprints, use different coloured chalk, trace the same pose again, and write the time inside the tracing



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Closure/Discussion:

- Ask the children to share what they noticed about their shadows. How did the shadows change over time?
- What are some predictions as to why the shadows changed? How does the sun (the light source used) influence the shape and direction of the shadows?
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- Is there a way we can predict where a shadow will be or what it will look like, based on the position of the light source?

Adaptations:

- For younger children:
 - Have adults help with the tracing
 - Allow children to trace objects other than their own bodies (things that are smaller, or easier to conceptualize)
- For older children:
 - Encourage the children to record their predictions, observations, and outcomes
 - This information can be used to create a graph, or other form of visual data

Shadow Follow the Leader

The artist in *Cut Outs* uses fans and other techniques to create the illusion of movement of the cut out characters throughout the show. This Follow the Leader activity allows children to practice creative movement and empathy while exploring light and shadow.

Curriculum Links:

- 1.2: Listen and respond to others non-verbally for a variety of purposes in a variety of contexts
- 7.1: Participate actively in creative movement and other daily physical activities
- 8.1: Demonstrate spatial awareness in activities that require the use of large muscles



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Materials:

- White sheet
- Overhead projector (or other light source)

Steps:

- Hang the white sheet in the classroom, where there is room for movement on either side
- Place the light source behind the sheet, leaving room for a child to stand between the sheet and the light
 - If this is not possible in the classroom, you can also simply project onto a projection screen or wall, and encourage children to watch the leader's shadow
- Choose one student to be the leader
- Encourage the leader to move creatively - using their whole body, using only their arms, using only their legs, continuous movements vs. static poses, etc.
- Encourage the other students to copy/follow the movements of the shadow of the leader
 - If shadow is only cast on the wall, encourage the children to not look at the leader, but rather at their shadow
- Choose a new leader until all children have had a turn

Reflection:

- Consider playing a game of Follow the Leader without shadows and talk about how it is different from a shadow version
- As a follower: is it easier to follow the movements of a shadow or a person? Why?
- As a leader: did you feel more comfortable moving as a shadow? Why or why not? Did you have to adjust your movements in any way to have the rest of the students follow you? (eg., bigger movements? Slower? etc.)

Adaptations:

- For older children:
 - Invite the children to play a game of charades, where the actor must represent the action only through movement that can be perceived through movement in their shadow



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Shadow Tag (Gross Motor - Large Group)

Cut Outs provides a fun, aesthetically pleasing approach to shadows and light exploration for children. Fun with shadows can also be explored from a more physical perspective, allowing children to practice gross motor skills. A game of shadow tag, played outside on a sunny day, will allow children to have fun with and think about shadows in a way that gets them running around.

Materials:

- Outdoor space to run around (make sure it's a sunny day!)

Instructions:

- Have the children gather in a space outside where there is room to run around, free of obstacles
- Select one student (can have two or three, depending on the size of the group) be "it"
- Instruct that in order to tag somebody, you must step on their shadow on the ground
 - As the facilitator, it is extremely important to observe and watch this activity to make sure children are following the rules, and that they are not touching each other (the nature of this tag game does not require any contact)
- You can decide what happens when a student's shadow is tagged:
 - Student is now "it" and other student is not
 - Both students are now "it"
 - Student who is tagged must freeze until another student unfreezes them
 - Student who is tagged must come to the educator and complete a physical action/answer a question/etc.

Reflection:

- Is it easier to tag someone's shadow? Why or why not?

Adaptations:

- For younger children:
 - Before playing tag, encourage children to move and run around outside while observing how their shadows move and follow them



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Additional Resources

The Black Rabbit by Philippa Leathers

This playful story follows Rabbit, who is being chased by a large, Black Rabbit. Rabbit is scared of the Black Rabbit, and tries everything to get away from it. However, he just can't seem to get rid of it. *The Black Rabbit* explores elements of lights and shadow, and would allow for children to make predictions about who the Black Rabbit is, and how Rabbit might be able to get rid of it.

Flashlight by Lizi Boyd

Through illustrations, Lizi Boyd explores light, dark, and nature to demonstrate to children the magic that is present everywhere in their lives. As this book does not incorporate words, it is an excellent opportunity for children to experience storytelling in a less-traditional format, similar to the work in *Cut Outs*.

Shi Shi Etko by Nicola I. Campbell

The story of Shi Shi Etko explores the importance of memories and how they relate to our culture and individual stories. Shi Shi Etko is leaving her family to go to a Residential School, but she is unaware of what she will face when she arrives. Rather, her family encourages her to remember things about her home that she can keep with her at school. This story would prompt children to think about their own families and stories, and what memories they may want to keep with them if they were forced to go to a new place on their own.

<https://wehavekids.com/education/shadow-puppet-theater>

Jimmie Lanley provides an example of how to make a shadow puppet theatre at home or in the classroom. This simple, yet effective project can provide hours of fun for children using created shadow puppets, as well as hand puppets. She also includes other resources, such as shadow templates, and stories that can be told using the shadow puppet theatre.