

## Using Puppets to Help Children of All Ages Actively Engage in Storytelling

Presentation by Laura Anne Ewald

*Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival*

Kids love to hear stories, and kids love role-playing games. Puppets can help facilitate both, because kids of all ages respond positively to puppets, which can be made simply and inexpensively out of common materials. Kids already like to play by taking “parts” from fictional stories, and puppets allow them to connect directly to favorite literary characters for active playtime

- I. There are two approaches to storytelling with puppets:
  - A. Start with an already existing story and create puppets of the characters.
  - B. Have your children create puppets first, then make up a story to fit the puppets.
  - C. You can build a whole unit of study around a story by choosing a story that includes a topic you want to explore (wildlife, farm animals, oceans, space, historical events, travel, etc.). Start with a story. Have each child pick a different character—either from the story or a new one that *could be* in the story. Have them do research then create a puppet.
    - i. For younger children, you can either copy illustrations from the original story or print images from another source.
    - ii. When creating original puppets, emphasize originality; they should use the descriptions from the book and their own imagination rather than copying the book's illustration.
    - iii. Once the puppets are ready, children can use them to act out a scene from the book or to create new scenes with new characters.
  - D. Start with the topic.
    - i. Each child should research a different “character” associated with the topic.
    - ii. Have them create a puppet of their choice.
    - iii. Put them in small groups to have them play creating “scenes” showing how their characters might interact in real life.
- II. Tips on making puppets with children.
  - A. Know the craft skills level of your audience. (For example, if they are not yet good with scissors, you may need to provide a tray full of eyes and ears for them to use.)
  - B. Use inexpensive, common materials. (See The Everyman Puppet Theatre's YouTube video on Puppet Potential at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4zurYE\\_pEY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4zurYE_pEY).)
  - C. White glue or paste works for most paper and felt puppets. Hot glue should never be used in a large group unless carefully monitored. (And always use “cool temperature” hot glue to avoid serious burns.)
  - D. If you decide to provide googly eyes, I recommend setting up an “eye station” manned by a teen or adult. Have the younger children create their paper puppets then report to the “eye station” to receive their googly eyes and control sticks.
  - E. For more tips on making various puppets, see The Everyman Puppet Theatre videos at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkYObjIEJYk4pQljkEIXqZw/videos>.

Puppets by Laura Anne Ewald



Made from book illustrations



Large paper plate & Construction Paper



Paper products; foam; felt; pipe cleaners; hot glue



Paper bags; construction paper; yarn



Large & small paper plates; construction paper



Combined paper plate & paper bag;  
construction paper



Cardboard TP tubes  
& construction paper

Questions? Please use the contact form on my webpage at [www.LauraAnneEwald.com](http://www.LauraAnneEwald.com).