

Paper Heart Puppets: *Cardboard Explosion!* Educational Guide, Grades K-8



About the Performance

"Cardboard Explosion!" brings four original stories to life using nothing but cardboard and the power of your imagination. With help from students and teachers in the audience, puppeteer Brad Shur transforms simple cardboard shapes into elaborate puppet characters, and then brings them to life right before your eyes. This fun, energetic, and highly interactive performance explores English Language Arts curricular topics including character, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution, as well as Social Emotional Learning as we learn to outsmart dragons, choose-your-own superpower, and train adorable animal sidekicks!



About the Artist

Paper Heart Puppets is dedicated to the magic of puppetry. Founder Bradford Shur has been performing for over 20 years with original shows for all ages as well as puppet building collaborations with clients as diverse as American Idol and Dolly Parton. Brad began performing as a student at the Rhode Island School of Design. While earning a degree in film, he was a regular performer at late night puppet slams and with Big Nazo Puppets. From there, Brad went on to tour nationally with Wood and String Puppet Theatre and Vermont Puppetree. In 2009, he became the Resident Artist at Puppet Showplace Theater in Brookline, MA where he served as the lead teaching artist and touring puppeteer for eight years. During that time, Brad developed six original shows and revived several classic shows created by Paul Vincent Davis. In 2017, Brad left Puppet Showplace for Poughkeepsie, NY and founded Paper Heart Puppets.

Program Learning Goals

1. To bring original stories to life using cardboard puppets.
2. To understand the elements that make up a story.
3. To explore how different narrative choices affect storytelling.

Essential Questions

1. How can we use our distinct voices to tell stories?
2. What elements make up a story?
3. How is hearing a story told out loud with puppets different from reading a book or watching a movie?

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Vocabulary

- **Storytelling:** the art of telling a story about real or imagined events using gestures and words to bring the events and characters of the story to life in the minds of those listening
- **Character:** a person, animal, or creature in a story that can think, feel, or act
- **Setting:** the time and place where the story takes place
- **Plot:** the order of events that make up a story
- **Conflict:** someone or something that stands in the way of a character achieving their goal
- **Resolution:** the end of the story when the main conflict gets solved

Key Facts and Context for Students

What is a puppet?

A **puppet** is a figure that is moved by a person. It can be controlled by fingers, hands, sticks, or strings. Puppets can represent people, animals, objects, or made up creatures. Someone who operates a puppet is called a **puppeteer**.

Different types of puppets:



Finger Puppets



Glove Puppets



Body Puppets



Shadow Puppets



Marionette Puppets



Hand and Rod Puppet

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Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What is a puppet? How can you make a puppet move?
- What characters in TV shows or movies are puppets? How do their puppeteers bring them to life?
- What kinds of puppets do you think Paper Heart Puppets will show you?

Pre-Performance Activity: Making a Cardboard Dinosaur

Learning Goal:

To create and animate a cardboard puppet.

Materials:

Cardboard, white paper, tape, pencils, string, scissors, markers

Directions:

1. Discuss different types of puppets and how puppeteers move puppets. Tell students that Paper Heart Puppets will use cardboard puppets in the upcoming performance.
2. Watch the “[Make Your Own Cardboard Dinosaur](#)” video by Paper Heart Puppets and follow along to make your own puppet:



3. Practice being a puppeteer! Explore how to use movements, voices, and sounds to give the puppet a unique personality.

Extensions:

- In small groups, write a short play featuring the puppets. Be sure that it's clear when each puppet is “talking”. Perform the plays for the class.
- Watch a popular show featuring puppets (Sesame Street, the Muppet Show, etc.) and discuss the puppets. How do they look, move, and act? How do the puppeteers operate the puppets? How do they make the audience connect with the puppets?

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Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What types of puppets were used in the performance? How did the puppeteer make them move?
- What was your favorite puppet from the performance? Why?
- How is hearing a story told out loud with puppets different from reading a book or watching a movie?

Post-Performance Activity: Mapping Stories

Learning Goal:

To understand the elements (character, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution) of stories.

Materials:

Story Map worksheet (see *page 5*), coloring supplies

Directions:

1. Discuss one of the stories told in the performance. Who were the main characters? Where did the story take place? What was the conflict? How did the story end?
2. Create a "story map" on the board for this story. Include the characters, the setting, the activities that occur, etc. This can be done in words and/or pictures.
3. Pick another story from the performance or a familiar book that is well-known by students. Discuss the storyline without going into too much detail.
4. Have students complete the Story Map worksheet for this story.
5. Share the story maps with the class.

Extensions:

- Use the Story Map worksheet to outline the plot of an original story.
- In small groups, use the sock puppets (see *page 3*) to reenact a story from the performance or another familiar story.



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Name: _____

Story Title: _____

STORY MAP

Directions: Draw and/or describe the elements of the story in each box.

Setting:

A large empty rectangular box with a purple border, intended for drawing or describing the setting of the story.

Main Characters:

A large empty rectangular box with a purple border, intended for drawing or describing the main characters of the story.

Plot:

A rectangular box with a purple border, containing a small circle with the number '1' in the bottom left corner. It is the first of six boxes for the plot.A rectangular box with a purple border, containing a small circle with the number '2' in the bottom left corner. It is the second of six boxes for the plot.A rectangular box with a purple border, containing a small circle with the number '3' in the bottom left corner. It is the third of six boxes for the plot.A rectangular box with a purple border, containing a small circle with the number '4' in the bottom left corner. It is the fourth of six boxes for the plot.A rectangular box with a purple border, containing a small circle with the number '5' in the bottom left corner. It is the fifth of six boxes for the plot.A rectangular box with a purple border, containing a small circle with the number '6' in the bottom left corner. It is the sixth of six boxes for the plot.

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Further Resources

- [Paper Heart Puppets Website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#)
- [The Boston Area Guild of Puppetry](#)
- [Puppet Showplace Theater](#)
- Blumenthal, Eileen: *Puppetry: A World History*, Harry N. Abrams (2005)
- Currell, David: *Puppets and Puppet Theatre*, The Crowood Press (1999)
- Gregory, Cynde: *Childmade: Awakening Children to Creative Writing*, Station Hill Press (2010)
- Kennedy, John: *Puppet Mania!*, North Light Books (2004)
- Trelease, Jim: *Read-Aloud Handbook: Eighth Edition*, Penguin Books (2019)

Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Theatre and Visual Arts

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.01, V.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.02, V.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (T.P.06, V.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07, V.P.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08, V.P.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (T.R.09, V.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10, V.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (T.Co.11, V.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

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Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science

K

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)

Science and Technology/Engineering

Technology/Engineering

- Engineering Design (1.ETS.1, 2.ETS.1, 3.ETS.1, 4.ETS.1, 6.ETS.1, 7.ETS.1)
- Technological Systems (5.ETS.3)
- Materials, Tools, and Manufacturing (6.ETS.2)

