

Puppet making

Project idea by Fayette Fox – Sambhali volunteer – September 2008

Overview

Making puppets with papier-mâché heads and cloth bodies.

Materials

A few old newspapers
Small bag of clay rocks
Packet of powdered fenugreek seeds
Binding glue
Two large bowls/pots
Blender
Forks
Poster paints (red, yellow, blue, white and black)
Empty plastic water bottles, cut open and filled with water
Paint brushes
Palette
Cloth for puppet clothes
Black yarn

Preparing ingredients

Note: This process is very labour intensive so please ask the girls for help at each stage.

Paper

1. Shred old newspapers to fill a large bowl/pot.
2. Cover with water and leave to soak for about 5 days until paper can easily fall apart into pulp.
3. Drain away some of the water and mix in a blender.
4. Squeeze all the water from the paper pulp. Do this by putting small balls of pulp in loosely woven cloth and squeezing.

Clay

5. Meanwhile break up a small bag of clay rocks. Wrap the rocks in cloth and smash them with a pestle.
6. Put the broken clay rocks in a bowl/pot and add a liter of water. Let sit overnight so it dissolves into a thick mud. Add another liter of water, a little bit at a time, stirring constantly.
7. Combine the dry paper pulp with the mud clay.
8. Add a small amount of glue to bind together.
9. The resulting mixture should have the consistency of clay and be easy to mould. If it is not and falls apart while being sculpted, mix up and add more clay mud.

Forming Puppet Heads

Tell the girls the following:

1. Make a ball with the clay. Not too small as this will be the puppet's head.
2. Slowing work thumb into ball.
3. With thumb still inside, slowly shape ball into a head.
4. If cracks appear, smooth them out with the back of a fork handle.
5. Tip: It can be easier to form a nose and ears from the main ball instead of sticking them on later.
6. If you stick anything onto the main ball, use the fork to score (scratch) both parts to help stick it well.
7. Indian animals and people work best.
8. For people, the eyes and mouth as well as other details (eyebrows, moustache, etc.) can be painted on later rather than made with clay.
9. Keep it simple and have fun.

Carefully move the wet clay heads up to a safe place on the roof to dry in the sun.

Painting puppets

Some of the girls may not have much painting experience. Please explain the following to them:

1. Explain how to colour mixing with primary colours.
2. Puppets are for kids so fun colours are good. Please don't make everything brown. People puppets

- should be different shades of brown but animals should be other colours. Blue dog? Why not?
3. Mix paint on palette (Thali plates work), not in paint pot or on puppet.
 4. Explain the importance of keeping brushes clean. Don't contaminate pure colours. Use the empty cut water bottles to clean brushes. As teacher you should keep an eye on the water bottles and change as needed.
 5. It's fun to mix colours and the result looks great. Want a yellow mouse? Why not make your own special yellow? Maybe mix a little white on the palette with yellow paint to make a pale yellow. This will look more interesting than if everyone uses the same shade of yellow. Experiment.
 6. Don't paint too thick or the paint will crack. Paint a little, let it dry and paint more. Be careful with the eyes especially to let the white dry completely before adding black pupils.

Puppet "dresses"

Tamanna will direct this part of the project. Small puppet heads can be used for finger puppets and the rest should be hand puppets. Note: The goal is for most puppets to be hand puppets so heads should be large enough.

Fabric must not be see-through or else you'll be able to see the puppeteer's hand. This spoils the illusion.

Finishing touches

After the heads are dry, the girls can add finishing touches such as gluing black yarn for hair onto the people's heads, etc.

Finally, glue the head to the dress.