

LEVELED BOOK • N

Puppets



Written by Kira Freed • Illustrated by Darcy Tom

Puppets



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Introduction

For centuries, puppet making was the work of woodcarvers. Puppets like Pinocchio were made of pieces of wood attached at the joints. Modern puppet makers have a choice of many more materials. They can use plastic, wood, animal skin, metal, fiberglass, and other materials. Each has its own special qualities.



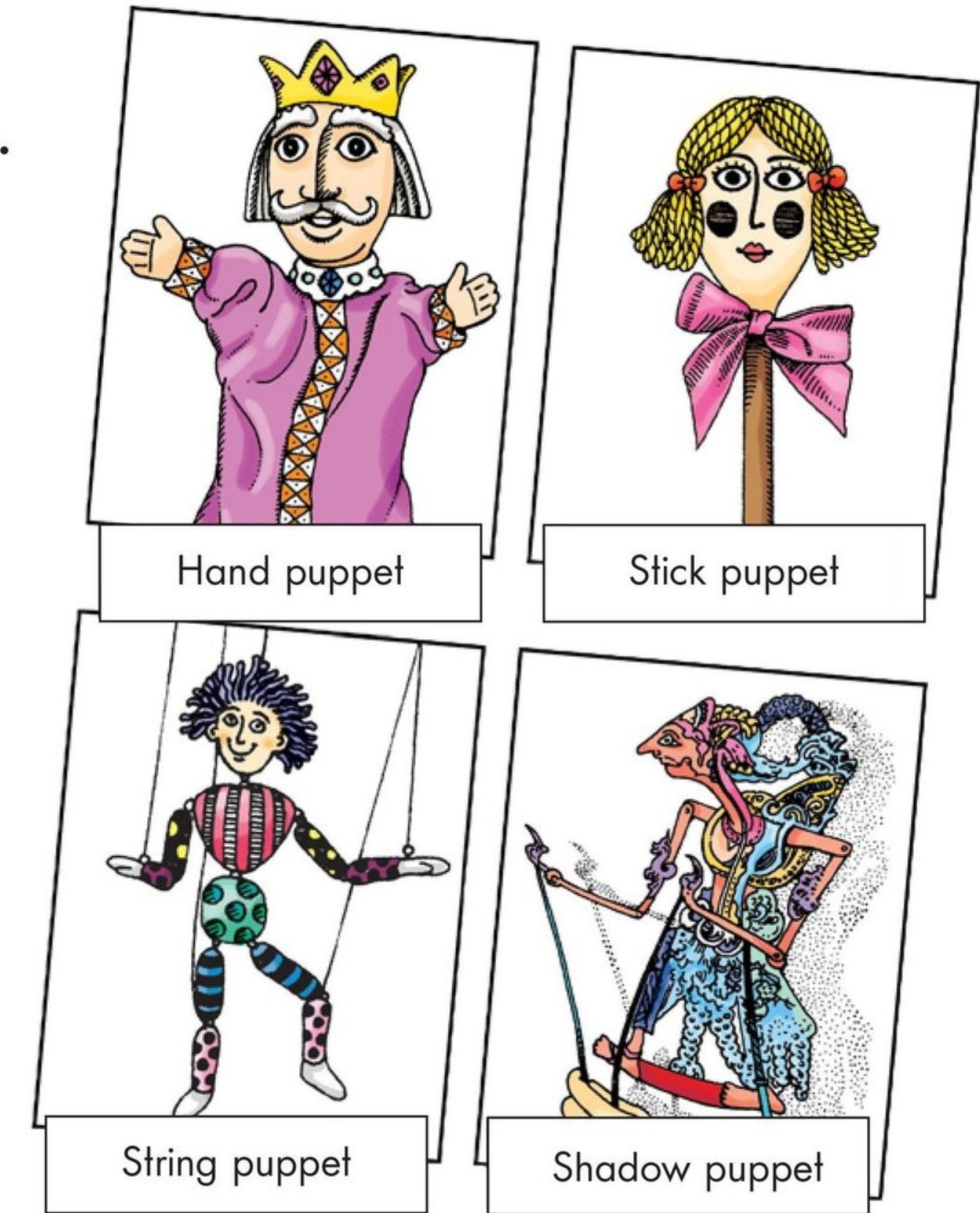
Puppets have been around for thousands of years. They have been popular all over the world. In each place, people have created and enjoyed puppets in ways that reflect the region's culture.

The people who make puppets come to life are called puppeteers. It takes a lot of training to be a good puppeteer.



Ancient Chinese hand puppet

Like other art, puppets are the result of someone's imagination. Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets, first got the idea for Kermit the Frog from a Ping-Pong ball and his mother's green felt coat. With a little imagination, just about anything can be turned into a puppet. Let's look at the four different kinds of puppets.



Hand Puppets

Hand puppets use the movement of your hand to give “life” to the puppet. They are usually soft-bodied puppets. Sometimes they have heads made of papier-mâché or Styrofoam. Finger puppets and glove puppets are types of hand puppets.



Finger puppets

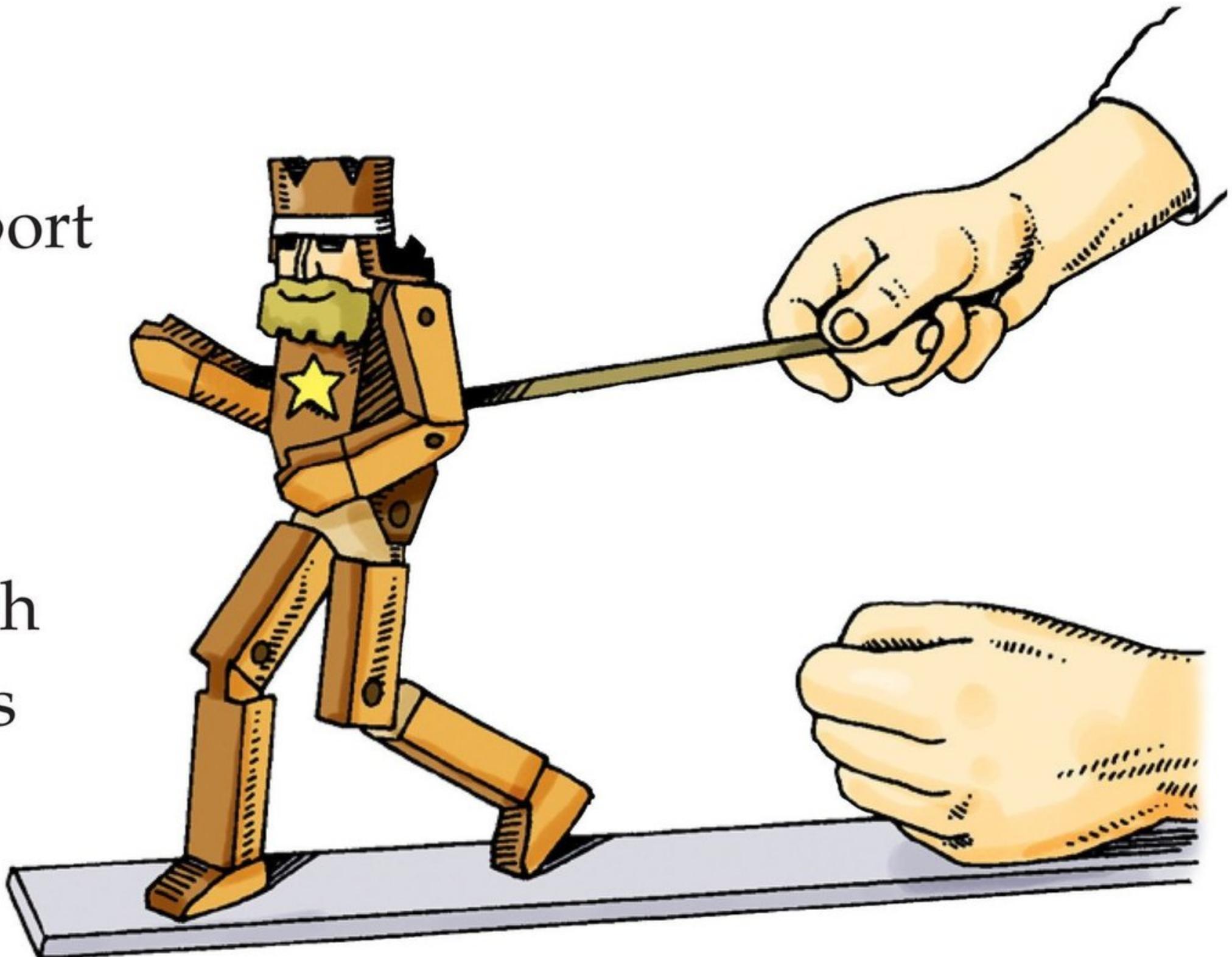


Glove puppets

Hand puppet

Stick Puppets

Sticks are used to support the upper body of a stick puppet. A well-known stick puppet is the dancing man, which is made of wood. It has joints that move. By bouncing the man on a table or floor, he appears to dance.



Stick puppet

Make a Stick Puppet

You can make a simple stick puppet by using a wooden spoon.

1. Use black felt-tipped pens to draw eyes, a nose, and a mouth.
2. Use a pink felt-tipped pen to add color to the cheeks.
3. Create hair by attaching yarn or pieces of fake fur to the spoon with clear, all-purpose glue. You might also want to add a mustache or beard if the puppet is a man.



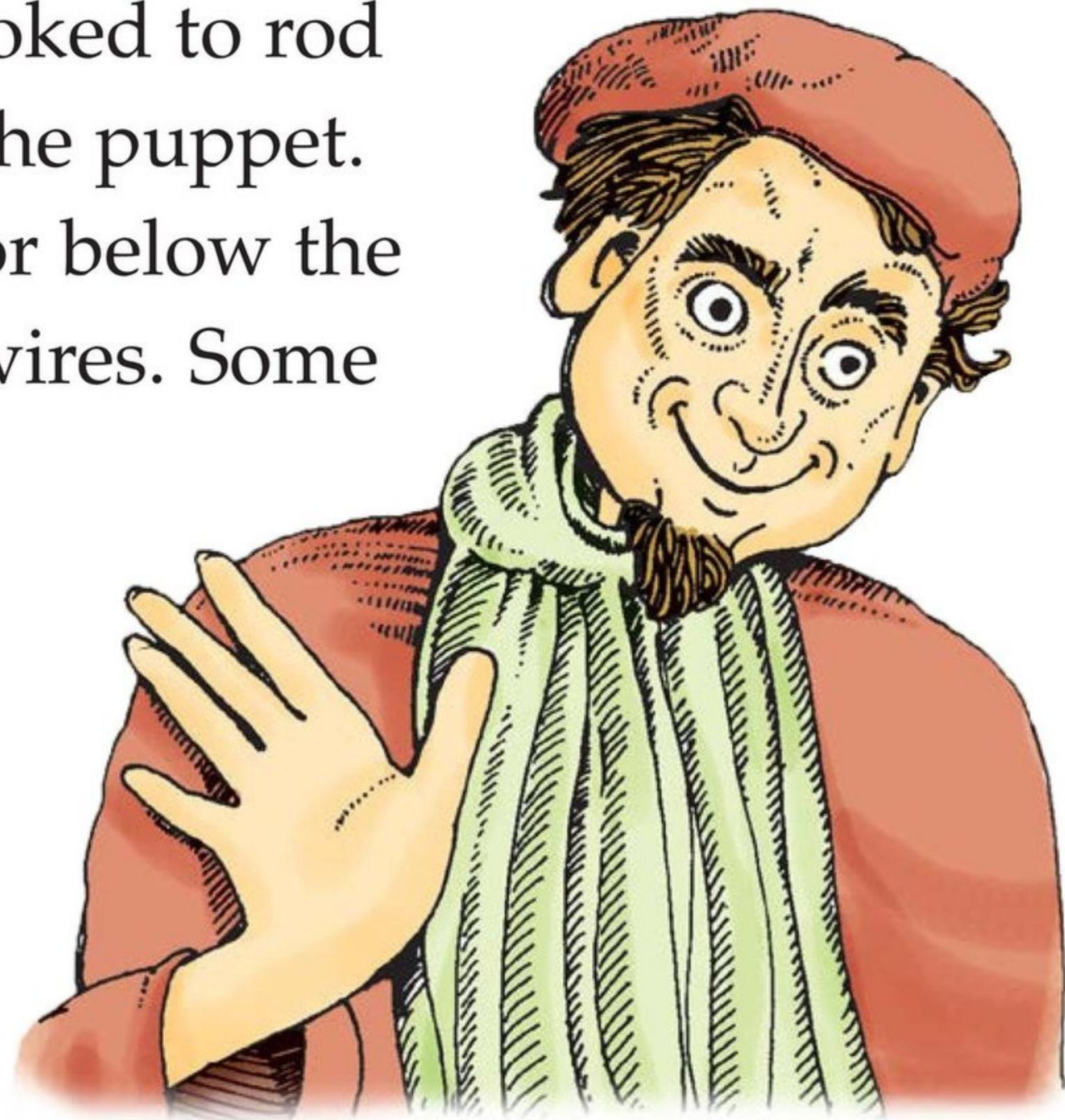
4. Tie a piece of ribbon at the neck of the puppet to create a bow or bow tie.

5. You may want to add other details such as sequins and glitter.

You can make a whole family of stick puppets using wooden spoons of different sizes. You can also have fun making zoo animals, different kinds of dogs or cats, or people from different cultures around the world.



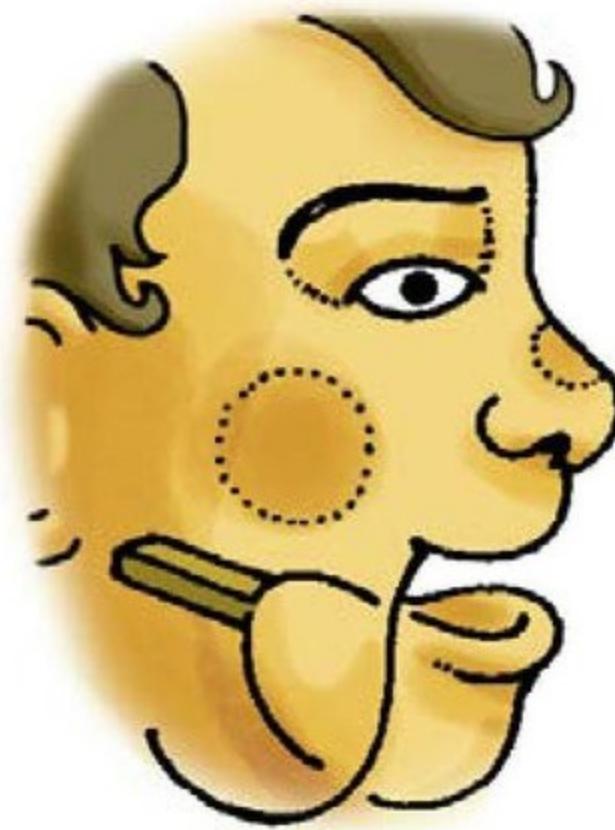
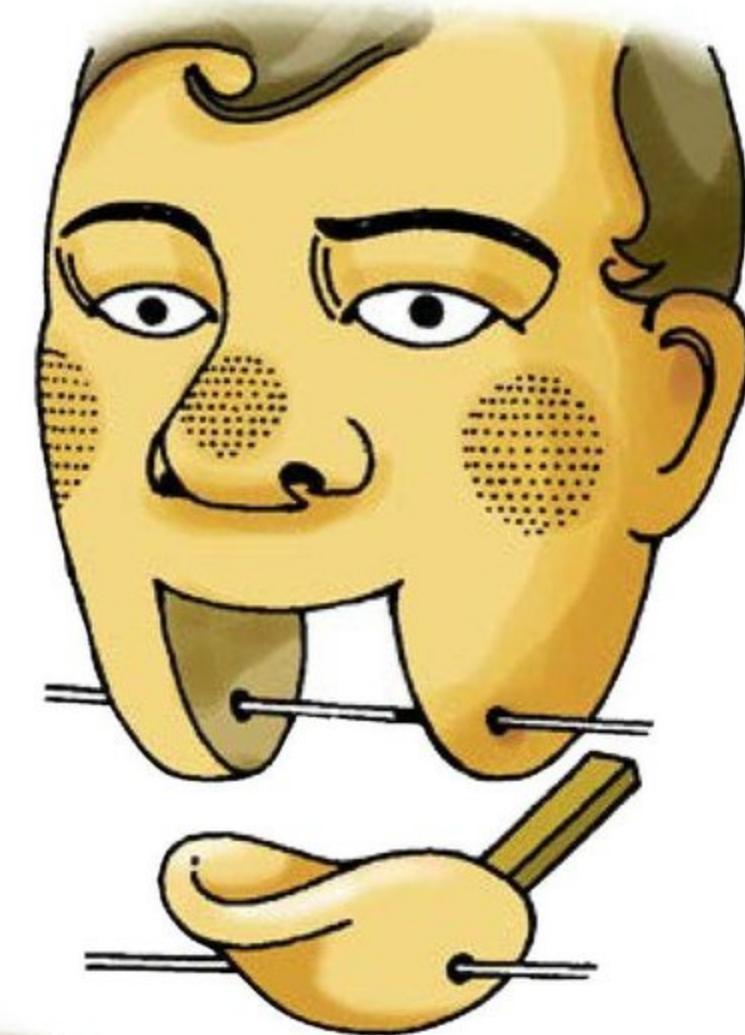
Rod puppets are an advanced kind of stick puppet. Rods and wires hooked to rod puppets are used to move the puppet. Someone standing behind or below the puppet moves the rods or wires. Some rod puppets have so many moving parts that it takes two or three puppeteers to work them.



Rod puppet with puppeteer's real hand

Like stick puppets, rod puppets use a stick or rod to support their upper body. They also use rods to move the arms and legs. Puppeteers move the rods and wires to make the puppet wave, gesture, walk, hop, run, and dance.

Rod puppets may also have controls that move the mouth, eyes, and eyebrows. These movements change the look of the puppet's face.



Rod puppet
mouth controls

Make a Rod Puppet

Start with an old doll or teddy bear. Get three wooden dowel rods. Ask an adult to help you decide how thick the dowel rods need to be. They should be strong enough to support the weight of the puppet.

1. Ask an adult to help you place a dowel rod on the doll or teddy bear. You can tape, wire, or stitch the rod to the back of the puppet's upper body. If the puppet's body is soft, you may want to cut a hole in the bottom or lower back of the puppet. Then push the rod up through the body to the head. An adult can help you decide the best place to put the rod.

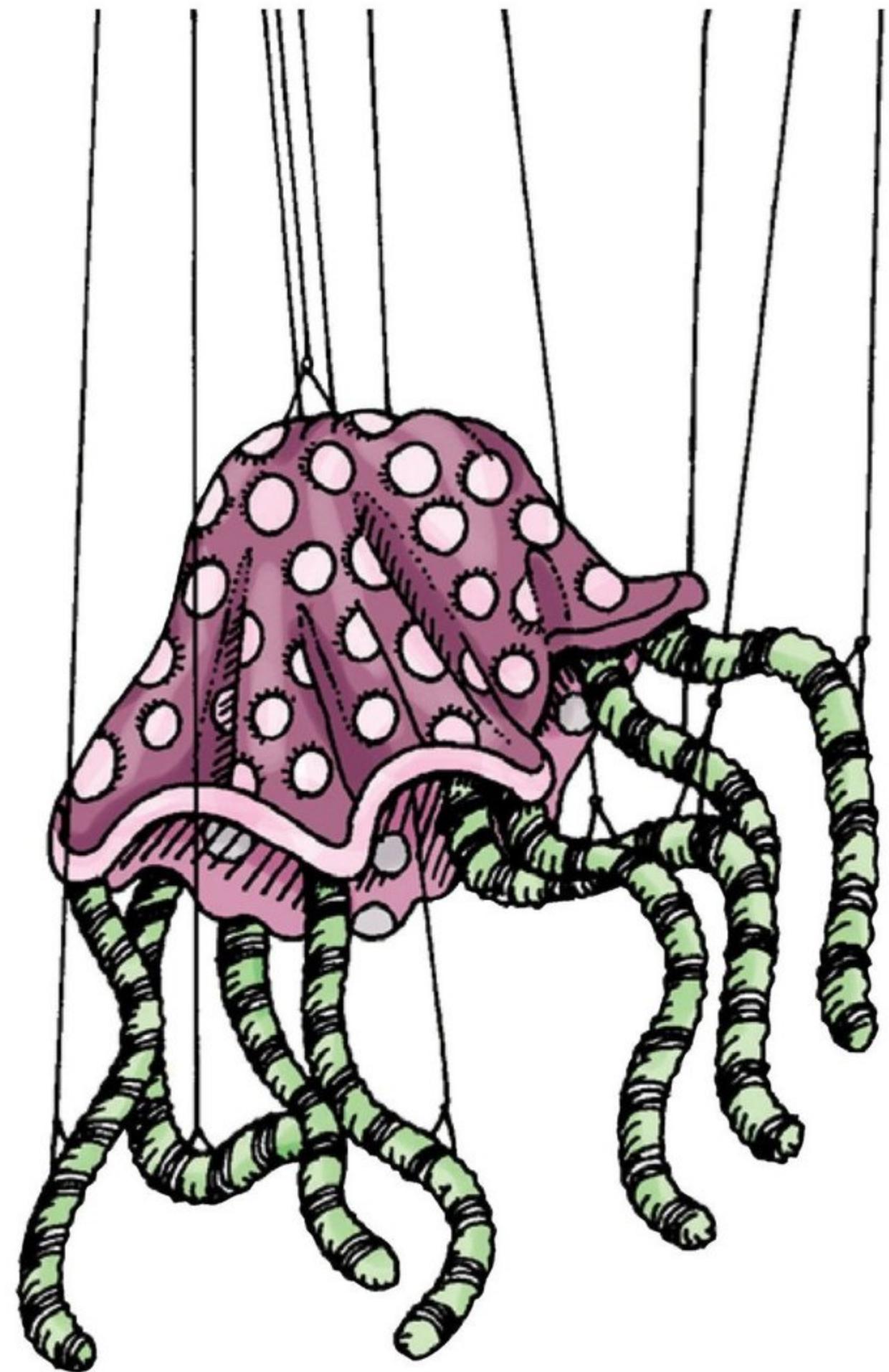
2. Put a rod on each hand of the puppet in the same manner. This will allow you to move the hands and arms. Then your puppet will seem more real.
3. It may take practice to move the rods in ways that will make your puppet move. With practice, you will learn the best ways to hold the rods.



String Puppets

String puppets, or marionettes, move by strings or wires hooked to different parts of their bodies. The other ends of the strings or wires are hooked to a cross-shaped piece of wood.

A puppeteer makes the puppet move by holding this piece of wood and moving it. String puppets can be moved in more ways than other types of puppets. They are able to dance, leap, and fly.



Because string puppets can move in so many ways, they are the most difficult kind of puppet to use. They have to be built carefully. If a string puppet is too heavy, the puppeteer will get tired from holding it up. If the puppet is too light, small breezes will cause it to move.



Shadow Puppets

Shadow puppets are usually flat puppets that are moved behind a screen that you can see through. The audience does not see the actual puppet. They see just the puppet's shadow cast on a screen. Since only the shadow is seen, there is no need to add details such as a painted face to a shadow puppet. Still, many shadow puppets are created with great detail.

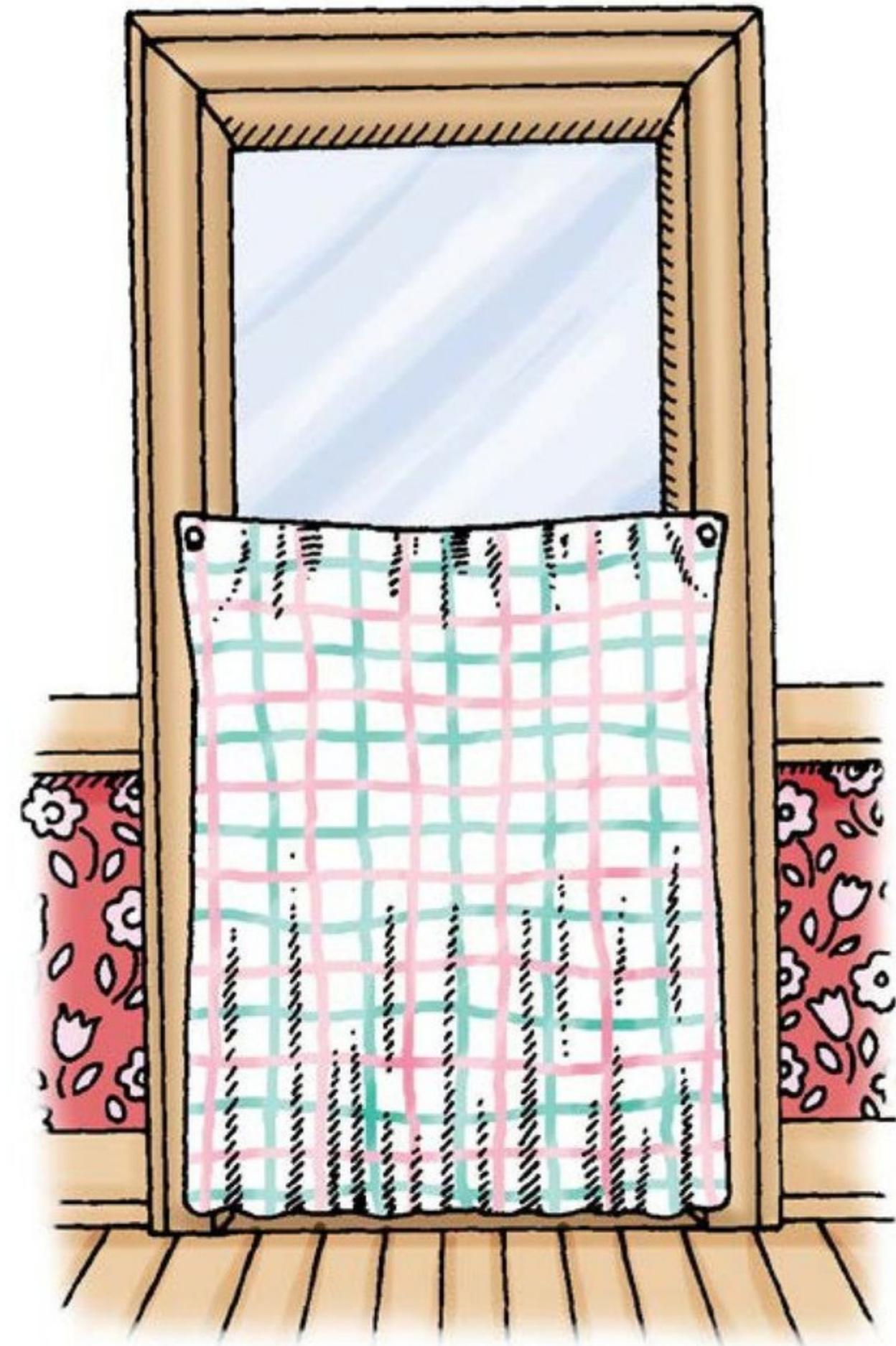


It is possible to add color to a shadow puppet's shadow. An easy way to do this is to first cut holes in the main body of the puppet. Then cover the holes with colored material that light can pass through, such as colored tissue paper or cellophane.



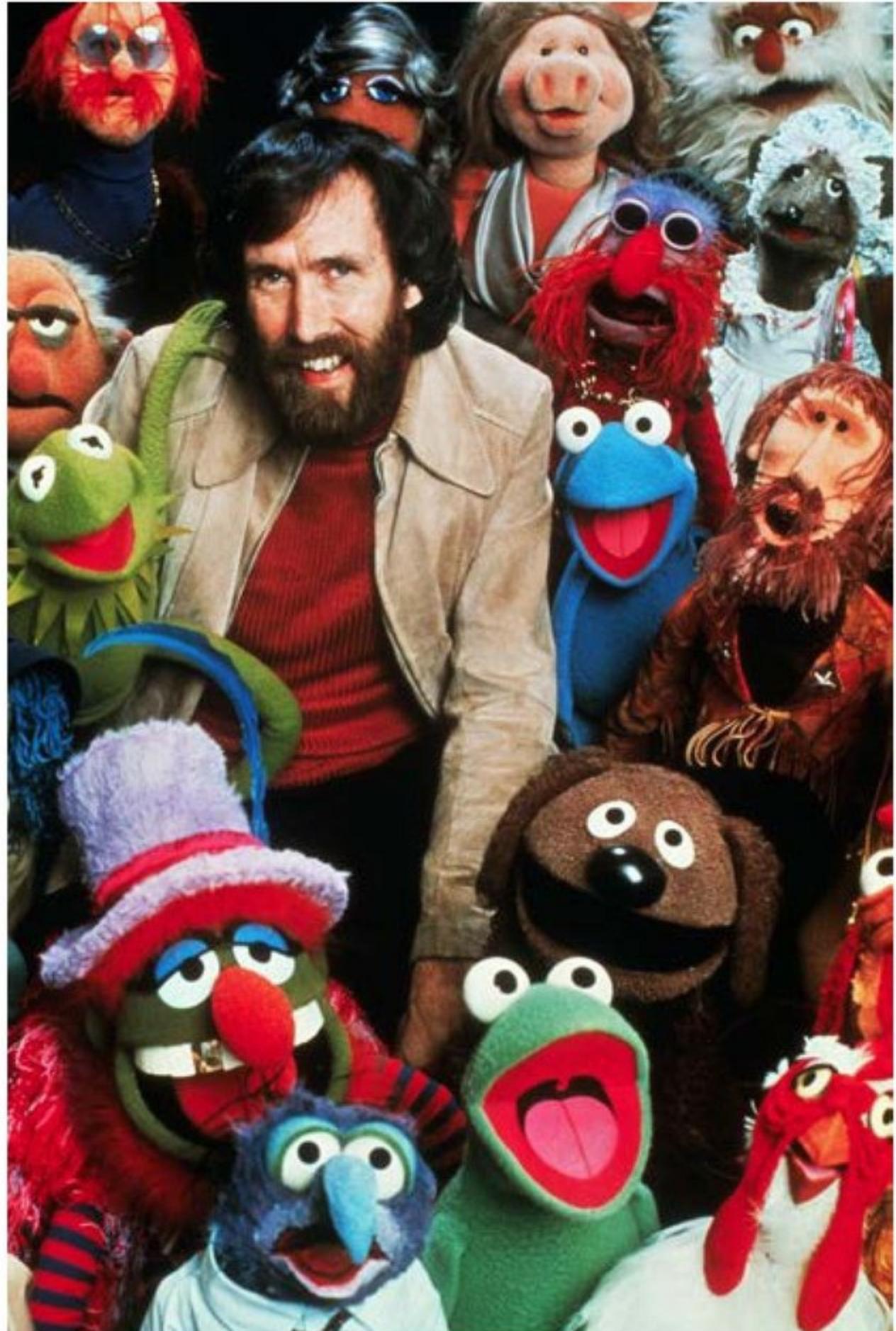
Puppet Stages

Many puppeteers like to be hidden. This makes it easier for people watching to use their imaginations during a puppet show. The type of stage used for a puppet show depends on the type of puppets. A table, a large box, or the floor can be used as a stage. A blanket tacked halfway up a doorway will also work.



famous Puppets

One of the most famous puppeteers of all time was Jim Henson. Jim created the Muppets, including Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy. He also created the Sesame Street characters, including Bert and Ernie, Oscar the Grouch, Grover, Cookie Monster, and Big Bird.



Collecting Materials

Many of the materials for making puppets can be found around your house. Others do not cost much and can be found at a craft store. You can even find puppet materials at yard sales!

Here are some materials to be on the lookout for:

- cardboard
- colored paper
- colored cellophane
- buttons
- sequins
- feathers
- corks
- yarn
- tempera paint
- magic markers
- fake fur
- fabric scraps
- glitter
- ribbon
- socks and gloves



This book is just an introduction to the wonderful world of puppets. You can find more information and ideas for making puppets at your library or on the Internet. Remember—when it comes to imagination, just about anything is possible. If you can imagine a puppet, there's probably a way to make it. Have fun!

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