

Felt finger puppets

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Background

This instructional text, giving the procedure for making a fabric finger puppet, will appeal to children, and the language is simple and direct, while introducing topic-related vocabulary. It has clear links to puppet-making units in design and technology, and to properties of materials in science, allowing literacy to be related to other curriculum work. The text incorporates many of the organisational and linguistic features typical of the genre.

Shared reading and discussing the text

- Read the text with the children, explaining any unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Ask the children to identify the sections of the text, using sub-headings to navigate. Label the title (which is also the statement of purpose – what is to be achieved), the picture of the finished puppet, the list of materials and equipment needed, the numbered instructions, the illustrations for some of the steps, and the variations.
- Cover the text and consider whether it would be possible to make the puppet using only the illustrations. Ask the children to describe what is happening in each picture and write down their suggestions. Now uncover the text and identify places where the written instructions extend the information in the pictures (and also places where the illustrations clarify the written text). Draw out the fact that the text and illustrations work together to ensure that the instructions can be followed easily and accurately.
- Add labels to the first two illustrations to show how this can further clarify the process, demonstrating how to use lines to point to parts of the picture and adding a brief explanation of each.
- Focus on the list of materials, highlighting the bullet points. Note that bullets are a way of distinguishing items in a list. Rewrite the items along a single line, using commas to separate (noting that the commas replace the bullets). Ask the children to consider which is more

effective. Draw out the point that a vertical list allows items to be considered one at a time and perhaps ticked off to ensure that all the materials are available.

- Read each instruction and highlight the action required – the imperatives – noting their position at the beginning of the sentence. Note that some of the steps have more than one sentence, where further explanation is needed for clarity.

Activities

- In groups, children can follow the instructions to make the finger puppets, then evaluate the effectiveness of the text, considering each section. Ask them to suggest improvements or additions to the list of materials, the written instructions and the illustrations.
- Prepare a cut-up version of the text (with numbers removed) and ask the children to reassemble it, first matching text to pictures and then sequencing the instructions. For less able children, leave the text with the pictures. In guided work, ask children to explain how they knew the order in which to put the instructions. With more able children, draw attention to the language clues that show how one instruction depends on the previous one for its sense (such as *Draw another line*).
- Give the children a copy of the text with some words taken out (such as the imperatives or the nouns). Ask them to work in pairs to complete the text. This activity can be differentiated by the type of word taken out or the number of omissions.
- Ask children to add labels to each illustration, using the model begun in the shared text work.

Extension/further reading

Children can write their own instructions for similar activities, incorporating the identified features. See *Making Puppets* by Josie McKinnon (Rigby Educational) and *365 Rainy Day Activities* by Vivienne Bolton (Dempsey Parr) for other puppet-making ideas.