

Procedure:

Making Your Puppet

1. Project AAM Kumbhakarna lintel. Ask students to identify each character and support their identification with visual evidence.
2. Explain that shadow puppet performances are still a popular way to recall the lessons of the Story of Rama. Show the shadow puppet of Kumbhakarna. Have students compare and contrast the two depictions of Kumbhakarna.
3. Explain how shadow puppets work by pointing to hinges and sticks.
4. Show the KQED video *Shadow Light* or another video so students can get an understanding of how the person and puppet move with the screen and light.
5. Give each student a manila folder. Using pencil, they may draw and transfer either their noble or demon character onto it. REMEMBER! If they want to have a moving part, they must overlap the parts to be able to put a brad in to join them. For example, the shoulder must stick out a bit from the body. To join it with the arm, place the puppet's arm over the shoulder, and join them with a brad. Plan whether you want moving parts, and draw those away from the body.
6. Cut out each part.
7. Make any cut-outs you want so that the light can come through. You can hole-punch eyes, or a belt of light. Older students or teacher/helpers can make cut-outs with mat knives.
8. Make a small hole and join any moving parts with a brad.
9. Color your puppet to make it even more expressive. Remember, some of your audience may sit behind the screen, as in Bali.
10. Attached any sticks you need to the moving parts with small bits of tape.
11. Try it in front of the light!
12. Mid-project reflection: Does your puppet look like you want it to in shadow? (Get used to seeing the shadow; sometimes students draw on the puppet, but it doesn't look as subtle in shadow.) Make adjustments.

Bringing Your Puppets to Life

1. Experiment with how your puppet character might move. What kind of voice does your character have? Say something in that voice.
2. Have each student take a turn introducing her or his puppet behind the screen. Challenge students in pairs or small groups to make a still tableau with their puppets. For example, maybe the demon is flying overhead, while the noble woman is striding along hand-in-hand with a noble tiger. Maybe another demon is lurking in some underbrush.
3. In small groups, students make a short (1–2 minute) scene with their puppets that has a beginning, middle, and end. Each student can speak for his or her own character, or have a narrator.
4. Add scenery. Students can experiment drawing a landscape on an overhead transparency, or have one student hold scenery, such as branches or other objects that the puppets use. Share/perform their scenes.
5. Students can also use their bodies in back (and even in front!) of the screen to interact with the puppets behind the screen.
6. Reflect: What was hard about this project? How did you persevere through it? What new skills did you learn? What was the most fun part of this project?

Optional Activities Before You Create Your Shadow Puppets:

Introduction to Balinese Shadow Theater

Lesson Duration: 1.5 hrs.

Watch and discuss the film *Shadow Master*. If possible, handle or view Balinese shadow puppets. Notice and discuss how the parts are moved. Notice where the latticework is cut into the puppet.

Shadow Party: Experiment with shadows

Lesson Duration: 1 hour

Preparation Duration: 45 minutes of teacher preparation to hang the screen, position the overhead projector(s), cut out model puppet parts,

Students rotate through different stations in groups of three, for about 3 minutes per station.

*Before the rotations, demonstrate each station. Then demonstrate how to interact onscreen. For example, how to make a shadow bigger (get close to the light source). How can characters touch each other onscreen without touching in real life?

Station 1: Casting shadows on the overhead projector with leaves, small puppets, or dolls

Station 2: Casting shadows with puppets on one side of the screen

Station 3: Casting shadows with your body on the other side of the screen

Station 4: At the 2nd overhead projector casting shadows with some scenery on pre-drawn overhead transparencies of landscapes, buildings, etc.

Station 5: Accompany the action quietly with some instruments. Really follow the action! If there is no music, one station could be improvising a narration of the action.

Default Station: In front of the screen as the audience!

Students can take turns being “onscreen” when they are in their station. For example, if one group is at the station to cast shadows with their full bodies, have them take turns waiting off screen, going one by one onto the screen for a minute.

- If this activity is too busy, try having fewer stations, such as only station 1 and 3 going on at once, for example.
- If you can, hang two screens and have stations at both screens

The size, shape, and features of a puppet tell us about the personality and character type: a large body, round eyes, and splayed stance usually mean a coarse character like a demon. A slim body, modest profile, almond eyes, and a closed stance signifies a refined character like a princess or god.

Stories from the Indian epic Story of Rama have been familiar in Cambodia and other countries of Southeast Asia for more than a thousand years. Here is a scene from the later part of the story. The beloved wife of the hero Rama has been abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Rama, together with his allies, the monkeys, attack Lanka to rescue her. During the ensuing struggle, Ravana's brother Kumbhakarna (the largest figure) takes on the monkey warriors. They attack by the thousands, but for all their wrestling and biting and clawing they cannot overcome him. Kumbhakarna maims hundreds of monkeys and devours hundreds more. The carnage continues without resolution till Rama himself (possibly the figure at left with the head broken off) joins in, and using his most powerful weapons, is finally able to cut Kumbhakarna to pieces. This relief would probably have been positioned over a door of a Hindu temple. The face and head of the central figure were entirely restored before this relief entered the museum's collection. The restored area has been darkened to distinguish it from original areas.



Kumbhakarna, approx. 1930–1938, by I Wara.
Bali; Negara district, Batuan village, Gianyar
regency. Hide, wood, string, and plant fiber.
American Museum of Natural History, 70.0/8202.



Kumbhakarna battles the monkeys, from the epic Ramayana (Story of Rama), 1100–1200. Cambodia or northeastern Thailand; former kingdom of Angkor. Sandstone. *The Avery Brundage Collection, B66S7.*