

Great Arizona Puppet Theater

“Dragons, Ladies, and Tigers” Study Guide

Overview

Welcome to the world of *Dragons, Ladies, and Tigers*! This study guide was designed to correspond to the Great Arizona Puppet Theater’s original show based on three Chinese Folktales. This study guide covers the history of Chinese Shadow Puppetry, Folktales, pre and post-show discussion ideas, and a fun puppet making activity.

This guide can be adapted for students of any grade level and used by teachers or parents. Seeing the puppet show and following along with the study guide satisfies many Arizona curriculum standards for grades Kindergarten - 2nd which can be found on page 5. Activities can be easily adapted for higher grades as well. Please use the sections that work for you and your students and feel free to contact us with any questions or comments.

History of Shadow Puppets

This show uses original puppets made here at the Great Arizona Puppet Theater that were inspired by traditional Chinese shadow puppets which have a long, rich history. Chinese shadow puppetry is so important in fact that it is on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Shadow puppets are silhouette figures made from **leather or paper**, usually accompanied by music, singing, and narrative. The figures create the illusion of moving images on a translucent cloth screen illuminated from behind by manipulating the puppets using rods. Many elder shadow puppetry artists can perform dozens of traditional plays, which are orally transmitted or passed down in written form. Many puppeteers also carve their own puppets, which traditionally can have between 12 - 24 movable joints. Chinese shadow puppet shows often tell folk tales (like you will see in *Dragons, Ladies, and Tigers*) but it can also pass on information such as cultural history, social beliefs, oral traditions, and local customs.



The use of shadow puppets in China extends back many hundreds of years. Legend has it that an Emperor was terribly grieved by his wife's death. Nothing could cheer him up and he neglected his duties to the State. An artist of his court made a flat figure resembling his beloved empress and moved it against a white screen lit from behind. The performance so comforted the emperor that he was able to resume his duties. This is said to be the beginning of all shadow puppetry.

Before Your Visit

Objectives: Good audience behavior is important so that everyone has an enjoyable time at the puppet theater. Take some time before your trip to set expectations with your students, just like you would for your classroom. Also, review some information about puppetry with your students and discover what experience they may have had with it before.

- Discuss theater audience behavior. How should our behavior be different seeing a live show rather than a movie or watching TV at home? Ask students what they think some rules might be and be sure the following is addressed:
 - Use walking feet and indoor voices while coming into the theater.
 - Talking to the puppets is ok if they ask you a question or talk to you first, otherwise we should be quiet.
 - Understand that the lights will go out and you may hear loud music or sound effects.
- Use the above information about shadow puppets to discuss some history of Chinese Shadow Puppetry. Ask your students if anyone has seen a puppet show or live theater before. What was it like?

Folktales

Objectives: This performance features three folktales from China. Before or after seeing the show, review some of the main traits of folktales with your students. Then, try naming a few folktales that are popular in America (examples include *Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox* or *Jack and the Beanstalk*). Consider an activity where students write their own folktale, either in groups or individually, based on the characteristics of what makes a classic folktale (this writing activity satisfies some first and second grade writing standards).

Traits of a Folktale:

- Folktales stem from an oral tradition passed down from the common “folks” or people
- The stories grew out of the lives and imaginations of regular people
- They're popular because they have imaginative characters, supernatural elements, a simple sense of justice, and happy endings
- They always have fundamental wisdom from the culture they come from and teach a lesson. So, they are always a form of *entertainment* **and** *an important teaching tool*



- Heroes/heroines all have good traits like being honorable, courageous, fair, charitable, and unselfish
- The setting and plot is very simple and easy to describe
- The plot is full of action and follows simple patterns
- Descriptions are quick and to the point with little description and few details
- Theme usually focuses on universal truths, lessons, and values important to the group that created the folktale
- Fables** are different than folktales in that they have animals as their main characters instead of people (like *The Tortoise and the Hare*)

Discussion Topics for After the Show

Objectives: Students will answer questions about the plot and themes of *Dragons, Ladies, and Tigers* and compare it with information they now know about folktales. Students will also assess and discuss various elements of the puppet production and get an introduction to analyzing live performance.

The Plot and Themes:

- What were the three stories about? Who were the main characters? Guide your students through a review of the play's three stories.
 - As a reminder the three stories are—"The Lady in the Picture," "The Living Kuan-yin," and "The Tiger's Teacher"
- Which of the three stories is a **fable**?
- What were the lessons from each story?
 - "The Lady in the Picture" is about how precious time spent with your family is
 - "The Living Kuan-yin" teaches the importance of being unselfish and the power of generosity
 - "The Tiger's Teacher" is a fable about the dangers of becoming too proud and disrespecting your teachers
- Which story do you relate to the most and why?
- If you could go ask the goddess Kuan-yin a question like Po-Wan, what would you ask? Would you sacrifice your question to ask someone else's? Why or why not?

The Production/Performance:

- Why do you think Great AZ Puppets chose to use shadow puppetry to tell these stories?
- What did you like about the show? Is there something you wish could have been different?
- How is a puppet show different from a play performed with human actors? What are puppets able to do that humans can't?
- How did the movement of the puppets help tell the story?

Make Your Own Shadow Puppets & Tell Your Own Folktale

Objective: Students will create their own shadow puppets and reenact their own version of one of the folktale's from *Dragons, Ladies, and Tigers* or create a puppet show based on a folktale they wrote.

Materials for Puppet:

Thick paper for the puppets (such as good quality construction paper, posterboard, or file folders)

Pencils

Scissors

Single hole punch

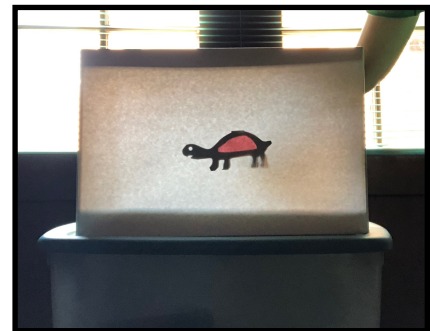
Small brads

Bamboo skewers or bendy straws

Tape

Directions:

1. Print the pattern of shadow puppets found at the end of the packet. You can print directly onto the thick material that you will use for puppets, or print on regular paper and cut it out to have students trace on thick material later.
 - a. If you want to make other characters, or have students make their own, just draw other designs. To make a moving piece use rounded corners and draw the pieces separately.
2. Have students trace all puppet pieces onto thick material if needed, then cut out each part of the puppet on the lines.
3. Use a single hole punch to make holes on each dot.
4. Attach the pieces of each puppet together using a small brad. Don't close the brad too tight, you want it to be a little loose so that the joint will move easily.
5. Using tape, attach a bamboo skewer or a bendy straw to the puppet. These will be the "rods" you will use to move the puppet.
 - a. For the people, attach one rod onto the hand and one onto the head. For the dragon, attach one rod to the head and one to the tail.
6. To make a shadow screen for your puppets you can attach plain white fabric to a frame, or stretch a sheet between a doorway. You can also use a cardboard box by cutting a hole in one side and gluing in a white cloth or paper for your screen (pictured right).
7. Put a light behind the screen—any light will do a but a light with a moving head is best. You can even use natural light from a window (pictured right).
8. Hold your puppet up against the screen and begin to perform your own version of the folktales!



Resources

Arizona State Standards:

<http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/>

<http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

Chinese Shadow Puppetry:

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/chinese-shadow-puppetry-00421>

Folktales:

Luo, T.Y. *The Lady in the Picture and other Folktales from China*. China Books. 2014.

Li, Yao-Win. *Sweet and Sour: Tales from China*. Clarion Books. 2007. (Grades 5-7)

“The Fable, Folktale, Myth, Legend: Differences and Examples” at study.com

“Folktale - description of story elements and quality characteristics”

<http://www.homeofbob.com/literature/genre/fiction/folktales/elements.html>

Great Arizona Puppet Theater:

<https://www.azpuppets.org>

Want to learn more about workshop opportunities for your students or fellow teachers?

Have ideas for improving this study guide?

Contact the Education Director at education@azpuppets.org

Arizona State College & Career Readiness Standards

Reading Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening Standards:

K.SL.2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood. (*Post-show discussion*)

1.SL.2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. (*Post-show discussion*)

2.SL.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. (*Post-show discussion*)

K.RL.3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story (*Post-show discussion*)

1.RL.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details (*Post show discussion, Puppet Showcase*)

2.RL.3. Recount stories, including fables and folktales, from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral (*Folktales, Post-show discussion*)

2.RL.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. (*Post show discussion, Puppet Showcase*)

1.W.3. Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure. (*Folktales—write your own folktale*)

2.W.3. Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order and provide a sense of closure. (*Folktales—write your own folktale*)

Arts Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 1:

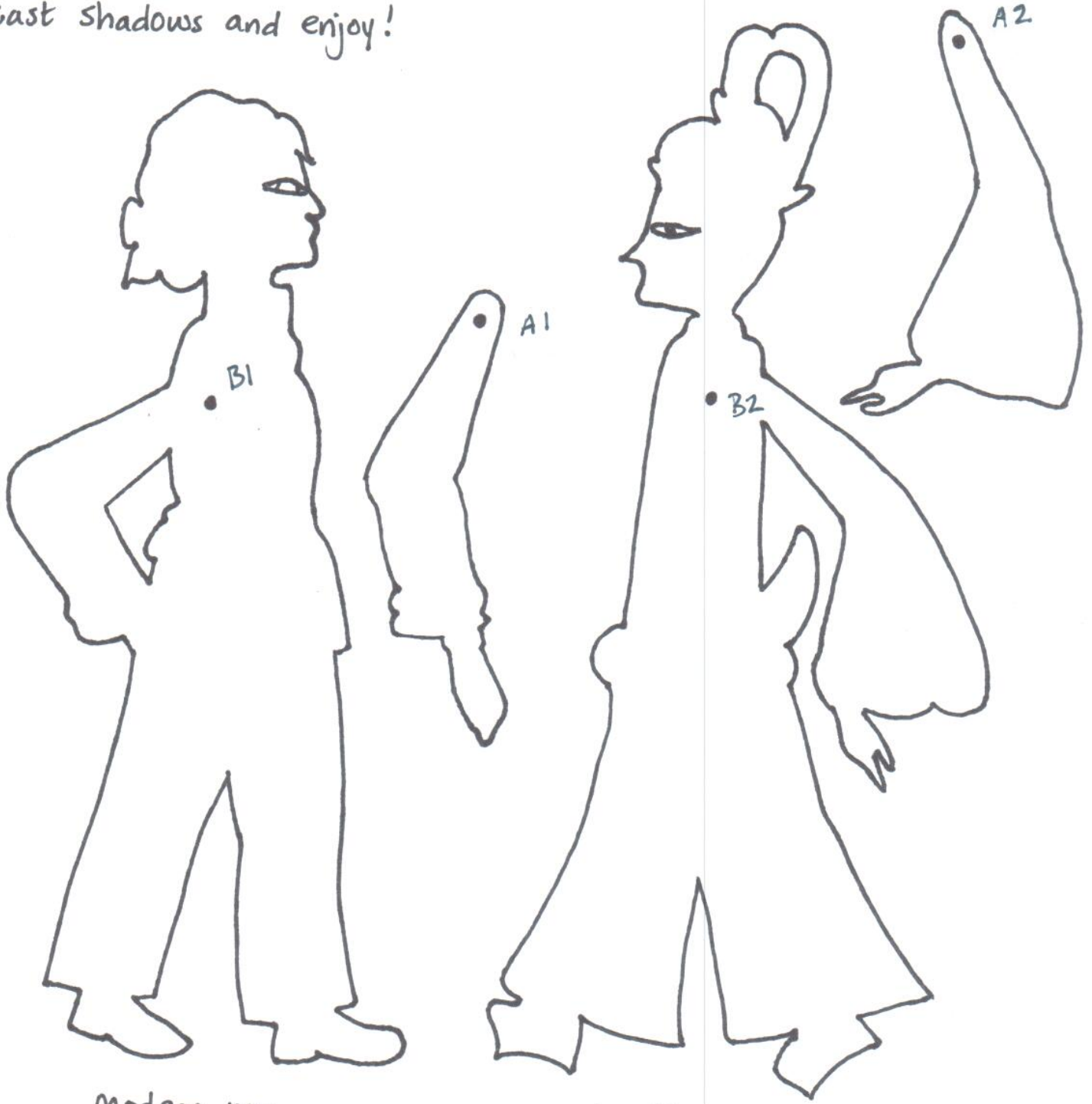
TH:Re8.1.K.a With prompting and support, identify preferences in . . . age-appropriate theatre performance. (*Post show discussion*)

TH:Re8.1.1.a Explain preferences and emotions in . . . age-appropriate theatre performance. (*Post show discussion*)

TH:Cn10.1.K.a With prompting and support, identify similarities between characters and oneself in dramatic play or a guided drama experience. (*Puppet Showcase*)

Great Arizona Puppet Theater

1. cut on lines out of thick material
2. punch holes on all circles
3. use brads to attach arm (A) to body (B)
4. attach one rod to hand and one to head
5. Cast shadows and enjoy!



modern woman

traditional man

Great Arizona Puppet Theater

1. Cut on lines out of thick material
2. Punch holes on all circles
3. Use brads to attach pieces together
4. Attach rods at head & tail with tape
5. Cast shadows and enjoy!



Chinese dragon

