

How to Make a TOY THEATER

with Patti Smithsonian



The Big Idea

In this workshop students will learn how to make a **miniature puppet theater** out of a cardboard box. A Toy Theater is a miniature replica of a professional theater. It can have cardboard curtains, backdrops and puppet characters to act a scene.



You Need

- Cardboard box: use a cereal, cracker box
- Crayons or markers or paint
- Scissors
- Glue, tape or stapler
- Collage materials (paper, magazines, etc)
- Sticks for puppet handle: pencils, chopstick, shish kabob sticks
- Step-By-Step tutorial: www.think360arts.org

The Plan

CUT OUT THE PUPPET STAGE

Step 1 - To make the floor of the stage, cut about 1 inch off the bottom of the box. Cut all the way around. This piece is will be the floor of the stage.

Step 2 - Flip the floor and insert it into the bottom of the box. It will be too tight to slide the floor into the box, so cut two slits along the back corners of the box. The slits should be the same height as the stage and will give enough room to insert the floor.

Step 3 - Cut an opening in the front of the stage for the puppets. The bottom cut should be even with the floor. Save the cardboard piece which has been cut out for the stage opening.

Step 4 - Cut grooves on the top sides of the box to push in sticks holding the curtains and backdrops.



The Plan cont.

DECORATE THE PUPPET STAGE

Decorate the stage by gluing papers shapes to it. Cut the shapes out of magazines, old greeting cards, or painted paper. You can also paint the stage or wrap and glue paper onto the whole stage.

MAKE COLLAGE PUPPETS

Cut out shapes and faces from magazines. Arrange and glue onto cardboard. Cut out your cardboard character.

Attach a stick to the back of the puppet.

MAKE PUPPET MOVE and TALK

Practice making a puppet move across the stage as if they are sad, happy, angry, confused.

Practice a high voice, a low voice, a silly voice, baby voice, animal voice, monster voice, robot, etc.

MAKE A SCENE

Use the puppets to make a scene. It can begin with a problem or conflict--something happens. Then, the problem is resolved in some way. That's one scene. When we put several scenes together, that's a play!

Going Further

- Toy Theaters of the World by Peter Baldwin
- Paper Toys of the World by BlairWhitton
- The Art of Romare Bearden by Romare Bearden and Ruth E. Fine
- Check out Patti's other video and learn how to make fun sounds to add to your puppet shows!



Teaching Artist Tip

- Set up a mirror in front of the stage so kids can see the puppets in action.
- Measure and cut neatly for better results cutting the cardboard box.
- Younger children (K-2) may do better with a three-sided box open entirely in the back. They can operate the puppets from below the stage.

