

How to Choose a Book for Puppetry

Excerpted from “From the Picture Book to the Puppet Stage” workshop
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Picture books are an excellent source for lesson material featuring puppets. Because young children learn best with repetition, both reading a book and acting it out with puppets provide that repetition in an engaging way. Many teachers have favorite books for use in a given unit, and adding puppets to the story gives the lesson another dimension. Furthermore, children who are visual learners may be stimulated by the book, while children who are kinesthetic learners or those with special needs may be best stimulated by a puppet re-creation of the book.

The primary goal of book-based puppet play is to generate interest and excitement about books, and to encourage children to want to read.

As with other lessons for early childhood, some books are more appropriate for use in puppet lessons than others.

Teachers searching for books to be used in this context should look for:

- Repeated phrases
- A sense of humor that the children will appreciate
- A story that may involve travel
- Opportunities for movement
- Inspiring pictures
- An element of surprise
- Characters that are animals or children
- An interesting atmosphere or setting
- The possibility for all the children to be the main character
- Series of people or items that lend themselves to sequencing or simple math activities

Perhaps the strongest recommendation for a book is a plot that promotes problem solving opportunities. While books need not have all the qualities listed above to be successful as the basis of a puppet lesson, it is important to think about how the book will be used, and which of the qualities is most critical to support the lesson being presented.