

# The Rainbow Bridge and Other Tales

## Study Guide

### THE PERFORMER

**H**obey Ford, the creator of the Golden Rod Puppets, designs, builds and performs puppet productions throughout the US and Canada. Today he is based in the mountains of Western North Carolina, near Asheville, but he was born in coastal Connecticut. He began working with puppets in 1976 at The State University of New York in Purchase, where he studied art.

Ford founded the Golden Rod Puppets in 1980 after moving to North Carolina, and since that time he has worked at such venues as The Smithsonian Museum, The Kennedy Center, The Jim Henson International Festival of Puppetry, The Detroit Institute of Arts as well as schools, festivals, libraries and theaters across the country.

The Golden Rod Puppets are named for their focus on rod puppetry, including many related styles of puppetry, which involve the use of rods. Ford works with traditional European style rod puppets, shadow puppets, adapted bunraku puppets, as well as contemporary hand and rod puppets. Ford serves as rod puppetry consultant to Puppeteers of America.

Drawing on art, woodworking and basic engineering skills, Hobe designs and crafts his puppets. He is renowned for his techniques of carved foam rubber, which he uses in his “foamies”, finely articulated realistic animal puppets. Ford employs complicated mechanisms and careful manipulation, while using his own voice and storytelling skills to bring his puppets to life.

Ford has won numerous awards including three Jim Henson Foundation grants, and puppetry’s highest honor, a Citation of Excellence from Union International de la Marionette. He also teaches nationally through The Kennedy Center’s Professional Development for Teachers program.

### THE AUDIENCE

A good audience is as important as the performer to make a performance go well. It is important to listen quietly and not to talk unless the performer invites the audience to do so. If you are sitting on the floor you should sit cross-legged and not on your knees, so the children behind you can see. Clapping at the end of a story or at the end of the show is always appreciated. Good audience skills are an essential for the success of the show, so have fun but remember your audience manners.

# THE STORIES

## The Rainbow Bridge

This is a story of from a Native American tribe near Santa Barbara, California called the Chumash. It is a creation story telling how the first people were created on what is now Santa Cruz Island. As with many creation stories, many of the creatures came to be the way they are today through events in the story. It tells how the people first got fire and how condor was once a white bird and how dolphins came to be. There is a modern story called rainbow bridge about what happens when pets die, but that is a different story.

## Three Billy Goats Gruff

Everyone is familiar with the classic tale, Three Billy Goat Gruff. I tell it differently, as if happened today. The Biggest Billy Goat is true to the traditional story, while Littlest Billy Goat brings modern ideas and logic to the story. Middle Billy Goat, though foolish and naïve, in the end, shares wisdom. You'll want to read the traditional story so you can tell the difference with this retelling.

## El Coqui

This Puerto Rican folktale tells the story of a little frog called El Coqui. Parrot thinks the animals have all grown lazy and announces a race. The winner of the race will be granted a wish. While the Parrot suggest that they all prepare themselves, each animal has their own excuse to lay about, thinking that they will surely win the race. El coqui begins to exercise and practice. You'll have to see how it all turns out. The traditional music for the story is by a Puerto Rican musician.

# SHADOW PUPPETS

Shadow puppetry was first created in China over 2000 years ago. A Chinese story tells how the Emperor lay in bed heartbroken when his love died. The paper cutter made a paper cut out that resembled his lady and performed it from the back side of a piece of fabric by the light of a candle. From the bed it looked like the shadow of the Emperor's true love. The Emperor began to talk to the shadow. Each night the same ritual took place. Soon the Emperor's heart was healed and, in the process, the art of shadow puppetry was born. Shadow puppetry spread across Asia. In Indonesia they created their own shadow puppet tradition around 300 years ago. Marco Polo brought shadow puppets back from Asia in his explorations at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Shadow puppetry became a popular entertainment in France in the 19<sup>th</sup> C.

# THE FOAMIES

These puppets are a form of puppetry, which I developed. They are realistically carved foam rubber puppets, depicting animals. Sometimes the foam is covered with fake fur but more often

they are painted with acrylic paints. The carved foam animals have rods or sticks attached which I use to fly, swim and run them through the air. Their environments exist in the imagination of the audience. The puppets are performed all over the performance space including into the audience.

## SHADOW PUPPET PROJECT

### MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Black (or blue, or green) poster board. One 7" X 11" or two 5-1/2" X 7"(poster board comes 22" X 28")
- Art tissue in assorted rainbow colors. One pack per 10 workshops
- Bamboo skewers. 12" length approx. one pack per 25 participants.
- 1/2" paper fasteners. 3/4" will work
- Masking tape. 1/2" width or 3/4" several rolls for convenience.
- Hole punch. 1/8" diameter is best, but regular 1/4" size is fine. Several for convenience
- Glue sticks, several for convenience.
- Pencil, one each
- Scissors, one each

### PREPARATION

- Cut poster board into (8) – 11" X 7" or 5-1/2" pieces. Allow for one or two pieces per student.
- Trim sharp ends off skewers using wire cutters (on pair of needle nose pliers or piers), metal shears or garden pruners.

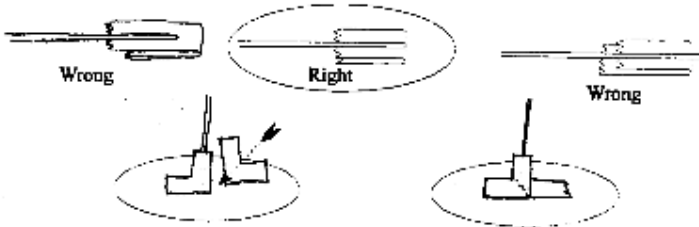
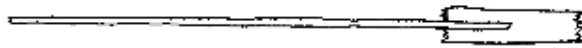
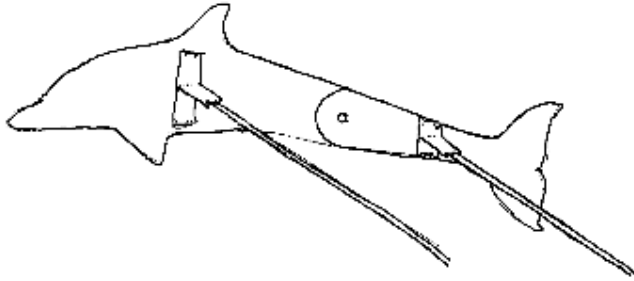
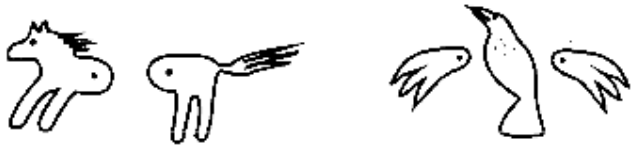
### MAKING SHADOW PUPPETS

Have students draw the outline of a person or animal on their piece of 11" X 7" poster board, making the drawing as large as possible. Drawings smaller than their flat hand are difficult to work with.



Cut out drawings with scissors. For students above 2<sup>nd</sup> grade consider having moving parts on the shadow puppet. Moving parts can be attached using a hole punch and a paper fastener. Bend fasteners over the tip of a scissor to create a loose and freely swinging joint.

Tape on rods to make parts move. Try to limit students to two rods, unless three rods are necessary to control the puppet. Often it is sufficient to let the legs of a puppets dangle and swing without any rod.



# SHADOW PUPPET THEATER

## MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Card board project display board. Available at office supply.
- Shower curtain liner or white bulletin board paper.
- Sturdy yard stick.
- Lamp extension cord, a power strip will allow you to turn it on and off easily, or you can install a switch or dimmer in the cord.
- Plug in light socket (see illustration 1.)
- Duct tape, to tape the screen onto the theater.
- Rubber bands, 2-3" diameter 1/4" width approx. 2 or 3 will do.
- Aluminum foil, 3 feet of it.
- Utility knife, a nice new sharp disposable one for cutting out proscenium
- Two pencils

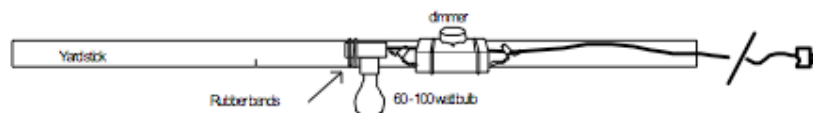
### I. PROSCENIUM

Make a compass for drawing a 24" circle. You can use a couple of pencils and rubber bands to fasten the pencils a foot apart on a yard stick as in the illustrations of the shadow puppet theater construction. After scribing the circle onto the display board, use a utility or razor knife to score the circle and then cut deeper until the circle is removable.

Decorate the façade of the theater at this time if you wish.

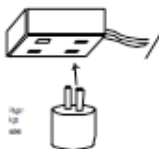
### II. SCREEN

Lay a piece of either paper or shower curtain liner over the proscenium opening and mark and cut out the screen material in a square so that it overlaps the edges of the circle by an 1-1/2". Tape the corners with duct tape, stretching the screen as you tape. Next stretch and tape the middle points of the top, bottom and side edges. Now lay duct tape along the whole perimeter of the screen as shown in the illustration.



### III. LIGHT BAR

Cut notches on the top edge of each wing of the display board, 1-1/4" deep and 1/4" wide, 8" from intersection with the center panel. These notches will hold a sturdy yard stick which will carry the light fixture.



Plug the light socket into the extension cord into the outlet slots closest to the end which the wire comes out of, on the side of the extension cord which has two spaces for plug ins. Refer to the illustration. Attach the socket/ extension cord to the center of the yard stick, using a rubber band, as shown in illustration.

Install a 60 to 100 watt light bulb into socket. Make a lamp reflector out of a piece of aluminum foil 3 ft. long, folded into a rectangle approximately 6" X 8". Attach the visor to the light socket with a rubber band.

#### IV. DIMMER SWITCH

Adding a dimmer switch to the extension cord on your light bar adds versatility to your theater. If you want to skip this detail, you can either unplug the cord to turn off light or plug the cord into a power strip which will give you an easy on off switch.

Locate the spot on the extension cord where you want to install the dimmer switch. With the cord UNPLUGGED cut the center crease between the wires several inches, referring to the illustration. Cut one of wires and strip the ends around 1/2". To each stripped end, twist together one of the wires coming off the dimmer switch. Twist on wire nuts, which usually come with the dimmer switch.

# Shadow Puppet Stage

