

Eco-Puppetry

Age/Grade Range

- Age 8-11

Group Size

- 15-30

Time

- Prep time: 1 hr
- Set-up: 10 minutes
- Activity: 1-2 hrs

Materials

- Puppet show scripts
- Curtains or a sheet (a stage)
- Puppet-making materials.
- We gave each kid a long rectangular piece of an old sheet to use as a base. They folded the rectangle in half, and round out the top corners if they wanted, then glue or sew down the sides, so they could still get their hands in the bottom. White glue, needles and thread (depending on the group's skill-level), scissors, scrap fabrics and paper, pompoms, googly eyes, and any other materials you can think to offer them.

Set-Up

- Print off 1 or 2 scripts per play, so that each group will have a few copies.
- Gather lots of materials and prepare the puppet bases ahead of time.
- Set up a stage with a curtain or desk that the presenters can hide behind.

Activity Directions

1. Introduce the activity. Talk about how one way to learn about the environment is to play as characters using puppets. You could also mention how one advantage of using puppets, is that we can easily play characters that are very different from ourselves (for example, an apple, or animals). One person can also easily play more than one character.
2. Next, you should play a game, get them moving, and break the ice. One that works well is the Thumb-squeeze game:



NWT SCIENCE FOCUS

Topics

- Food Production
- Waste
- Ecology and Animals
- Water

Objective

- Explore environmental issues and ways to be more environmentally friendly through puppets!





- a. Everyone stands in a circle and sticks out their left thumb, then they take their right hand and make it into a doughnut shape and place it around the thumb of the person on their right.
 - b. Pick a keyword (ours was 'beaver').
 - c. Say you're going to tell them a story, and every time you say the keyword, they have to try and remove their thumb before their neighbour squeezes it. There should be lots of laughs as they try and get their thumbs away and, at the same time, grab their neighbours. The story could be about anything and doesn't have to be award-winning quality. Try adding some words that sound close to the keyword, so they have to listen carefully.
3. Make Puppets:
- a. Chose the scripts you are going to use so that there are enough roles for everyone to have one. Divide them into groups by the number of characters in each scene.
 - b. Give the groups a couple of copies of their script and let them discuss with their group who will be each character.
 - c. Give each a puppet-body base, and have them be creative with all the materials.
 - d. If some finish earlier than others, you could encourage them to practice their scripts.
4. Game interlude: While waiting for the glue to dry on the kids' puppets, take them outside to play a game or two. Depending on how much time you have, you could pick a couple of games that keep them active and entertained.
5. 5-minute practice: Have the kids grab their puppets and get into their groups to practice a few times. They don't have to memorize the scripts, but they should read them loud and clear, and think about how their character should sound.
6. The Show!
- a. String the curtain up between 2 trees (or piles of chairs- whatever you have available) so that it is high enough for the kids to hide behind. Let the show begin!
 - b. Have each group introduce their scene before they start. The order of the scenes does not matter; just have the groups go up one at a time when they are ready.
 - c. Try having some sort of debriefing after each scene to go over the key ideas, especially if there are members of the group who spoke too quietly to be heard.
7. Debrief and thanks: A brief chance for them to say what they thought about the eco-puppetry, and what they learned.

