

## Puppets Unlimited with Everyday Materials

*Reviewed by Melanie Fasciato, Senior Lecturer in design and technology, The Institute of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University*

This paperback book is quite delightful. The format is A4 and it is printed on brown recycled paper and spiral bound. Different sections are devoted to different types of puppets: hand, string, shadow and rod. Each section has a brief introduction followed by a number of examples of the type of puppet. Each puppet has a page to itself and is divided into sections; 'we used', 'to make it', 'to move it' and sometimes there are hints and tips for personalising your own version of the puppet shown. From the illustrations, these appear to be actual examples made by children in a puppetry workshop. The illustrations are both line drawing and 'stuck on' colour plates, of the type one found in fairy storybooks of my mother's generation. This time, however, the colour plates are photographs of the actual puppets made by children.

It is clearly written by someone whose first language is not English and this leads to some interesting, and often surprising, quirky names for the individual puppets (such as Disposable Pop-star and Brigadier Barkface in Africa). There are also lists of resources, which include items which are unfamiliar or rare in Britain: coconut husk, thermocol packing and a coconut frond. The majority of the materials suggested are 'junk' (the ubiquitous toilet rolls and disposable cups) and using this as the main source of materials for children making at Key Stages 1 and 2 can give the wrong messages about design and technology in primary schools. However, there is an issue about sustainability here and perhaps we should be looking at more creative ways of using waste products.

There are certainly many ideas in this book for creating puppets which look attractive and function well.

The final section of the book deals with 'Showtime', showing how to put on a puppet show. This covers sound effects, lighting and other helpful suggestions. There is also a sample script which, like the jokes in the original Winnie the Pooh, may appeal more to adults than to young children.

It is difficult to say what the target audience is. It is a craft book, not a design and technology book, but there is much of interest to fire young imaginations here as well as old imaginations come to that! I really enjoyed flicking through this book, the illustrations are a little fuzzy but attractive and the text is adult level but should be accessible to most children at Key Stage 2 onwards. I would use it as a source of inspiration for older children and possibly as an ideas bank for focused practical tasks (FPTs) for use with younger children. As a way of making an ancient, traditional craft accessible to this generation of children, it is excellent. Clearly there are also good opportunities for cross-curricular work with English, in writing and presenting plays.

At £12.50, this is not a cheap book, but it is charming to look at. This is the time of year when grateful parents ask teachers if they can contribute a book to the school library to say thank you for teaching their offspring over the last six or seven years. This could be just what they are looking for. By buying this book they will also be supporting Oxfam.

## Puppets Unlimited with Everyday Materials

Gita Wolf and Anushka Ravishankar  
Oxfam: £12.50  
ISBN: 818621125X  
Orders: [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)

Appropriate content	///	Generic use
Pupil/student use	///	One of a series
Teacher resource	////	Photocopiable
Visuals	////	Pupil/student activities ←
Overall style	////	Cross-curricular ←