

Oh, Seuss! Off to Great Places™

activity 4

Shadow Shapes

Can you tell it is me, when all that you see
 Is my shadow? Or do you say, "What can it be
 That is making that shape? Is a bear standing there?
 Or a moose? Or a weird bird all covered with hair?"
 No! It's *The Shape of Me!* A bear's not the same!
 Nor the Cat nor a car nor a bird with no name!
 All different! And my shape will be different, too,
 If I move! So will yours! I like shape-play! Do you?
So join us today—we'll make shadows and shapes.
In a special light theater. Bring on the drapes!




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Did you know?

 The illustrations in Dr. Seuss's book, *The Shape of Me and Other Stuff* are entirely silhouettes – the outline of a shape filled in with color.

 Dr. Seuss was inspired to experiment with silhouettes when he saw some incredible black and white photographs on an airplane flight from Washington to California.

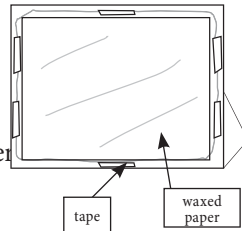
 Shadow puppets are puppets that use light and shadow to create silhouettes on a screen. Shadow puppets are some of the oldest types of puppets in the world.

Try It!

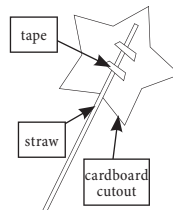
*"The shape of you
 the shape of me
 the shape of everything I see
 A bug...a balloon
 a bed
 a bike.*

No shapes are ever quite a like." –Dr. Seuss
 Dr. Seuss's book, *The Shape of Me and Other Stuff*, is a celebration of different shapes and objects, all outlined as silhouettes. In today's activity, you will experiment with shadows, light, and shapes by creating a shadow puppet and a little theater.

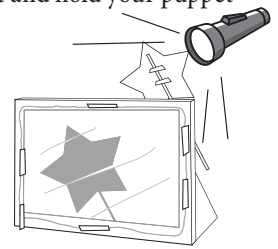
To create a shadow puppet screen, pull off 3-4 pieces of waxed or tissue paper, each about 2 feet long. Cut a large rectangular opening in a box or poster board to create a frame for your wax paper. Stack the waxed or tissue paper together and tape it to your frame to make the screen. Use extra cardboard to create legs so that your screen can stand on its own.



To create a shadow puppet, cut out whatever shape you'd like from some thin cardboard. You might start with something simple like a hexagon or a hand, and then make more complicated puppets later. Tape a bamboo skewer or straw to the back of your cardboard shape so that the skewer or straw sticks out at least 3 inches below your shape.



Now you're ready to put your shadow puppet into action to make a silhouette. Hold your light source (flashlight or bright lamp) behind your puppet and hold your puppet close to the screen. The person on the other side of the screen should see a shadow silhouette cast by your puppet.



Does your puppet look different as you move the light farther away from the puppet or the screen? Does the puppet look different on the screen if you keep the light in the same place but move the puppet closer and farther away from the screen? Experiment with ways to make different shapes simply by moving the light or the puppet.



You can also make a more complicated shadow puppet that moves. Cut out a few different shapes that you'd like to connect together. You could cut out a body and arms and legs or a butterfly body with separate wings. Punch holes in the body and the legs (or wings) and use a brass fastener or a folded twist tie to connect the separate parts. The parts should overlap when you fasten them. Attach bamboo skewers to the back of each puppet part (arms, legs, body) using tape, and move the sticks up and down to animate your puppet.



Create enough puppets to tell a story. You can make a puppet person turn into a giant by moving the puppet farther away from the screen!

What you'll need

- Scissors
- Cardboard box or posterboard
- Waxed paper or tissue paper
- Flashlight
- Thin cardboard (cereal box, poster board, cardstock)
- Bamboo stick, straw or hanger wire
- Tape
- Optional: brass fasteners, string, or twist ties

Mop up these Resources

Books by Dr. Seuss:
On Beyond Zebra
Did I ever tell you how lucky you are?



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