

Start at home

Shadow Puppet Storytelling



About the work

Wayang Kulit is an ancient Indonesian form of storytelling using shadow puppets. Performances often took place in the royal courts of Java on ritual days and religious ceremonies. The puppet figures are made from leather and are highly decorated, brought to life by a dhalang, (the puppet master and storyteller). Wayang Kulit was extremely entertaining with musicals and dramatic stories about mythology, heroes, religion, education, social culture and even town gossip. A tradition that is still very much alive and cherished today in Indonesia.

Shadow puppet, Batara Guru is a beautifully detailed puppet made from buffalo hide, horn and decorated with natural pigments, metal and fibers. It was created in East Java, Indonesia more than 100 years ago. The figure in this piece is Batara Guru, the supreme god and kind spiritual teacher, also known as Shiva; the Javanese name for a Hindu deity.

Unlike traditional shadow puppets, Batara Guru is motionless; he is forward facing, head in profile, feet turned outward with four arms. He also stands on a cow because he was cursed with weak legs. Batara Guru is surrounded by nature to represent his powers over everyone and everything in the universe. Before every performance, puppeteers burn incense as offerings to Batara Guru as he is seen as the most sacred of all the shadow puppets.

image Indonesia, East Java, *Shadow puppet, Batara Guru*, 1850-1900, East Java, buffalo hide and horn, natural pigments, metal, fibre, 77.5 x 26.5 cm; Public Donations Fund 2010, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

Presented by



Materials

- Card A3 size
- Lead pencil
- Coloured pencils, markers, and pens
- Decorations – sequins, gems, feathers, coloured paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Masking tape
- A long straight stick or several pop sticks or chopsticks taped together

To make your puppet move:

- Needle and string or split pins

Take it further

Create a shadow puppet performance

Wayang Kulit performances take place behind a lit-up screen, this enables the puppeteer to play with light and shadow. Make your own shadow play by hanging a white (or light) sheet. Use a torch or lamp to shine a bright light from the back and take the stage; it's time for your shadow puppet to perform!

The Activity

Create your own detailed shadow puppet

In traditional Indonesian culture, Batara Guru is someone that people worshipped and admired.

Your shadow puppet could be your hero or a mythical creature. What symbols and images could you use around your shadow puppet?

- 1 Draw your character lightly in pencil to fill up the whole piece of card.
- 2 Surround your character with their special symbols.
- 3 Colour and decorate your character using coloured pencils, markers and pens.
- 4 Carefully cut around your puppet. You may even want to cut out the negative spaces within your design.
- 5 Glue on your decorative items.
- 6 Tape the long stick to the middle back of your character with enough space to hold your puppet at the bottom.
- 7 To make a moving shadow puppet, draw each arm separately in two sections (the upper arm and from elbow to fingertips).
- 8 Cut them out and line up the top of the upper arm to the shoulder and poke a small hole through both using a sewing needle. Do the same at the elbow of both sections. Carefully thread string through the holes and tie a small knot on both sides.
- 9 Attach long sticks to each hand and there you have it...a moving shadow puppet!

Shadow puppet, Batara Guru is currently on display in Gallery 20

We would love to see your work! Ask your parent or carer to post a photo on Instagram and tag the Art Gallery of South Australia. Or you can email your photo to us at public.programs@artgallery.sa.gov.au

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