



“The Use of Puppetry to Increase Self-worth Through the Windows of Poetry”

Curriculum Unit 91.04.08
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Introduction

In this paper, I would like to explore ways in which ventriloquism and puppetry can be integrated into a unit for teaching young children about poetry. As a key component to my unit, I would like to emphasize the active participation of children in using puppetry to read and discuss poetry, as well as, writing it.

Focused activities will be implemented in the classroom throughout the school year, using puppetry and poetry as vehicles for the creation of opportunities to increase the use of reading and language arts. In addition, supplementary activities will be suggested for an eight to ten week after school program.

My own family of puppets consists of ten relatively large stage size puppets. Most of my puppets were hand made in a studio and are approximately 20 to 36 inches in length. Many have striking characteristics with lively expressions, (e.g. Large noses, movable mouth parts and eyes, use of bright colors in their clothing or fur if they happen to be an animal.) (See bibliography section, “Additional Resources” for catalogue and ordering information.)

I am a self-taught ventriloquist and have developed numerous programs which have been presented at schools, churches and at birthday parties throughout several states. The focus of these presentations has generally been entertainment or special themes. However, there is one area in my work that particularly intrigues me.

In my work with young children (toddlers, preschoolers and first graders), I have been struck by the way that the very young relate to puppets, not only in their affective response but in their establishment of a truly interactive relationship with an inanimate object. The puppets are perceived as real people with feelings and values that the children empathize with. I have noticed the same phenomenon with the isolated and infirmed aged in nursing homes.

It has been my experience that puppets often function as classroom assistants, supplementing my presentations by gaining and holding the attention of children who generally have very short attention spans, are preoccupied with painful home situations and are subject to a myriad of economic, social and environmental stresses.

In the inner-city, a significant degree of learning is imparted through example and children emulating role models. My own career in ventriloquism followed this model by watching another ventriloquist perform. I tried to imitate the same voice style along with a new appreciation for the art of ventriloquism and growing sense of self-worth.

Presently, I teach first grade in an inner-city school setting where many of my students lack the primary skills for reading readiness and writing. Approximately one third of my first grade class is repeating first grade. It is vitally important that these children be given every opportunity to improve their academic skills so that they are not caught in the "catch up" cycle throughout their remaining school years.

Along with a need for improved vocabulary, many children exhibit low self-esteem and have difficulty conveying their thoughts and feelings. This is prevalent not only in a group setting, but on a one-to-one basis as well.

Puppets provide a beautiful tool which children perceive as non-threatening and can relate to on a peer basis. Puppets can break down barriers and help to achieve communication and self-identity goals in a relatively short span of time.

This is particularly true of children with emotional problems. For example, one little girl in one of my classes was the product of a custody battle. On occasion, she lost control and sobbed louder than I could speak. However, when "Willie" the puppet came to class, she calmed down and was able to confide in him. Over a period of time, the outbursts subsided and as a result, she was able to move to a higher reading level.

Not only is "Willie" a good therapeutic tool for soothing disturbed children, but he helps to instruct in areas such as reading, writing, and singing. On occasion, he forgets a letter formation or sings incorrectly which brings squeals of delight to the children they know something that he doesn't.

The classroom environment becomes the laboratory for the discovery of self. The classroom is the child's world where she/he experiences the positive social, emotional and intellectual stimulation necessary for growth and development.

Objectives My overall objectives for the course of the year are as following:

- Through the use of puppetry, gain the children's attention, and provide an interactive experience stimulating verbal response and building rapport.
- Helping the children to expand their experience and exposure to poetry and poets of the past and present.
- To increase the children's thinking skills in analyzing ideas given by the poets.
- To widen the children's experience in the type of poetic forms used by poets and using this as a model for writing their own poetry.
- Helping the children to improve in their oral and written skills through reading and memorization of poetry.
- Encouraging the development of self-assurance in reading and analyzing poetry in a group setting.
- Stimulating the desire to share thoughts and ideas in a socially acceptable way (i.e. waiting for one's turn and listening to fellow classmates share.)
- To project feelings of happiness so that poetry becomes a fun experience.

As an example of how poetry and puppetry will be integrated, each student will have the opportunity to make his/her own puppet along with discovering a unique voice and developing a specific character. The art of helping the puppet become alive will be explored and experienced.

While using a ventriloquist figure, it is important to make the presentation so natural that it is life-like, sparkling and convincing. Synchronizing ventriloquial speech with the figure's mouth movements is essential in creating a life-like appearance.

It requires a blending of voice and movement to give the illusion of life to the figure. In addition, it is important that the ventriloquist maintains the puppet's distinctive personality—shy, bold, sweet, dumb, etc. Even the way in which a ventriloquist figure is handled helps in creating the desired image.

With this in mind, one comes to the oral presentation of poetry with two distinct personalities, (i.e. the teacher and the puppet.) The puppet may present his feelings about a particular line in a poem while the teacher may agree or disagree. The teacher has the distinct advantage of controlling the circumstances and presenting a model situation to her class. As the puppet and teacher discuss a line from a poem, the teacher can respond in a way that shows acceptance and respect for different views and responses. The puppet may incorrectly pronounce a word or perhaps give the wrong meaning to a vocabulary word. Here, again, the children are given a model situation (i.e., it is all right to take a risk and learn from one's mistakes.)

As an example of how this may work in the classroom, Gwendolyn Brooks in her poem, "Tommy", refers to a seed popping out of the ground without consulting Tommy. The puppet could pronounce the word "consulting" as "consooting". The teacher could then proceed to correct the puppet by showing him that the "u" is pronounced with the short vowel sound and encourage him to try again. Or the class may be drawn in at this time and help the puppet by pronouncing the word correctly and giving their views about this particular line.

I like to read the poem first in a natural tone of voice before I use a fantasy voice with a puppet. The children are able, therefore, to hear more natural tones in voice projection. Certainly, they will listen more carefully for new vocabulary words because it delights the children to be able to correct the puppet.

I have found that some children are too intimidated to take a risk and suggest ideas or meanings for words. However, if given the opportunity to speak through a puppet, the risk becomes minimal. In other words, it doesn't matter how many mistakes one makes because the puppet risks looking stupid or feeling incompetent. As a result, children become more free in expressing their own thoughts and feelings without deflating their self-esteem.

Strategies Examples of overall strategies for the course of the year are as following:

- Making a puppet from paper materials with movable mouth for voice synchronization.
- Viewing videos (e.g. cartoons, stories, etc.)
- Listening to tapes of professional ventriloquists and puppeteers to gain information and knowledge about puppetry, different voices and voice projection.
- Experimenting with various voices with fantasy quality, choosing a distinctive voice different from one's own.
- Using classroom puppets (i.e. store bought or custom made and individually made) to analyze, discuss and read poetry.

- Using an element in the poem with hands-on activities for the children to connect with their own feelings and senses.
- Using poetry as a springboard for writing main ideas and feelings found in poetry.
- Using poetry as a model for writing one's own poetry and compiling a book of poetry and illustrations.

I have prepared folders for each month of the school year. In each folder, I placed poetry pertaining to a season, holiday, celebration, event, etc. found in that particular month. For example, poems by Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, Nikki Grimes, Eloise Greenfield, etc. have been placed in the February folder pertaining to Black history month. Some of these poems lend themselves to seasons, such as Langston Hughes' poem, "April Rain Song" or Gwendolyn Brooks' poem, "Tommy." Naturally, one would want to place them in their appropriate spring folders, April and May respectively.

The folders help one to organize the poetry for sequencing throughout the school year. I also want to begin a file by subject which would lend itself to units of study or interest, (e.g. poems on "Weather," "Animals," "Native Americans," "Black History," "Fantasy," etc.)

The following gives a few examples of poetry pertaining to special subjects:

Weather

- "Rain"—Robert Louis Stevenson
- "Clouds"—Christina G. Rossetti
- "Weather"—Marchette Chute
- "Lo, The Winter Is Past"—Song Of Solomon 2:11
- "First Snow"—Marie Louise Allen

Animals

- "Good Morning"—Muriel Sipe
- "Dogs"—Marchette Chute
- "The Camel"—Ogden Nash
- "Mice"—Rose Fyleman
- "The Owl And The pussy Cat"—Edward Lear

Native American

- "Butterfly Song"—Acoma
- "Songs of Birds"—Aztec
- "Horizon's Home"—Simon Ortiz
- "Song Of The Osage Woman"—Osage Indian
- "Summer Evenings In Tucson Remembered"—Wendy Rose

“Black History”

“Tommy”—Gwendolyn Brooks

“Bicycle”—Mahiri Fufuka

“James Shell’s Snowball Stand”—Nikki Giovanni

“Riding On The Train”—Eloise Greenfield

“My People”—Langston Hughes

“Fantasy”

“A Funny Man”—Natalie Joan

“Old Man And The Cow”—Edward Lear

“The Owl And The Pussy Cat”—Edward Lear

(Please turn to the section, "Suggested Poems and Poets" for cited works and page numbers.)

With regards to my yearly unit of poetry, "Wednesday Delight" (a classroom puppet) introduces a new poem each Wednesday to the children in class. She aids the children in their class discussion of the poem. Vocabulary words are introduced, as well as questions for group discussion.

Sometimes the poems are used as models for writing and illustrating poetry in class. If they are used in this manner, I compile the children's poetry and illustrations into "big books" which are read in class, then placed in our classroom library center.

On the other hand, the children may be asked to illustrate the poem introduced by "Wednesday Delight," then place it in their poetry book of collected and illustrated poems.

I write the poems on large sheets of manilla paper which are stored in the classroom. During opening exercises, we read the same poem until a new poem is introduced. Sometimes, the children will memorize a poem and recite it at this time. The lessons last about 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the length, content and activity surrounding the poem.

Although some of my first grade classes have made puppets in the classroom and used them for reading their own writing, I generally save this activity for the after school program. The after school program lasts about 90 minutes, giving more flexibility for extended class time and opportunity for one-on-one help and guidance for making individual puppets.

Unlike the regular classroom, the after school program is made up of children from a variety of classes first through second grade. Also, the class is more restrictive in size, generally consisting of 12 to 16 children. Naturally, not all of the children are acquainted with my classroom puppets and their introduction of poetry in the regular classroom. Therefore, a basic introduction to the puppets is necessary early on in the program.

I generally use the lessons on puppet voices and choosing one's own puppet voice for the after school program. This lesson is taught first, so that the children can visualize a character and voice before constructing their own puppet to match the character.

After constructing a puppet, the children use the class time to listen to poetry, write poetry and read the poetry in class.

Poems for the regular classroom and after school program have been chosen from a wide range of American poets with diversified multi-ethnic backgrounds, (e.g. Gwendolyn Brooks, Victor Hernandez Cruz, Nikki Giovanni, Langston Hughes, Wendy Rose, etc.) Poets have been chosen from the past, (e. g. Langston Hughes, Carl Sandburg, Robert Louis Stevenson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Walt Whitman, etc.) as well as, contemporary poets, (e.g. Gwendolyn Brooks, Victor Hernandez Cruz, Mahiri Fufuka, Nikki Giovanni, Simon Ortiz, Wendy Rose, Sonia Sanchez, etc.) giving as much flavor and diversity to the unit as possible.

In my unit, the children will become acquainted with a variety of subjects found in poetry. This will be accomplished by bringing an activity to the children relative to their own experience.

I want the children to be able to feel the poetry with their own senses, giving them a connection for excitement and love of poetry. For example, along with Nikki Giovanni's poem "James Shell's Snowball Stand", the children will have the opportunity to feel the ice balls, followed by putting their own toppings on snowcones and eating them.

Or, for example, in Wendy Rose's poem, "Summer Evenings in Tucson Remembered", Rose tells of bread baking in earth ovens, filling the air with a sweet aroma. The children will be given the opportunity to bake bread, smell the aroma and taste the finished product. Of course, some of the lines in this poem may remain obscure to the children. In other words, they may not fully comprehend the entire poem, but they will enjoy the poem and hopefully in later years develop a keen sense of interest in Native American poetry.

I have found that although one is able to instill excitement into poetry by helping the children feel with the poet in their metaphors and similes, it is sometimes difficult to excite that same feeling in terms of writing poetry. Kenneth Koch suggests themes and techniques for teaching children to write poetry. He contends that not only do suggestions give children an enormous start, but that children feel like poets and want to write more. (*Wishes, Lies and Dreams* , page 10)

Some themes suggested by Koch are: Lie poems—saying something in every line that isn't true; Color poems—using a different color in every line; Wish poems—"I wish I were"; Dream poems—"I had a dream of"; Comparison poems—"I use to, but now"; Crazy or Silly poems—"A ____ is like a"; Contrasting poems—"I would like, but I would not like" (pages 9-28)

In my class, we wrote poems beginning with the phrase, "I wonder why" After the children completed their poems, we compiled a book of "I Wonder Why" poems along with the children's illustrations. The following poem is an example from our poetry book:

I Wonder Why
I wonder why I cannot fly.
I cannot fly because I do not have wings.
God gave me legs to walk.
I wonder why the birds sing.
They sing because it is their way of talking
and it makes them glad.
I wonder why dogs do not talk.
Dogs do not talk because they have no voice.
Instead, they talk to each other by barking.
Kelly Moore
(Age Six)

Sometimes teachers shy away from teaching poetry to children because they feel that children may not understand the words or the ideas may be too foreign or too remote. Koch contends (page 30) that “poetry is a mystery, but it is a mystery children can participate in and master, and they shouldn’t be kept away from it by hard words.”

As one can see, the themes suggested by Koch are presented in words that the children actually use. For example, rather than using the theme “I desire . . .” which sounds foreign to a child, Koch suggests “I wish . . .”. (page 30)

In addition to the themes suggested by Koch, repetition of words is an easy way to help first graders or lower elementary grade children write their own poetry. I have found a good example and model to be Margaret Wise Brown’s little poetry book entitled, “Where Have You Been.” Wise asks an animal character where he has been, to which the character replies with a rhyming answer.

In my after school class, we wrote “Where Have You Been” poems. The children read their poems in class with their puppet. The following poem is an example of one child’s poem:

Where Have You Been?
Little old man, little old man,
Where have you been?
Sitting on my can.
Little old rat, little old rat,
Where have you been?
Sitting in my hat.
Little old fish, little old fish,
Where have you been?
Sitting in my dish?
Little old hat, little old hat,
Where have you been?
Sitting on my cat,
And that is that.
Danica Blue
(Age Six)

Most importantly, “the child’s poem should be his own.” Changing the poem, according to Koch, to meet the teacher’s standards only inhibits the child from writing freely. Likewise, children should be encouraged to use their own spelling, rather than stopping in the middle of a sentence and risk breaking a flow of ideas. (page 31)

In my classroom, the children love to hear their own writing read in class. Koch suggests (page 34) that “by listening to or reading poems, children can become excited about writing and can learn new ideas and techniques.” He goes on to say that although the children he taught responded with enthusiasm and interest to such poets as Oylan Thomas, Theodore Roethke, John Ashbery—the best poems were those of the children. The children’s poems that were read in class elicited the best response in terms of the children’s own writing.

Lesson One

(I use this lesson in the yearly program, but more often in the after school program. This lesson gives one example of a movable mouth puppet which primary grade children can make.)

Materials paper bags; Construction paper; patterns for puppet pieces; pom pom balls (small fuzzy balls which can be found in any craft store); Movable button eyes; Buttons; Tissue paper; Feathers; paste, etc.

Procedure: I have found that lower primary grade children are most successful with a bird type puppet which is relatively easy to construct. However, bird puppets can lead to other forms and types of puppets quite easily.

For the head, cut a piece of construction paper at least as wide as your paper bag. Paste your piece to the bottom of the bag as indicated below. Then trim the head to the shape that you desire. (It may be easier to have a pattern already cut for your children to trace.)

(figure available in print form)

For the bill, cut a piece of paper the width of the bag. Fold it the short way. Put paste on the part that is hidden under the bottom of the bag. Place the bill into this area and paste. (Again, it may be easier to cut a pattern for your children to trace.)

(figure available in print form)

Cut a shirt for your puppet and paste it under the bill. Pants or skirt should be pasted to the shirt.

(figure available in print form)

Lesson Two

(I usually use this lesson in the after school program.)

For this lesson, I use the cassette tape, “Developing Character Voices” by Liz VonSeggen. (See bibliography for ordering instructions.)

I have found that it is best, especially with lower primary grade children, to begin with three basic fantasy voices. From these three voices, my children will choose one voice for their puppet.

After each voice is demonstrated on the tape, it is important to stop the recorder and allow the children to imitate and experiment with the voice. Have the children read a short line that you have written on the board, using their hand to mouth the words. (It is easier for children to use their hand in place of actual puppets when imitating a fantasy voice.)

The three basic voices are:

1. Whispered voice—This voice is ideal for a sweet little girl or an animal. In order to produce this voice, one must speak in your normal voice, but put a whisper over your own voice.
2. Dumb voice—This voice is good for a clown, slow learner or a boy. For this voice, one must lower the pitch of the voice, drop your bottom jaw and speak slower, using slurred diction.
3. Nasal voice—All of us use this quality on the end of some words. For example, the word “sing”, the “ng” sound automatically throws the sound into the nasal passages. (It sounds as if one is talking through their nose.)

Lesson Three

Poem “Tommy”

Poet Gwendolyn Brooks

Summary A small boy plants a seed in his back yard. One day to his surprise, a beautiful flower unfolds.

Vocabulary seed, popped, consulting

Procedure

1. Begin by reading the poem with “Wednesday Delight” (or any classroom puppet).
2. Go over the vocabulary words with the children.
3. The puppet will ask questions about the poem such as: “Where did Tommy plant the seed”; “How did he care for it?”; “What does the poet mean when she refers to the seed popping out without consulting Tommy?”
4. Form a puppet choir and read the poem together. While the puppet choir is reading the poem, some of the children may be used as props. For example, one child may be Tommy planting the seeds. Another child may be the watering can, watering the seeds. (A large paper or material watering can could be placed over the child.)
5. Have the children memorize the poem.
6. Plant seeds in the classroom and watch them grow. Chart their growth on a graph.

Lesson Four

Poem *“The Reason I Like Chocolate”*

Poet *Nikki Giovanni*

Summary *The poem talks about things that make children happy when they don’t have to live up to adult standards. For example, a child can eat chocolate, lick his fingers and nobody tells him/her that this is not polite.*

Vocabulary *polite, snuggle, scare*

Procedure

1. Begin by reading the poem with a classroom puppet.
2. Go over the vocabulary words with the children.
3. The puppet will ask questions about the poem such as: “Why does the poet say that she likes chocolate?”; “Why does the poet especially like scary movies?”; “What do you do when a movie is scary?”; “What makes you happy?”
4. The children will make chocolate cupcakes in class, bake them in the school lunch room, eat them and lick their fingers. Descriptive words about their experience will be written on the board.
5. The poem will be used as a model for writing poetry in class (e.g. “The reason I like . . . is because . . . ”
6. The children will illustrate their poetry.
7. The children will use their puppets to read their own writings in class.
8. The poetry will be compiled into a big book of poetry and placed in the classroom library.

Suggested Poems And Poets

The following is a list of poems and poets that I have chosen and feel are appropriate for the lower primary grade children. The is by no means complete.

- Acoma: “Butterfly Song” (Bierhorst, p. 110)
- Allen, Marie Louise—“First Snow” (Schenk, p. 25)
- Aztec: “Songs of Birds” (Bierhorst, p. 111)
- Barris, Amanda: “A pumpkin Speaks” (Bouton, p. 145)
- Blake, William: “Laughing Song” (Bouton, p. 269)

"The Lamb" (Ross, p. 221)
 Brooks, Gwendolyn: "Andre" (Brooks, p. 5)
 "Cynthia In The Snow" (Brooks, p. 8)
 "Maurice" (Brooks, p. 28)
 "Rudolph Is Tired Of The City" (Slier-21)
 "Tommy" (Brooks, p. 39)
 Burgess, Gelett: "The Purple Cow" (Larrick, p. 33)
 Causley, Charles: "Angels' Song" (Harrison, p. 39)
 "Mary's Song" (Harrison, p. 33)
 Caroll, Lewis: "Turtle Soup" (Bouton, p. 57)
 "The Crocodile" (Bouton, p. 88)
 Chute, Marchette: "Dogs" (Schenk, p. 68)
 "Our Tree" (Schenk, p. 27)
 "Weather" (Schenk, p. 16)
 Cooper, George: "Come Little Leaves" (Bouton p. 147)
 Cruz, Victor Hernandez: "Coka-Moon (21st Floor Water Street)"
 (Cruz, *Mainland* , p. 13)
 "Side 7" (Cruz, *Tropiclization*)
 Davis, Fannie Stearns: "The Circus" (Bouton, p. 237)
 Fanthorpe, U. A.: "What The Donkey Saw" (Harrison, p. 89)
 Fufuka, Mahiri: "Bicycle" (Fufuka)
 "Big Mama" (Slier, p. 66)
 "El Train" (Fufuka)
 "Parades" (Slier, p. 22)
 Fyleman, Rose: "Mice" (Schenk, p. 71)
 Giovanni, Nikki: "Chester's Wisdom" (Giovanni, p. 37)
 "James Shell's Snowball Stand" (p. 21)
 "Mommies" (Giovanni, p. 11)
 "Shopping" (Giovanni, p. 14)
 "The Reason I Like Chocolate"
 "Two Friends" (Giovanni, p. 25)
 Greenfield, Eloise: "By Myself" (Greenfield)
 "Riding On The Train" (Greenfield)
 "Things" (Slier, p. 35)
 Grimes, Nikki: "Pretty" (Grimes)
 "Remembering" (Grimes)
 "Waiting" (Grimes)
 Herford, Oliver: "I Heard A Bird Sing" (Schenk, p. 20)
 Hopkins, Lee Bennett: "To The Zoo" (Slier, p. 89)
 Hughes, Langston: "April Rain Song" (Slier, p. 34)
 "Brothers" (Slier, p. 68)
 "Hope" (Slier, p. 38)
 "I, Too" (Ross, p. 161)
 "Mother To Son" (Slier, p. 75)
 "My People" (Slier, p. 39) "Snail" (Slier, p. 80)
 Kiowa: "That Wind" (Bierhorst, p. 23)

Lear, Edward: "The Owl And The pussy Cat" (Bouton, p. 25)
 "Old Man And The Cow" (Schenk, p. 110)

Lindsay, Vachel: "The Little Turtle" (Schenk, p. 74)

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth: "Rain In Summer" (Bouton-262)

McCord, David: "Samantha Speaking" (Ross, p. 16)
 "Snowman" (McCord, p. 29) "Wintry" (McCord, p. 28)

Merriam, Eve: "A Round" (Merriam, p. 6)
 "How To Eat A Poem" (Merriam, p. 1)

Milne, A. A.: "The More It Snows" (Schenk, p. 22)
 "Furry Bear" (Schenk, p. 33)
 "Politeness" (Schenk, p. 97)

Moore, Lilian: "To A Red Kite" (Schenk, p. 33)

Morley, Christopher: "Skating Song" (Bouton, p. 180)

Natalie, Joan: "A Funny Man" (Schenk, p. 106)

Nash, Ogden: "The Camel" (Schenk, p. 69)

Navajo: "House Blessing" (Bierhorst, p. 48)

Ortiz, Simon: "A Birthday Kid Poem" (Lincoln, p. 200)
 "Horizon's Home" (Lincoln, p. 196)

Osage Indian: "Song Of The Osage Woman" (Ross, p. 11)

Rose, Wendy: "Summer Evenings In Tucson Remembered" (Rose)

Rossetti, Christina Georgina: "Brown And Furry" (Schenk-233)
 "Clouds" (Ross, p. 125)
 "The Pancake" (Bouton, p. 53)
 "The postman" (Bouton, p. 4)

Sandburg, Carl: "We Must Be polite" (Schenk, p. 96)
 Sanchez, Sonia: "Haiku" (Slier, p. 43)

Serraillier, Ian: "The Tickle Rhyme" (Saunders, p. 18)

Shakespeare, William: "Be True" (Bouton, p. 306)
 "Under The Greenwood Tree" (Ross-155)
 "Winter" (Bouton, p. 178)

Sipe, Muriel: "Good Morning" (Schenk, p. 62)

Spirituals: "Do Lord Remember Me" (Bryan, p. 41)
 "It's Me O Lord" (Bryan, p. 31)
 "The Gospel Train" (Bryan, p. 24)

Stevenson, Robert Louis: "At The Seaside" (Heller)
 "My Shadow" (Bouton, p. 12)
 "Rain" (Schenk, p. 17)
 "The Cow" (Ross, p. 221)
 "The Swing" (Bouton, p. 102)

Sulpher, Margaret: "Autumn Leaves" (Bouton, p. 147)

Tennyson, Alfred Lord: "October" (Bouton, p. 143)
 "Ring Out Wild Bells" (Bouton-177) "Winter" (Bouton, p. 176)

Turner, Nancy Byrd: "A Popcorn Song" (Schenk, p. 23)

Psalm 100: "Make A Joyful Noise Unto The Lord" (Ross-29)

Whitman, Walt: "The Indian Woman" (Bouton, p. 21)

Appendix—“The Art of Ventriloquism”

Puppetry is generally considered to be a display of a hollow mitten-type doll, into which the performer places his hand, and manipulates the arms and head with his fingers. Usually, although not always, the performer works from behind a stage concealing himself and exposing the puppet through an opening in the stage. Generally there is no movement of the mouth.

Marionettes are life-like dolls from which strings are attached, manipulated from above by a performer concealed from the view of the audience. The main center of attraction is focused upon the life-like doll.

Ventriloquism differs from these in that 1) the performer remains in full view of the audience throughout the entire presentation; and 2) the performer creates an illusion in such a way as to cause the audience to believe that the sound originates from a source other than himself.

Usually, the performer works with a near life-size figure with which to create a life-like illusion. He/she may work with more than one figure when applying the near voice ventriloquial technique or with none at all which is the case when doing the distant voice illusion.

Magic becomes an effective illusion because the hand is quicker than the eye. The magician also uses misdirection, causing the audience to see only what he wants them to see. In a somewhat similar manner, the ventriloquist misdirects the audience’s attention by some act, word or gesture to the place from which he wants them to think the sound has come (Hill, page 17).

Many people believe that the ventriloquist possesses a special throat giving him/her extraordinary ability in creating another voice, distinctly different from his/her own. While this is not true, it certainly helps to keep the art somewhat a mystery and perhaps creates a more genuine illusion. There is certainly no doubt about the fact that ventriloquism is very fascinating and appealing to all age groups.

Ventriloquism is voice production. When giving a presentation with any type of ventriloquist figure, the performer must speak for two people. Obviously, this means that the performer will have to breathe enough air to speak for two people. Just as normal correct breathing is required for a professional singer, it is equally important for the ventriloquist.

Inhaling while forcing the shoulders to stay in place and allowing the diaphragm and abdominal muscles to work as a team, allows the ventriloquist to speak for both himself/herself and his/her figure (Hill, page 21-24). At the same time, one can remain relaxed and not relinquish all of one’s air in the middle of a sentence.

A question often asked the ventriloquist is: “How do you keep your lips from moving?” There are six letters of the alphabet (F, V, M, W, P and B) known as labials. These particular letters require the movement of one or both lips. In order to produce a truly effective ventriloquial illusion, the ventriloquist is required to substitute another letter sound very much like the labial sounds but not requiring any lip movement.

Ventriloquists vary in their use of letter sound substitutes. However, one common substitute is the “th” sound for the letter “f”. Instead of pronouncing the “f” sound, the ventriloquist would use the “th” sound, and say, “I theel great.”

Through repetition and practice, the dialogue eventually becomes automatic, allowing the conversation to sound natural.

Teacher's Bibliography

Bierhorst, John. *In The Trail Of The Wind* . New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972. (An anthology of Native American poetry, translated from over forty languages.)

Bouton, Josephine. *Favorite Poems For The Children's Hour* . New York: Platt and Munk, 1967. (A collection of beautiful poetry for elementary school children. Poems are arranged according to subjects that reflect childhood experiences: seasons, home, city, country, etc. Some of the selected poets are as following: T. S. Eliot, Lewis Carroll, George Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Christina Rossetti, Robert Louis Stevenson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Shakespeare, etc.)

Bryan, Ashley. *I'm Going To Sing: Black American Spirituals* . New York: Dix Type, Inc., 1982. (Ashley presents a collection of Black American spirituals which are rooted deep in the past experiences of slavery, rhythms of Black Africa and a combination of western culture and music.)

Cruz, Victor Hernandez. *Mainland* . New York: Random House, Inc., 1973. (A book of poetry about city life mostly on the adult level. "Coka-Moon (21st Floor Water Street)" would appeal to children because of its vivid description of a typical city scene.)

Cruz, Victor Hernandez. *Tropicalization: (Poems)* . New York: Reed, Cannon and Johnson Communications Co., 1976. (Cruz presents a beautiful book of poetry about familiar sights and sounds from New York City. Although most poems are written for older children and adults, there are a few poems that may appeal to young children. One such poem is "Side 7" which describes a bright red car with tiger stripes painted on its sides. In the rear window, a dog sits on a yellow shag rug with his head bobbing.)

Harrison, Michael and Stuart-Clark, Christopher. *The Oxford Book Of Christmas Poems* . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. (A delightful book of poetry for both children and adults. Children will enjoy having the poetry read to them. Most poems are too difficult for the lower primary grades.)

Hughes, Langston. *Selected poems* . New York: Random House, Inc., 1959. (Hughes presents a collection of poetry for both the adult world and elementary school children.)

Koch, Kenneth. *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children To Write Poetry* . New York: Harper and Row, 1970. (Kenneth Koch describes his methods for teaching Manhattan elementary school children to write poetry. He gives many examples of student's work that are appropriate for various age levels.)

Koch, Kenneth. *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* New York: Random House, Inc., 1973. (Kenneth Koch gives examples of poetry by authors such as Blake, Donne, Stevens and others. Koch gives these examples as models and explains to teachers how to help children write their own poetry.)

Larrick, Nancy. *Piping Down The Valleys Wild* . New York: The Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1968. (A beautiful collection of poetry by poets such as: Gelett Burgess, Robert Frost, Rachel Field, e.e. cummings, T. S. Eliot, Edward Lear, etc.)

Lincoln, Kenneth. *Native American Renaissance* . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. (A book about Native American literature, folklore, history, religion, poetry, etc. Lincoln gives insights into these materials, approaching them in their cultural diversities. Although most of the material is written from an adult perspective, some of Simon Ortiz's poetry would be appealing to children.)

Livingston, Myra Cohn. *Thanksgiving Poems* . New York: Holiday House, 1985. (The book captures the religious as well as the secular aspects of Thanksgiving. Each poem is beautifully illustrated.)

Merriam, Eve. *A Sky Full Of Poems* . New York: The Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1986. (A book of poetry for children of all ages. Children will love the repetition of words and repeat of a beat.)

Petersham, Maud and Miska. *The Rooster Crows* . New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973. (A collection of rhymes and jingles familiar to the young and old alike.)

Rose, Wendy. *Lost Copper: Poems* . Banning: Malki Museum Press, 1980. (A beautiful collection of Native American poetry written by Wendy Rose.)

Ross, David. *The Illustrated Treasury Of Poetry For Children* . New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1976. (An anthology of poetry, songs and limericks for both primary and upper elementary grades. Some of the poets found in the anthology are as following: William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Langston Hughes, William Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, etc.)

Saunders, Dennis. *Magic Lights and Streets* . New York: Greenwillow Books, 1974. (A book of poetry illustrated by beautiful photography. Most topics pertain to nature, animals and seasons.)

Schenk de Regniers, Beatrice, et al. *Sing A Song Of Popcorn* . New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1988. (A beautiful collection of children's poetry by author's such as: Marie Louise Allen, Marchette Chute, Langston Hughes, Natalie Joan, Edward Lear, Ogden Nash, Christina G. Rossetti, Robert Louis Stevenson, etc.)

Slier, Deborah. *Make A Joyful Sound* . New York: Checkerboard Press, Inc., 1991. (A beautiful collection of poetry and colorful illustrations by well-known African American poets such as: Gwendolyn Brooks, Countee Cullen, Karama Fufuka, Nikki Giovanni, Eloise Greenfield, Langston Hughes, Sonia Sanchez, etc.)

Student's Bibliography

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* . New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1956. (A book of poetry written about life's familiar experiences of inner-city children.)

Brown, Margaret Wise Brown. *Where Have You Been?* New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1952. (A delightful little book which can be used as a model for children writing their own poetry.)

Factor, June. *Jelly On The Plate* . Cleveland: Modern Curriculum Press, 1987. (A collection of 10 poems ranging from the traditional to the more contemporary.)

Fufuka, Karama. *My Daddy Is A Cool Dude* . New York: The Dial Press, 1978. (A collection of poetry written by Fufuka pertaining to the Black American family.)

Giovanni, Nikki. *Spin A Soft Black Song* . New York: Hill and Wang, 1985. (A beautiful book of poetry written by Nikki Givovanni about common experiences shared by the American Black child.)

Greenfield, Eloise. *Honey, I Love* . New York: Harper Collins publishers, 1986. (A delightful book of 16 poems describing everyday life as seen through the eyes of a young elementary school age child.)

Grimes, Nikki. *Tom Feelings: Something On My Mind* . New York: The Dial Press, 1972. (Grimes presents beautiful poetry expanding on themes about thoughts and feelings familiar to anyone's childhood days.)

Heller, Rebecca. *My Little Book Of Poems* . New York: Western Publishing Company, Inc., 1955. (A delightful book of poetry for the young child.)

Lyfick, Warren. *The Little Book Of Limericks* . New York: Harvey House, Publishers, 1978. (A delightful book appealing to young children.)

McCord, David. *All Small* . Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1986. (McCord's poetry appeals to the young child's interest and curiosity. His collection of twenty-five poems tell about cocoons, crickets, ladybugs, snails, knotholes, doors, etc. all subjects of keen interest to the young child.)

Additional Teacher Resources

Ventriloquist Books:

Detweiler, Clinton. *Maher Home Course of Ventriloquism* . Maher Ventriloquist Studios, Littleton, Colorado, 1975.

Detweiler, Clinton. *Ventriloquist's Treasury Of Ideas* . Maher Ventriloquist Studios, Littleton, Colorado, 1974.

Detweiler, Clinton. *Ventriloquism In A Nutshell* . Maher Ventriloquist Studios, Littleton, Colorado, 1979.

Videos:

"Detweiler's Live"

"Shari Lewis And Lamb Chop"

"Ventriloquism For Children And Adults"

Cassettes

"Developing Character Voices" by Liz VonSeggen

"Here's Ventriloquism" by Col. Bill Boley

*Puppets, books, videos and cassettes can be ordered from: Maher Studios, Box 420, Littleton, Colorado 80160 or One Way Street, Inc., P. O. Box 2398, Littleton, Colorado 80161.

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