



Jim Henson
1936-1990

Jim Henson at a Glance

- Jim was an American artist, animator, puppeteer, and movie maker. He was best known for his work with the Muppets, which he helped to create.
- Henson was born in Greenville, Mississippi and grew up in Leland, Miss. The family stayed in Mississippi until Henson was 12, when his father got a new job in the Washington, D.C. area.
- Jim Henson's grandmother taught him to draw, and paint, and sew.
- Henson's best known puppet is Kermit the Frog. Henson made the very first Kermit from Henson's mother's coat, "milky turquoise" in color, with two ping-pong balls for eyes.
- While in high school, Henson designed sets for school plays, acted in the plays, and created a comic strip for the school yearbook.
- Henson found out about a job for young puppeteers at a local television station. He researched how to make puppets, and he and a buddy landed the gig.
- He took a puppetry course in college and met his future wife, Jane Nebel. Together, they had five children. Henson showed up to his college graduation in a Rolls Royce that he bought with the money he earned during college.
- Henson's muppets were made of soft foam, which allowed him to change the muppets' expression by pinching and stretching the face.
- *The Muppet Show* was turned down by all three U.S. TV networks before being picked up by a British station. It went on to become one of the most successful TV shows ever, airing in 106 countries to over 235 million viewers.
- Jim Henson created over 2,000 Muppets during his lifetime — and loved every one of them.
- After his death, Henson was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1991 and was selected to be one of the Disney Legends in 2011.

JIM HENSON PUPPET MANIA!

Theater Lesson Plan with Subject Area Integration for 4th Grade



"If you care about what you do and work hard at it, there isn't anything you can't do if you want to."

- Jim Henson

Subject areas and arts discipline:

Theater
Language Arts
Math
Social Studies
Science

Lesson Overview/Goal: After learning about Jim Henson's life and career, students will develop knowledge of the Elements of Theater and create puppets to demonstrate subject area concepts (such as the process of division, the steps to creating a science fair project, summarizing and finding main ideas in literature, portraying a famous Mississippian).

TARGETED STANDARDS:

This is an open-ended lesson, where standards for theater are indicated, but subject-related standards should be selected by the teacher according to the concept or process to be addressed.

TH: Re7.1.4 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

TH: Cr1.1.4 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Procedures:

TLW take the Jim Henson Pretest.

TTW help students develop background knowledge about Jim Henson's life and career through such sources as the book=====, Jim Henson at a Glance fact sheet, The book and video sources mentioned are listed on the Resource List for this lesson.

TLW work as a class to summarize information about Jim Henson as the teacher records on the board.

TTW explain and demonstrate the Elements of Theater, including plot, character, theme, diction/language/dialogue, music/rhythm, and spectacle (see Whole Schools Initiative posters regarding the elements of Visual Art, Theater/Drama, Music, and Dance/Movement located at the end of this Mississippi to the Max document).

TTW show online directions for creating a paper puppet (see paper puppet choices in the Resource list).

(continued)

TLW organize thoughts for creating a puppet by completing the Puppet Planning Sheet.

(Standards, continued)

TTW demonstrate how to create the selected paper puppet. Puppet may have only a head with a movable mouth, or a head, body and arms so that a rod can be attached to one or both hands and be manipulated like Henson's hand and rod puppets (think Kermit the Frog).

TLW keep their Puppet Planning Sheet in mind while selecting materials and creating a puppet with a movable mouth.

TTW demonstrate (or show video clips – see Resource List) how to use puppets, including eye focus, movement, voice, and emotions.

*An important teacher command to get student attention and readiness is "Puppets down". When hearing this command, students must be silent and lower their puppets.

TLW practice using their puppets by introducing them to a partner, They will state their name and why they are special (think Puppet Planning Sheet). The partner may ask the puppet one question. Partners switch roles.

*Reader's Theater and Theater Games allow teachers to address selected subject area standards.

TTW use a puppet to demonstrate Reader's Theater (see Reader's Theater Can Become Puppeteer's Theater information) using a selected subject area related text (textbook, biography, etc.)

TLW work in small groups to develop a reader's theater performance - 1) Cold reading 2) Edit for expression

3) Adjust 4) Master (present)

* The "Theater Games = Learning Activities That Can Be Adapted for Puppets" document gives directions for short learning experiences that can be used for subject area practice or review.

Name _____ Date _____

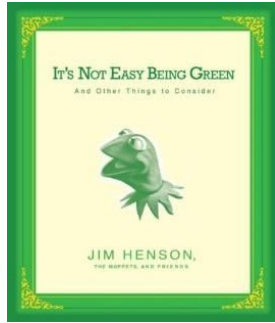
Jim Henson Pretest/Posttest

1. Jim Henson was a famous puppeteer and () singer () movie maker () dancer
2. What Mississippi town did Henson grow up in? () Leland () Tupelo () Quitman
3. He made his best-known puppet, named _____, out of his mother's coat.
4. Jim Henson's _____ taught him many of the skills he later used in puppet making, such as drawing, painting, and sewing.
5. In his lifetime, Jim Henson created around () 50 () 1,000 () 2,000 Muppets.
6. Bert and Ernie are both hand and rod puppets. () True () False
7. Jim's Muppets were made of soft _____, so he could make them expressive.
8. He designed a comic strip for the yearbook when he was in _____.
9. Name one TV show or movie that Henson created _____
10. What should people know about Jim Henson? _____

Jim Henson Resource List

BOOKS:

It's Not Easy Being Green: and Other Things to Consider



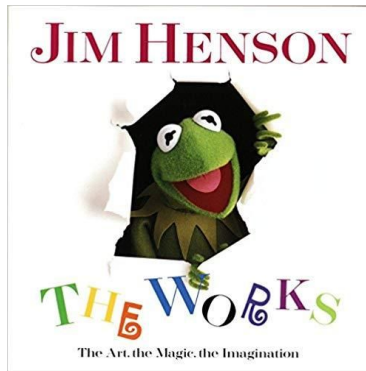
By Jim Henson, the Muppets, and Friends

Illustrations by Jim Henson

ISBN: 1401302424

“...in it you hear Jim’s message most clearly. He believed that people are good and that they want to do their best and that no matter how or why we might be different from anybody else, we should learn to love who we are and be proud of it.” —Ray Charles

Jim Henson: The Works - The Art, the Magic, the Imagination

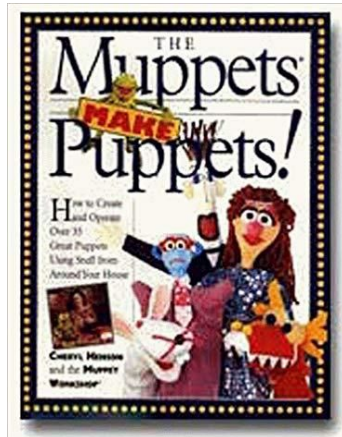


By Christopher Finch

ISBN: 0679412034. 268 pages

This oversize, colorful volume, sure to delight Henson's many fans, traces his career from local TV in the mid-1950s through the triumphs of *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show*, his leap into movies (*The Muppet Movie*, *The Dark Crystal*, etc.), and late projects like *Fraggle Rock*. The book also covers Henson's little-known forays into experimental film and the contributions of his Creature Shop puppetmakers to non-Henson movies.

The Muppets Make Puppets: How to Create and Operate Over 35 Great Puppets Using Stuff from Around Your House



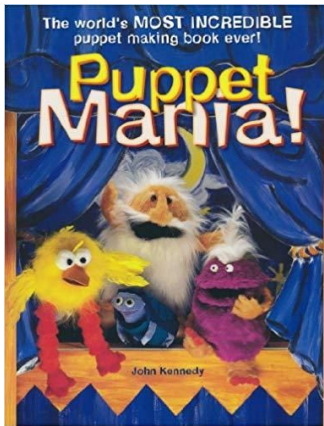
by Cheryl Henson & The Muppet Workshop

ISBN-10: 1563057085, ISBN-13: 978-1563057083 112 pages

Cheryl Henson, daughter of Muppets founder Jim Henson, shows kids how to make over 35 puppets using stuff from around the house—with a little help from the googly eyes, funny noses, feathers, and fuzzy fur included. There's Dixie Dragon (principle ingredient, a sock), Jughead (small plastic jar), Spidey Jones (old work glove), Metalmouth (bandage boxes), Princess Esterrilla (wooden spoon and chopsticks), and more.

Learn how to talk the puppet talk and walk the puppet walk, write a script and put on a show.

Puppet Mania: the World's Most Incredible Puppet Making Book Ever

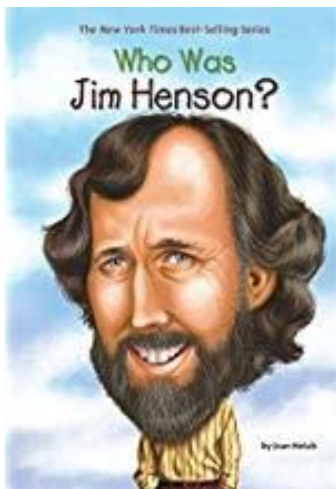


by John E. Kennedy

ISBN-10: 1581803729, **ISBN-13:** 978-1581803723 80 pages

Presents thirteen projects for making puppets out of household materials and gives tips on puppetry skills, such as lip synching, body motions, and eye contact and movement.

Who Was Jim Henson?



by Joan Holub and Who HQ

ISBN-10: 0448454068, **ISBN-13:** 978-0448454061 112 pages

Jim Henson broke into television with a five-minute puppetry segment when he was only a freshman in college. He created puppets like none ever seen before, with expressive fabric faces and rod-controlled arms. His Muppets became world-renowned celebrities and formed the backbone of a media empire. With black-and-white illustrations throughout, this easy-to-read biography will be published twenty years after Henson's untimely death.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

How to Perform with Puppets – Puppetry Basics 7 Minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsilYpCQzA4>

A very helpful video for students to watch before attempting to use puppets. Basic puppetry skills are modeled, including eye focus, movement, voice and more.

Taxi Dog Educational Program, 2 minutes

http://taxidogedu.org/puppet_power

Another short video that demonstrates even more puppetry skills. A Muppet puppeteer shows how to make a puppet show various emotions, walk, etc.

Jim Henson on Making Puppets 1969, 14 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AC440k6iByA>

This is a truly wonderful video for students! Jim Henson shows several different ways to make puppets.

Basic Puppetry Lesson - Lip Sync, 3 minutes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ij6rg9pa8_Q&list=PL2O7HVVTaVHQPaqo9IIiMoGIFGOHVjEkdG&index=22

Jim Henson puppeteer demonstrates how to move a puppet's mouth realistically.

Basic Puppetry Lesson – Eye Focus, 2 ½ minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWFIFLbMLq0>

Jim Henson puppeteer demonstrates the important skill of showing eye focus.

How to Fold a Paper Puppet 2 minutes, 52 seconds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXPizUIv14g>

A child demonstrates how to fold a paper puppet head with moving mouth. Easy and great result!

How to Make a Crocodile Paper Puppet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOlegMM-2KI>

Demonstration of how to fold an “M” shaped puppet. It is folded into quarters, which makes a longer snout, suitable for many animals. Shows how to add eyes, teeth, etc. that stand vertically by using a folded tab.



Easy Dog Hand Puppet DIY - Paper Hand Puppet Craft - Easy Dog DIY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbvsOWTHxkM>

Basically the same process as the crocodile puppet, but folded into thirds, which can be used to make a broader face for people

and dog puppets. Think of using BIG paper to make a puppet for class instruction.

DIY - How to make Paper Plate Puppets



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqKGh6CAi1E>

This video shows how to make a paper plate puppet with a movable mouth.

Name _____

Student Planner for Puppet Design

What is my puppet's name? _____

What does it look like? _____

What kind of voice does it have? _____

How does my puppet move? _____

What does my puppet do? _____

What does my puppet know? _____

What does my puppet care about? _____

Draw a picture of your puppet in the space below:

READER'S THEATER CAN BECOME PUPPETEER'S THEATER!

All students should be engaged in the learning experience. Reader's theatre can help make this happen. Any piece of literature can be created into a Reader's theatre script and be read by puppets!

Reader's Theatre Process – CREAM:

1) Cold reading 2) Edit for expression 3) Adjust 4) Master (present)

Groups will

- create scripts from available appropriate materials
- divide parts by using all, chorus, voices, and grouping options.
- assume roles in prepared scripts
- present a "cold reading" within the group
- self-evaluate/edit
- make adjustments
- present to the larger group

Theater Games = Learning Activities That Can Be Adapted for Puppets

THE PRINCIPAL'S CAT

The Principal's Cat game, also known as The Minister's Cat, may be adapted to teach many concepts. In the game, players stand in a circle and create a rhythm. They take turns describing "the principal's cat" with different adjectives. Each adjective has to start with the same letter of the alphabet. They cannot repeat one another or break the rhythm, or they are *out** of the circle. Once a player is out, the next player starts over with the next letter in the alphabet. For example: "The principal's cat is a *happy* cat."

"The principal's cat is a *hopeful* cat."

"The principal's cat is a...." (*Player can't think of a word in time, so he is out, and play resumes.*)

"The principal's cat is an *irritating* cat." (*And so on.*)

The same game can be played using prepositions or prepositional phrases:

"The silly dog is *above* the chairs."

"The silly dog is *beyond* the chairs".

SPARKLE!

This spelling game works best with all students standing in a circle. The teacher or game leader will call out a word, and the students must go around the circle spelling it out, one letter at a time. After the last letter in the word has been called out, the next student must say "Sparkle!" Then the leader will call out the next word, and the game continues. If a player takes too long to say a letter or says the wrong letter or fails to say "Sparkle" at the end of the word, then he or she is *out** of the game. Play may continue until there is one winner left. This interesting variation on the Spelling Bee keeps students alert and engaged. Students who get "out" can rotate back in when the next student is out, helping to maintain student involvement.

COMMERCIALS

Students rehearse and perform commercials for something they have studied in class, such as a mathematical figure ("We offer a variety of triangles for your many three-sided needs from the scalene to the isosceles..."), a tool or invention ("My name is Thomas Edison, and thanks to my latest invention, you will never need to read by candlelight again..."), a part of speech, a historical event or artifact, a scientific concept, or whatever you like. Students can vote to determine which group made the most creative (or the most persuasive) commercial. They are not allowed to vote for their own commercial.

THE SHRINKING PLAY

The idea here is for students to grasp an understanding of the concepts of summary, main idea, and theme by progressively whittling a story down to smaller and smaller elements. They begin by reading a story, or a part of a story. One group must act out what happens in the story using only a few sentences (no more than 10). What they create will in effect be a summary of the story's events. Then they must go back and reenact the story using only one sentence. This will be the main idea. Finally, they act out the story using only one word or a short phrase, which should be the theme.