

Unit 88: Puppet Construction and Operation

Unit code:	D/600/0195
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit is concerned with the creation and operation of different puppets. Learners develop a knowledge of puppet types and how to construct and operate them.

● Unit introduction

There are many opportunities for creating and operating puppets within the performing arts industry, this includes West End musicals, television, touring puppet theatre and theatre in education. This work includes traditional and experimental work with puppets. The public appetite for puppets in children's entertainment is still very strong. This unit introduces learners to the possibilities for the use of the puppet in performance and encourages the development of new skills that can be used in traditional entertainment as well as specialist areas such as theatre in education, or working with children.

This unit enables learners to identify different puppet types and introduces learners to the skills, materials, processes and techniques that a puppeteer uses to create puppets. Learners will be introduced to puppet construction materials and processes and will develop the skills required to work with different materials in the construction of puppets for performance.

The demands of puppet operation are fundamental to puppet construction: therefore this unit also offers learners the opportunity to learn and apply puppet operation skills.

Learners will be able to develop creative and practical skills that are transferable within the design elements of the performing arts. This unit provides links with a range of other units for learners following both drama, dance and technical pathways and has direct links with *Puppet Design*, *Production Planning*, *Costume for Performance*, *Props Making*, *Design for Performance*, *Design Drawing Development* and *Design Materials and Process*.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the characteristics of different puppet types
- 2 Be able to use puppet construction materials and puppet construction techniques
- 3 Be able to operate puppets in performance.

Unit content

1 Understand the characteristics of different puppet types

Types of puppet: eg hand, rod, string puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes, humanettes, mouth and soft mouth puppets, UV and black theatre, tight joint animation puppets

Puppets from different cultures: eg Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Javanese, Native American, Indigenous Australian, European

2 Be able to use puppet construction materials and puppet construction techniques

Carving/modelling: eg wood, polystyrene, foam rubber, plastic, wood, cardboard, papier mâché, cloth mâché

Mould preparation: eg plaster, plaster filler, latex, styrene, compound expandable foam

Lamination: eg paste and paper, plaster and muslin, fibreglass

Frames, mechanisms and fixings: eg wire mesh, wire, metal strip, string, thread, pulleys, springs, elastic, levers, hooks, loops; glues – PVA, epoxy and solvents

Tools: eg hand and power tools, glue gun, soldering equipment

Presentation of ideas: eg verbal, source folder, video, DVD, PowerPoint

Costume fabrics, trimmings and finishes: eg gauze, lace, braid, dyeing, buttons, velcro, ribbon, glitter, sequins, feathers, crêpe hair, buttons, foil, fur, raffia

Paints: water and other bases

Application: eg brushes (various), air or manual spray guns, glueing, stitching, joining

Design interpretation: materials; choice; swatches; colour; effects; estimates; budget; costing; pattern cutting

Health and safety: safe working practices; safety equipment; safety procedures, construction methods; Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH); construction materials; applying decorative finishes

3 Be able to operate puppets in performance

Operate: operational techniques eg string, hand, finger, stick, verbal and non-verbal puppeteering, technical assistance, performance sound effects

Performance: eg plays, street theatre, children's parties, carnival

Health and safety in performance: safe use of props; operation of larger puppets; team communication for larger puppets; storage off-stage

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe the characteristics of different puppet types [IE]	M1 explain the characteristics of different puppet types	D1 critically comment on the characteristics of different puppet types
P2 use puppet construction techniques to create a puppet for performance [CT]	M2 select and use appropriate puppet construction materials to create a useable puppet for performance	D2 carefully select and skilfully use entirely appropriate puppet construction materials to create a convincing puppet for performance that is easy to use
P3 operate a puppet in a performance. [EP, TW]	M3 operate a puppet in a performance with some attention to performance detail.	D3 perform as a puppeteer in a performance demonstrating high levels of performance skill and dexterity.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Work for this unit will develop learners' understanding of some different puppet types through group and individual assignment work. Learners will complete work for this unit in practical activities. Learners will use the research findings to inform the selection and creation of the puppet; and they will consider suitable construction techniques that will allow the desired puppet operation. Learners will experiment with puppet construction methods and puppet operation techniques before selecting and using one of the methods to plan and construct a puppet. Finally, learners will apply skills and techniques to design, plan and realise a puppet for a performance and they will operate the completed puppet in a performance. Health and safety is a vital consideration for the puppet maker and operator. Learners will be introduced to the health and safety considerations for the puppet maker and the puppeteer. They will then be expected to apply effective health and safety considerations throughout the unit. Learners' reflection on the process may include notes, diagrams, photographs and models.

For learning outcome 1, learners will be introduced to a range of different puppet types. The exploration of the puppet types will be focused on construction methods and how the puppet construction affects the puppet operations opportunities. Learners will reflect on the different puppet types in their journals. This practical enquiry will be best delivered with the benefit of examples of different puppet types. Tutor observation of learners' enquiries will also provide suitable evidence for assessment. Learners will evaluate the various needs of the selected puppets and performances.

For learning outcome 2, learners will be introduced to some accepted puppet construction-materials in workshops. Learners will investigate the properties of puppet construction materials and draw conclusions as to their suitability for the construction of different puppet types. This will be taught through practical exercises in which the learner investigates the potential of puppet-making materials. Health and safety will be reinforced through all of the practical work. Learners will be encouraged to keep a note book in which they describe, explain and evaluate processes used. As a result of this enquiry learners will select suitable materials to create a puppet for performance.

Interim assessment will be used during the puppet making process.

For learning outcome 3, learners will build on the exploration of puppet operation techniques that they first explored for learning outcome 1. Learners will practise and refine puppet operation skills. Using the puppet that was created for learning outcome 2 they will demonstrate puppet operation skills as they operate the puppet in performance. The learner will demonstrate appropriate health and safety techniques. Learners will keep an account and reflect on their experience of the process. Tutor and peer evaluation of the puppet performance will inform the assessment.

Throughout the unit learners will be introduced to essential health and safety practice for the puppet maker and operator. Learners will need to demonstrate their understanding of appropriate health and safety practice in all unit assignments.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit and the structure of the programme – tutor-led, whole class. Assignment introduction.
Assignment 1: Hands Up – P1, M1, D1 Learners are introduced to the different puppet types. Learners are asked to assess the: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• performance potential of the different puppet types• origins of different puppet types• puppet in performance• puppet as a cultural object• contemporary use of different puppet types.
Assignment 2: Creating a Puppet – P2, M2, D2 This assignment has two sections. The first element of this assignment will take time to introduce, practise and develop puppet construction skills. Initially learners are introduced through practical class work and demonstration to the different puppet construction materials and techniques. Secondly learners are asked to apply the skills and the techniques that they have learnt to the construction of a puppet for a performance. Through the use of a note book and practical demonstration learners will demonstrate an understanding and application of correct health and safety practices.
Assignment 3: Curtain Up – P3, M3, D3 This assignment could follow on from the previous assignment as learners could learn to operate the puppets that they have constructed. However, for those learners with weaker construction skills it would be advisable have a range of other different puppets on which they will have more opportunity to develop appropriate puppet manipulation skills. Learners will operate one or more puppets in performance.
Review unit and assignments. Feedback from assignment.

Assessment

Assessment decisions will be informed by learners' ability to demonstrate their understanding and management of the puppet construction materials, making techniques and puppet operation skills. Learners will be expected to produce evidence of their understanding and application of all stages of the puppet construction and operation process. Evidence can be provided in research portfolios, the report and the accounts of their understanding. Learners will also be required to evidence their experience of all practical workshops; evidence for this may include notes, scale plans, sketches, diagrams, models, photographs, videos of rehearsals, peer and self evaluations and the final completed puppet. The importance of health and safety is implicit and must be demonstrated throughout this unit; therefore description of and reflection on health and safety should feature in all work produced for assessment. Good health and safety practice can also be recorded to support assessment sessions by peer observation or witness statements.

To achieve learning outcome 1, learners will demonstrate productive and focused practical research into the characteristics of different puppet types. Learners will reflect on their response to the different puppet types and include personal comment on the success of the research process. Learners' accounts will evidence their understanding of the performance potential of the different puppets in performance. Evidence for assessment could include a workbook, a journal, a handout, or a presentation.

To achieve learning outcome 2, learners will demonstrate an understanding of puppet-making materials and construction techniques. Evidence for assessment may include an account that demonstrates an understanding of the properties of different puppet making materials and describes puppet construction techniques. Learners' accounts may include notes, sketches and diagrams and will show some evaluation of their experience of the practical skills learnt in the workshops. Tutor observation of learners' engagement in the practical workshops will also inform assessment. Learners will then demonstrate the application of puppet construction materials and techniques in the creation of a puppet that is to be used in a performance. Learners will keep an account of the puppet construction process. The tutor will use interim assessment to offer formative opportunities throughout the puppet construction process. Learners' reflection will include an understanding of health and safety considerations for the use of different puppet construction materials and techniques.

To achieve learning outcome 3, learners will demonstrate an understanding and command of puppet operation skills. Learners will demonstrate that they understand how to communicate through the effective operation of two or more puppets in a performance. Tutor and peer observation may be used to reflect on the learners' puppet operation skills. Learners' reflections will demonstrate analysis of the success of their puppet operation skills, and may include self-evaluation of the skills and techniques that they have used and applied.

To achieve P1 learners will show that they can describe the characteristics of a range of puppet types. Pass learners will be able to recognise different puppet types. Learners' evidence could include a descriptive workbook, a journal, a handout, or a presentation that makes straight forward observations. Learners' reflection will make some limited observations about how the use of the puppet in performance will affect the design and creation of the puppet. Pass learners will be able to use the information, describe the research process and be able to utilise some of the research findings.

To achieve M1 learners will show that they understand the main characteristics of a range of puppet types; understanding will be detailed in places. Merit learners will be able to explain the construction considerations and performance potential of different puppet types. Learners' evidence could include a detailed workbook, a journal, a handout, or a presentation. Learners' work will be evidenced in detailed written notes, sketches and photographs. Annotations on the images will be considered and mostly accurate. Learners' reflection will make some considered observations. Merit learners will be able to describe the research process confidently and be able to utilise the research findings productively.

To achieve D1 learners will show that they fully understand the characteristics of a range of puppet types. Distinction learners will use a range of research sources with confidence and imagination. Learners will fully understand and be able to evaluate the construction considerations and performance potential of different puppet types critically. Learners' evidence could include a thorough and fully detailed workbook, a journal, a handout, or a presentation. Learners' work will be evidenced in accurate and fully-detailed written notes, sketches and photographs. Annotations on the images will be wholly considered and accurate. Learners' reflections will make some insightful observations. Distinction learners will be able to evaluate the research process critically and they will be able to utilise the research findings innovatively.

To achieve P2 learners must show that they are able to use some puppet construction materials and techniques. Learners will show an engagement with the exploration of puppet construction materials and techniques. The learner will show that they can choose and use puppet-making materials, processes and techniques to create a puppet. The final puppet will communicate the basics of the designer's intentions and will show a basic understanding of health and safety considerations for the puppet maker and for the puppeteer. Pass learners will keep a brief record of their experience of the process; this may include research, plans, notes, diagrams and photographs.

To achieve M2 learners must show that they understand and can implement puppet-construction materials and techniques; in their practical work they will show that they can use them with some confidence. Merit learners will show an engagement with the exploration of puppet construction materials and techniques, learner's work will demonstrate a level of skill. Learners will show that they can choose and use puppet-making materials, processes and techniques to create a convincing puppet that is effective in performance. The final puppet will communicate the important details of the design and will show an informed understanding of health and safety considerations for the puppet maker and for the puppeteer. Merit learners will keep a record of their experience of the process; this will be detailed in places and may include, relevant research, considered plans, notes, diagrams and photographs.

To achieve D2 learners must show that they can implement the use of puppet construction materials and techniques; in their practical work they will show that they can use them with successfully with skill and control. Distinction learners will show a focused engagement with the exploration of puppet construction materials and techniques, learners' work will demonstrate a confident and convincing level of skill. Learners will show that they can choose and use puppet-making materials, processes and techniques to create a convincing puppet that is effective in performance. The final puppet will demonstrate creativity, be wholly convincing and will communicate the important details of the puppet intentions. Learners' work will show a fully informed understanding of health and safety considerations for the puppet maker and for the puppeteer. Distinction learners will keep a detailed record of their experience of the process; this will be fully detailed in places and may include relevant research, considered plans, notes, diagrams and photographs. Learners' reflections will critically reflect on their experience of the puppet construction and operation processes; they will show a fully justified understanding of how the skills that they have learnt have been applied.

To achieve P3 learners will demonstrate puppet operation skills. The operation of the puppets will show some puppet manipulation skills.

To achieve M3 learners will demonstrate convincing puppet operation skills. The operation of the puppets will show some confident and mostly effective puppet manipulation skills.

To achieve D3 learners will demonstrate creative, imaginative and wholly convincing puppet operation skills. Learner will be able to skilfully operate a minimum of two different puppets in performance. The operation of the puppets will show some practiced and wholly effective puppet manipulation skills.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
PI, MI, DI	Hands Up	<p>Learners are introduced to different puppet types. Learners, in the role of puppet designer, are to give examples of different puppets and asked to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the performance potential of the puppet the origins of different puppet types how the puppet may be used in performance health and safety considerations for the different puppet types. <p>Learners will describe their findings in a research portfolio and will then write a report on the suitability of two puppet types. Learners will work individually to complete these tasks.</p>	<p>Tutor observation of the research process.</p> <p>The research portfolio.</p> <p>The report.</p> <p>Health and safety.</p>
P2, M2, D2	<p>Creating a Puppet</p> <p>This assignment has two parts and will run over a large number of weeks.</p> <p>Part One</p>	<p>Learners will be introduced to puppet construction materials and construction techniques. Learners, in the role of puppet designer, will take part in practical workshops that will give them the opportunity to explore and experiment to develop a personal puppet design style.</p>	<p>Critical evaluation of the potential of materials explored.</p> <p>Critical evaluation of the potential of techniques used.</p> <p>Tutor observation of learners' practical work.</p> <p>Self evaluation of skills learnt.</p> <p>Health and safety.</p>

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P2, M2, D2	Creating a Puppet Part Two	The learner will build on the skills developed in the first part of this assignment. The learner will select suitable materials and construction techniques to create a puppet for performance.	Research. Materials selected and used. Techniques demonstrated. The final puppet. Interim tutor and learner formative assessment. Learners' reflective account of the process. Peer assessment of the puppet. Learners' demonstration of health and safety.
P3, M3, D3	Curtain Up	Learners will devise, rehearse and perform a puppet performance for a minimum of two puppets. The performance will include the use of the puppet that was created in assignment 2. For learners who have weaker construction skills it would be advisable to have other puppets available so that learners will have more opportunity to develop appropriate puppet manipulation skills. Learners will keep an account of the process and reflect on the development of their puppet operation skills.	Tutor observation of the process and the puppet performance. Peer observation of the puppet performance. Learners' account of health and safety for the puppeteer. Learners' account of the process. Learners' self evaluation of the success of the performance.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Design Skills in the Performing Arts	Performing Arts Production Process	Production Arts Planning
	Design for Performance	Scenic Painting
		Design Method
		Stage Design for Performance
		Puppet Design

This unit also has links with the following National Occupational Standards:

Technical Theatre

- CPD1 – Improving your skills
- CPD2b – Ensure that you and your team keep up to date with the technical and production areas of the live arts
- TP1 – Clarifying creative and production requirements
- TP2.5b – Interpreting designs for sets or props
- TP3.4b – Planning props requirements for a production
- TP7.2a – Making and finishing props.

Essential resources

All workshop spaces must be suitably equipped with appropriate tools that will enable the planning and realisation of puppet designs. This will require a dry design space where learners can draw and develop design ideas. Learners will need access to suitable reference materials; this includes books, journals and magazines and computers with internet access. Learners will need appropriate storage space. The workshop must meet current health and safety guidelines and offer suitable lighting and ventilation. Learners will require access to a range of design planning and making materials; this should include access to painting and drawing materials and card for experimentation with possible construction methods. Learners will need a suitable room in which to present their final designs. This space should have IT presentation resources.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Watching and evaluating puppet performances can inform and support learner research work. This can be achieved through theatre visits or through inviting a touring puppet theatre company to the centre. Centres should work to develop links with any local theatre and puppet companies, professionals or receiving houses. Puppetry is specialised and some locations may not have local access to puppet theatres; in this instance a trip to the larger city-based museums is recommended. Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the audio-visual industries has a section of their website dedicated to careers, www.skillset.org/careers.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Bell J (editor) – *Puppets, Masks and Performing Objects* (MIT Press, 2001) ISBN 9780262522939

Currell D – *An Introduction to Puppets and Puppet Making* (Apple Press, 1992) ISBN 9781850764014

Currell D – *Puppets and Puppet Theatre* (Crowood Press, 1999) ISBN 9781861261359

Hodges D – *Marionettes and String Puppets: Collector's Reference Guide* (Krause, 2000)
ISBN 9780930625948

Peattie S – *The Puppeteers' Cooperative: 68 Ways To Make Really Big Puppets* (Dasilva Puppet Books, 2000)
ASIN B0006RQTUC

Simon R and Estrin M – *Rehearsing With Gods: Photographs and Essays on the Bread and Puppet Theatre*
(Chelsea Green, 2004) ISBN 9781931498197

Singer N F – *Burmese Puppets* (OUP Australia and New Zealand, 1993) ISBN 9780195885897

Tribble K (editor) – *Marionette Theatre of the Symbolist Era* (Mellen Press, 2003) ISBN 9780773469648

Young S – *Shakespeare Manipulated: Use of Dramatic Works of Shakespeare in Teatro Di Figura in Italy*
(Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996) ISBN 9780838635780

Websites

www.costumegallery.com

The Costume Gallery

www.costumepage.org

The Costume Page

www.costumes.org

The Costumer's Manifesto

www.puppetmuseum.com

The Olde Worlde Puppet Theatre

www.sagecraft.com/puppetry

The Puppetry Home Page

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

Although PLTS are not identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching the characteristics of different puppet types
Creative thinkers	using materials and techniques to make a puppet
Reflective learners	reflecting on the use and development of the puppet-making materials and processes and the development of puppet operation skills
Team workers	working as a member of the production team to create a puppet performance
Self-managers	describing and applying health and safety considerations for the puppet-maker and operator
Effective participators	operating the puppet in performance.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	describing/explaining/critically commenting on the characteristics of different puppet types
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching the characteristics of different puppet types
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	describing/explaining/critically commenting on the characteristics of different puppet types.