

## **Make a *Monkey King* Puppet And Try Out a Chinese Shadow Puppet Play!**

Get to know Monkey King, a favorite character and hero for all children in China, by making a traditional Chinese shadow puppet. Through this fun and easy art-making activity, students learn two important aspects in Chinese culture. Monkey King is the main character in *Journey to the West*, a classic Chinese novel, and many popular stories. These stories will lead students into an amazing world of fantasy, history and religions in China. Students will also experience one of the most beautiful old visual and theatrical arts from China, Chinese shadow puppetry.

### **Recommended Age Level:**

7-12

### **Length of Time to Complete:**

1 hour if making the shadow puppet only

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will learn that human societies use art and drama to record events, convey ideas, and tell stories

### **Outcomes:**

By the end of this activity, the students will be able to

- Briefly describe the Chinese art form of shadow puppets
- Create shadow puppets
- Set up a shadow puppet stage and try with the puppets

### **Connections to National and State Learning Standards:**

#### **National Standards for Arts Education (K-4 Visual Arts)**

Content Standard 1

Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Content Standard 4

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Content Standard 6

Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

#### **Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework, 1999**

The Arts Disciplines: Visual Arts

1.1 Use a variety of materials and **media**, *for example, crayons, chalk, paint, clay, various kinds of papers, textiles, and yarns*, and understand how to use them to produce different visual effects

1.2 Create artwork in a variety of **two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) media**, for example: *2D – drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, weaving; 3D – plastic (malleable) materials such as clay and paper, wood, or found objects for **assemblage** and construction*

1.3 Learn and use appropriate vocabulary related to methods, materials, and techniques

1.4 Learn to take care of materials and tools and to use them safely

6.2 Investigate uses and meanings of examples of the arts in children’s daily lives, homes, and communities

For example, children learn and teach other children songs in languages other than English; interview parents and community members about dances, songs, images, and stories that are part of their family and cultural heritage.

8.1 Identify characteristic features of the performing and visual arts of native populations and immigrant groups to America, such as

- styles of North American native cultures of the East Coast, Plains, Southwest, and Northwest;
- styles of folk and fine arts of immigrant groups from European, African, Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries

### **Learning Standards in the Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework**

1. Culture Strand

- Standard 4: students will demonstrate an understanding of the traditions, perspectives and practices, and the products of the culture studied including human commonalities as reflected in history, literature, and visual and performing arts. In classical language study, discussion and writing will be in English.

### **Materials Needed:**

- White or off-white cover paper to print the template
- Markers
- Scissors
- Hole punchers
- Paper-fasteners
- Twist ties
- Straws or bamboo sticks for holding and manipulating the puppets
- White cloth for a screen
- A flashlight or a table lamp

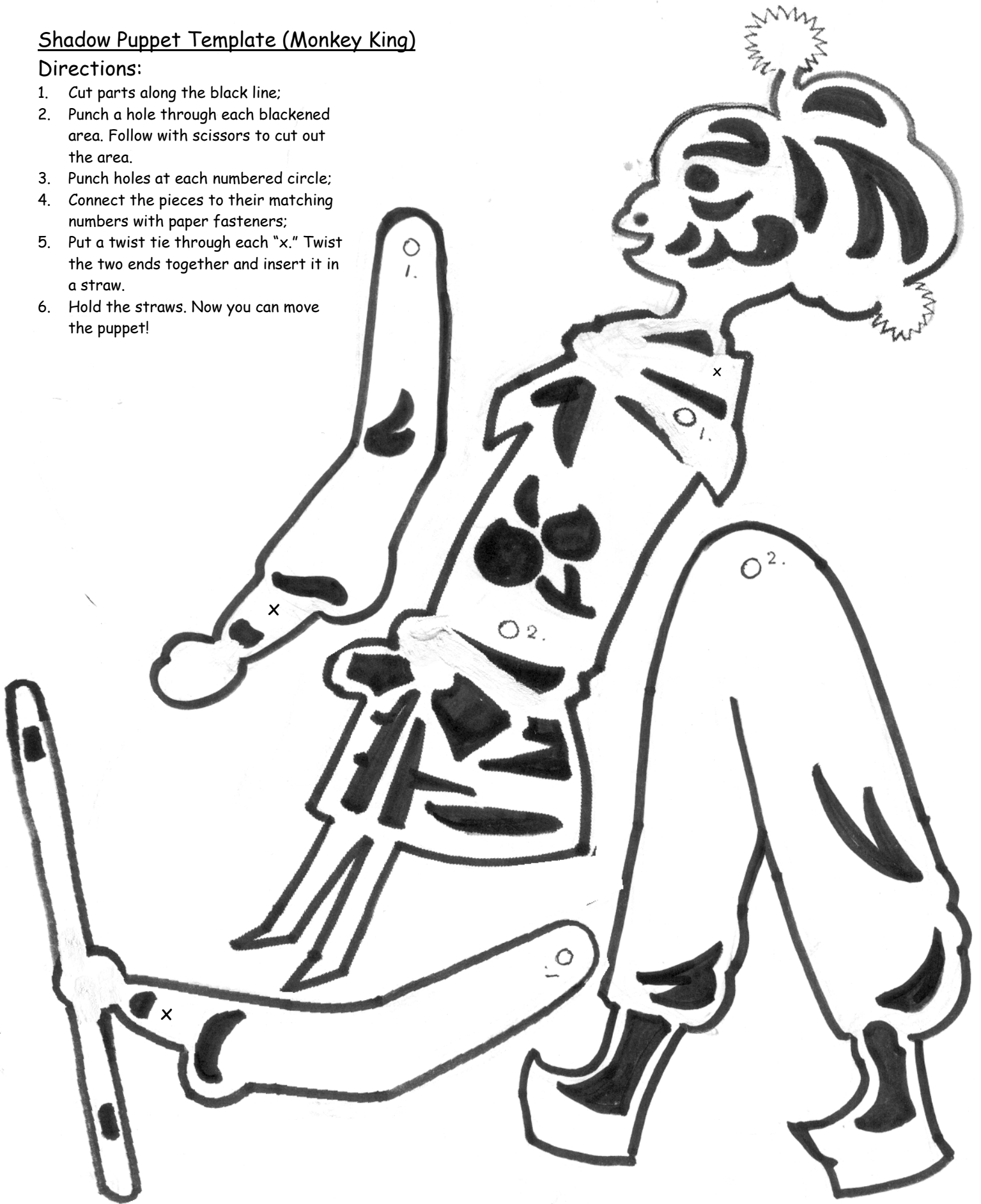
### **Procedures:**

1. Introduce to the class the brief background of Chinese shadow puppets and puppet play. Please refer to the background information on page x.
2. Tell students that they will make a shadow puppet of Monkey King. Reading a picture book about Monkey King is strongly recommended. A book list is on page x.
3. Pass out the template and markers. Ask students to color the pieces.
4. Follow the directions on the template and have fun!
5. Set up a shadow puppet stage by hanging the white cloth on two poles, or ropes from the ceiling. Turn on the flashlight or lamp, and try out the puppets.

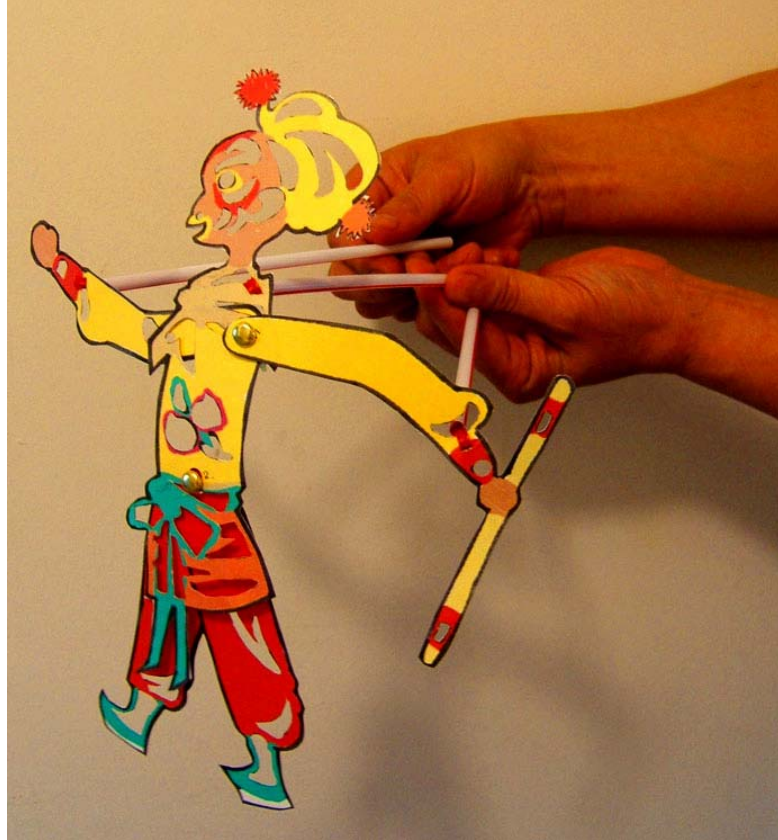
## Shadow Puppet Template (Monkey King)

### Directions:

1. Cut parts along the black line;
2. Punch a hole through each blackened area. Follow with scissors to cut out the area.
3. Punch holes at each numbered circle;
4. Connect the pieces to their matching numbers with paper fasteners;
5. Put a twist tie through each "x." Twist the two ends together and insert it in a straw.
6. Hold the straws. Now you can move the puppet!



After you have put the pieces together, hold it with the straws from the back. Practice moving the puppet in different poses.



The photo shows you shadow puppet artists demonstrating a puppet show. Try to set up your own stage with white cloth and a lamp. Have fun with your Monkey King puppet!



## Chinese Shadow Puppets

**What is it?** Chinese shadow puppets are made of flat pieces of transparent leather carved into shapes of human, animals and scenery. The puppeteers hold the shadow puppets in front of a lamp. The light of the lamp casts the puppets' shadow on a screen, thus the Chinese name Pi Ying Xi, leather shadow opera, suggests.

**The History:** Written record traces the first shadow puppets back to Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D.220). Emperor Han Wendi lost his favorite concubine, Madame Li. His sorrow was later comforted by a shadow show showing the likeness of Madame Li, an idea by Shao Weng, a Taoist priest.

By Song Dynasty (960-1279), Chinese shadow puppets reached its maturity along with the flourishing of Chinese classic literature and drama. Dyed leather was used to replace paper in making puppets.

According to Chinese sources, the spread of the shadow puppets outside of China dates back to the Mongol rule of China, the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). Genghis Khan enjoyed watching shadow puppet shows and sent shadow puppet troupes out to the many parts of the vast empire to entertain his army. At the time, the Mongol Empire spread all the way across Central Asia to Persia, Turkey, Arabia and Egypt, and to South and Southeast Asia. Interestingly, the Mongols never conquered Japan, and indeed, there is no shadow puppet tradition in Japan.

**The Play:** Chinese shadow puppet plays traditionally copy the theme, music and singing of that of local operas. They are almost identical with local operas except the characters are leather figures. However, the shadow puppet plays hold some great advantages over operas played by real actors. A dining table is all the room needed for a shadow puppet play thus makes it easier for the puppet troupes to be invited into homes for special occasions. The puppet troupes can keep their number small and easily mobile as the puppets can be manipulated by only a few people and each puppeteer can sing both male and female parts. More over, like the movies, shadow puppet shows can show fantastic and magical scenes such as horses running, dragons spitting fire, and the like, which is impossible to achieve in a traditional local opera.

Chinese shadow puppetry has a very long history and is one of the most colorful traditional Chinese folk art. Starting the last century, however, its existence has been seriously threatened by the introduction of movies, and even more so now by television, and personal computers. This endangered art form needs to be preserved so that our future generations can still learn and admire this ancient art.



## JOURNEY TO THE WEST AND MONKEY KING

*Journey to the West* is one of the best Chinese classic novels. Over the centuries, the novel has influenced art, poetry, and drama in China. The novel pertains to all three of China's major religions—Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism—and allegory at all three levels makes the stories appealing to people of all ages. The Monkey King stories from *Journey to the West* have remained popular throughout Chinese history. Monkey King is the favorite character of children in China.

*Journey to the West* is based on the account of a monk's journey to India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Hsuan-Tsang<sup>1</sup> (596 – 664), a famous Chinese monk in the Tang Dynasty, traveled on foot to India, the birthplace of Buddhism, to obtain the Buddhist scriptures. When he arrived in India, he stayed for 17 years, studying Buddhism. Upon his return to China, Hsuan-Tsang translated the scriptures into Chinese, founded a school of Buddhism, and thus made significant contributions to the development of Buddhism in China. He left behind two accounts of his journey through China to India.

Wu Cheng En (1504 – 1582) was a writer and poet in the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644). He is credited to be the author of *Journey to the West*, as he is the one who finally compiled and recorded all the stories about the monk's journey into a single work. The writing of the novel drew on vast sources of Tang monk and Monkey King stories and dramas at the time. It is an allegorical rendition of the journey, with Chinese fables, fairy tales, legends, folklore, popular beliefs, and monster stories.

The following are the main characters of the novel:

### Monkey King

Monkey King, Sun Wu Kong, whose name means “awareness of emptiness” has a contrasting personality to the monk's, and is filled with wit, intelligence, as well as a streak of rebelliousness. He is forever resourceful, and leads the group out of the many battles with monsters and other dangers.



### Hsuan-Tsang

Although the monk in real life was incredibly intelligent, strong, and courageous, in the novel he is depicted as the very opposite: fearful, unable to tell truth from fiction, and completely dependent on his disciples and fellow pilgrims.



### Pigsy

Pigsy is piggish, lazy, and sensual. He always thinks of food and women. He also likes to compete with Monkey. In doing so, he usually wins the sympathy of his master.



### Sandy

Sandy is a former sea monster. He is the quiet and loyal follower of the monk.



For a complete lesson to create a shadow puppet play, Boston Children's Museum offers an educator's kit: CHINESE SHADOW PUPPETS. It contains the set of four heroes in Journey to the West in hand-made real shadow puppets, and an complete story for students to develop into a play. For kit information, please contact kit studio: (617)426-6500x231 or (800)370-5487x231.

### Assessment

1. Assess the students' ability to follow instructions.
2. Evaluate artistic abilities/motor skills.
3. Assess the students' ability to listen and pay attention to each other's performances.

## BOOKS AND RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

### Books

#### On Shadow Puppets

Cochrane, Louise. (1972) *Shadow Puppets in Color*. Boston: Plays, Inc.\*

Jilin, Liu. (1988) *Chinese Shadow Puppet Plays*. Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers.\*

Lynch-Watson, Janet. (1980) *The Shadow Puppet Book*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.\*

Stalberg, Roberta Helmer. (1984) *China's Puppets*. China Books.\*

UCLA. (1976) *Asian Puppets—Wall of the World: Catalogue of an Exhibition presented by the UCLA Museum of Cultural History*. Los Angeles: University of California.

Young, Ed, and Beckett, Hilary. (1978) *Rooster's Horn*. William Collins+World Publishing Company.\*

#### Chinese Stories related to Monkey King and traditional Chinese plays for Children

Chen, Debby. Illustrated by Wenhai Ma. (1998) *The Making of Monkey King*. Union City, CA: Pan Asian Publications.\*

Chen, Debby. Illustrated by Wenhai Ma. (2001) *Monkey King Wreaks Havoc in Heaven*. Union City, CA: Pan Asian Publications.\*

Shepard, Aaron. Illustrated by Song Nan Zhang. (2001) *Lady White Snake: A Tale from Chinese Opera*. Union City, CA: Pan Asian Publications.\*

Wang, Xingbei. (1976) *Journey to the West, an Excerpt: Monkey Subdues the White-Bone Demon*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Wu, Cheng'en. Translated by W. J. F. Jenner. (1990) *Journey to the West*. Beijing, Foreign Language Press.\*

Young, Ed. (2001) *Monkey King*. Harper Collins Publishers.\*

Young, Ed, and Beckett, Hilary. (1978) *Rooster's Horns*. William Collins+World Publishing Company.\*

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\* Books available in Boston Children's Museum Library.