



DREAMTIME:

Tales from Down Under

Learning Guide

G'day, mates! We hope you will have a bonzer time at our puppet show!

Translation: Hello! We hope you will have a great time at our puppet show!

We're excited to be performing for you; we hope you will have time to review the performance information and suggested follow-up activities. We want the show to be a fun experience for everyone and appreciate your assistance in preparing the students for their part as audience members. *Enjoy the show!*

General Performance Information

Show Length: 45-minutes plus optional question and answer session

Types of Puppets: Rod puppets, hand puppets, and mask.

Barefoot Puppet Theatre brings to life three folktales from the **Aborigines of Australia**. The stories are part of their **oral tradition** and are thousands of years old. There are amazing similarities between stories from different cultures around the world, and the stories of the Aborigines of Australia are no exception. Australia's unusual animals including platypuses, an emu, kookaburras, kangaroos and koalas are featured throughout the performance. The original music in the show features traditional instruments including rhythm sticks and didgeridoo.

In the first story, you will hear a story about how the **emu** lost its wings – emus are similar to ostriches, which live in Africa. This story has a built in message about both vanity and peer pressure as the wind taunts a beautiful bird into flying to the sun. In the second story, you will hear how the aborigines explain the strange appearance of the **platypus**. The third tale tells of a giant frog who drinks all the water in the world – be prepared to participate!

The performer will be using three different styles of puppetry during the show. All puppets were made in our studio in Richmond, Virginia especially for this show. The puppeteer will be in view during the show, wearing black to blend into the background. This style of puppetry is a contemporary adaptation of Japanese **Bunraku**.

During the puppet show, the audience will remain seated. There will be moments when audience participation is expected (responding to questions – usually yes or no or single words). Laughter is always a part of every show. *Time permitting*, we love to do questions and answer with the children at the end of a show. We can even show how some puppets work.

Vocabulary

Aborigines: The first (original) people to live in an area.

Australia: The only island that is both a continent and a country.

Bunraku: A Japanese style of puppetry where the puppeteers are in view and they operate the puppets with rods (sticks). Usually, several people will operate one puppet.

Crocodile: A large reptile with huge jaws and lots of teeth. Crocodiles are found on every continent in the world except Antarctica. The crocodiles in Australia are the most dangerous in the world.

Emu: A large, flightless bird of Australia similar to the Ostrich of Africa. The emu is unique because the male bird is responsible for caring for the eggs and spends two years raising the chicks on his own.

Kangaroo: A marsupial with powerful legs and a strong tail that moves by jumping.

Koala : A marsupial that looks like a small, gray bear. They are unusual because their pouches are upside down. Koalas live in eucalyptus trees and eat their leaves.

Kookaburra: A small, meat-eating bird. According to tradition, these noisy birds are responsible for waking the sun each morning with their calls that sound like hysterical laughter.

Mammal: Warm-blooded animals that give birth to live young (except for the platypus and echidna of Australia), have fur, and are nursed by their mothers.

Marsupial: A mammal with a pouch for its young.

Nocturnal: Animals that are active at night and sleep during the day.

Oral Tradition: Passing on history verbally, usually in the form of stories.

Platypus: a nocturnal animal native only to Australia that has a fur-covered, otter-shaped body with a tail like a beaver, a duck bill and webbed feet. They are a special kind of mammal called a monotreme because they lay eggs! (This is the main character in our show.)

Rod Puppets: Puppets operated by a stick control.

Follow-Up Activities

- The first story presented during the show explains how the emu lost his wings (he succumbed to peer pressure – another great topic for discussion!). Read other “How and Why” stories (Rudyard Kipling has some) and/or have students create and illustrate their own.
- The second story in the program explains how the platypus shares characteristics of many different animals. Have students create their own imaginary animal by piecing together animals they know. Students may illustrate their animal; they may even be able to describe their animal’s habitat.
- Have students select an animal in Australia and write a summary of that animal to share with the class. They may even be able to make a “zoo” of their animals on a bulletin board or display table.
- Have students create shadow puppets of different Australian animals. You may wish to use the book World of Shadows, which is listed under puppetry resources, for detailed information.
- Have the students re-enact the stories they heard in the puppet show using their own versions of the puppets in the show (paper cut-outs on straws work very well!).

Recommended Reading

Lasky, Kathryn. Puppeteer. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985. A great book for elementary readers who want to know what it takes to be a professional puppeteer. It focuses on Master Puppeteer, Paul Vincent Davis, as he develops his show *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*.

Puppetry Information and Resources for Teachers

www.sagecraft.com/puppetry is the best website for information on puppetry. There is a link to the puppetry bookstore with the best selection of books available on puppetry.

Hunt, Tamara and Nancy Renfro. Puppetry in Early Childhood Education. Austin: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1979. This book is a treasure for the classroom teacher who wants to incorporate puppets into the learning experience.

Renfro, Nancy. Puppetry and the Art of Story Creation. Austin: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1979. Provides excellent step-by-step instruction to guide students as they create their own puppet plays.

Wisniewski, David and Donna. Worlds of Shadow. Englewood: Teacher Ideas Press, 1997. The best book on shadow puppetry in the classroom with wonderful information for all elementary grade levels.