



Learning Guide: GALAPAGOS GE RGE

OBJECTIVES: *This performance will:*

- ◆ Increase students' awareness of how humans can impact an environment and how some animals become endangered using the specific example of a Galapagos Giant Tortoise.
- ◆ Evoke in students an appreciation for animal life in a place far from home.
- ◆ Introduce students to many of the animals unique to the Galapagos Islands: giant tortoises, sea turtles, Sally-Lightfoot crabs, marine iguanas, blue-footed booby birds.
- ◆ Preview/review concepts related to the environment (i.e. ecosystems, endangered animals, etc...).
- ◆ Demonstrate a style of puppetry (tabletop rod puppets – inspired by Japanese Bunraku) not common to this country.
- ◆ Serve as an example of art being used to communicate information/concepts.
- ◆ Entertain!

Program Description

Galapagos George is a 45-minute puppet show that was inspired by the true story of an actual **tortoise** (Lonesome George) from Pinta Island in the **Galapagos**. George is special because he is the last of his **species**. Every island in the Galapagos has their own unique kind of tortoise and George is truly one-of-a-kind. Students will watch George grow from a tiny hatchling to a giant tortoise and discover why is all alone. Students will also see many of the other unique animals that live in this remarkable **archipelago**: marine iguanas, Sally Lightfoot crabs, blue-footed booby birds, and sea lions.

This story has a lot of impact because “Lonesome George” is still alive and living today in the Galapagos Islands at a research center. George is about 80 years old, but tortoises live for a very long time. There is always a possibility that someday another tortoise will be found on Pinta Island. People are working very hard today to improve life on the islands and to create a balance between the **native** life on the islands and humankind. *(continued)*

The puppeteer will be using rod puppets and hand puppets, working in a puppetry style inspired by Japanese **Bunraku**. The puppeteer, Heidi Rugg, created all of the puppets and scenery in her studio in Richmond, VA. The puppets are primarily **rod puppets** or puppets controlled on a stick (rod), which often has strings attached to controls to create movement. Narration will be done primarily in rhyming verse. There will be moments when audience participation is expected (responding to questions – usually yes or no or single words).

Time permitting, we love to do a question and answer session with the children at the end of a show. We can even show how some puppets work!

PRE-PERFORMANCE: *While the majority of concepts are presented during the show, it is helpful that students are aware of most of the vocabulary listed below and the following:*

1. Students should have a basic understanding of the location of the **Galapagos Islands** (they are 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in South America).
2. **Islands** are amazing places and often have unique animals that can be found nowhere else in the world.
3. On the Galapagos island you can find giant **tortoises**. Tortoises are land-dwelling animals and cannot swim like most turtles. These tortoises in the Galapagos Islands are **endangered animals**. They are endangered for many reasons; the main reasons (to be explained *during* the show) are:
 - ♦ Pirates, whalers and other human visitors to the islands between the late 1700's and the early 1900's acted in ways that caused problems for all of the animals on the islands. There had never been people on the islands, and the animals had never learned to be afraid of them. The animals were easy to catch – and the pirates were hungry!
 - ♦ People also brought with them other animals (rats, dogs, pigs, goats, and cats) that did not belong on the islands. These **introduced animals** caused problems by eating lots of the plants, animals and eggs (including tortoise eggs) all over the islands.

Vocabulary: *The following words may be used pre- and/or post-performance. It is recommended that the words marked with an *asterisk* be covered before the show.*

Island: Land surrounded by water on all sides.

Archipelago: A large grouping of islands.

Galapagos: Islands off the coast of Ecuador in South America, near the Equator.

***Tortoise:** A reptile with a shell that lives on land. Tortoises cannot swim.

***Turtle:** A shelled-reptile that lives in either fresh- or salt-water; they are also able to move about on land.

***Extinct:** A plant or animal no longer lives anywhere in the world.

South America: The continent below North and Central America.

Endangered Animal: A plant or animal exists in few numbers

Sea Lion: A mammal, similar to a seal. The difference is that sea lions have tiny external ears and can use their front flippers to “walk.” Seals do not have external ears and their front flippers are only useful in the water.

***Species:** Different types of animals that are related. Cats are a good example to share – lions, leopards, jaguars and housecats are all different species of cats. Each island in the Galapagos has its own unique kind of tortoise (and some of the islands have several different kinds!).

***Introduced Species:** Kinds of animals that did not grow up in a particular place (are not native), but were brought in (usually by people). Rats, goats, pigs, cats and dogs are introduced species in the Galapagos Islands.

Native/Indigenous: An original plant or animal from a particular place. In example, elephants are native or indigenous to Africa and India, but not to the United States.

Bunraku: A traditional form of puppetry in Japan where the puppeteers are in view, operating large puppets. Often, 2 or 3 puppeteers will manipulate a single puppet! Puppeteers usually wear colors to denote seasons and/or their own level of mastery.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

The puppeteer, Heidi Rugg, will be using rod puppets and hand puppets, working in a puppetry style inspired by Japanese **Bunraku**. Ms. Rugg created all of the puppets and scenery in her studio in Richmond, Virginia. The **rod puppets** are puppets controlled on a stick (rod), which often has strings attached to controls to create movement. The puppets are made out of a variety of materials including: raw silk, foam rubber, slinkies, papier-mâché, wood, springs, dowel rods, fishing line and different kinds of glue. Puppets take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to build! It takes approximately 3 months to build a show *after* she has researched all the information and the script has been developed.

The stage was designed to look like an island in the Galapagos archipelago. You can see driftwood, a sandy beach, a rocky mountain in the back and flowers similar to those found in the islands.

Ms. Rugg has worked hard to develop all the voices for the show; all voices are done “live,” only the music is recorded. During most of her shows, Ms. Rugg performs barefoot – that’s why her company is called “Barefoot Puppet Theatre.” She chooses to work barefoot because it makes it a lot easier to cue the music with foot pedals located behind and beneath the stage. She also likes the fact that being barefoot makes her move more quietly and she is less likely to damage a puppet if she accidentally steps on it!

Follow-Up Activities: *These activities may be used to expand on the information presented during the performance. It is not necessary to do any/all the activities or to do them in order. You may wish to modify the activities to be more appropriate for your grade level.*

- ❑ Students may write a letter to George! The puppeteer is collecting “letters to George.” Letters or packets of letters may be mailed to: Lonesome George, c/o Heidi Rugg, 1811 Maple Shade Lane, Richmond, VA 23227.
- ❑ Discuss other extinct and endangered animals around the world. Have students create a factual story about an extinct or endangered species. The story could include a description and/or drawing of the species, information about their habitat and what caused their species to become extinct or endangered. You may wish to use 11-year old Michael Mastorakis’ book to inspire your students.
- ❑ Have students select an animal in the Galapagos 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 Galapagos animals. You may wish to use the book World of Shadows, which is listed under puppetry resources, for detailed information. They can then re-enact the puppet show (or parts of it) using their own puppets.
- ❑ Have the class write a letter to a Congressman or the President voicing their concern for endangered species and encouraging the government to make choices that will save them.

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*.

“Galapagos” Means “Tortoises” by Ruth Heller, 2000: Great picture book with rhymes about different animals in the Galapagos. K-1

We're Off...to the Galapagos by Michael Mastorakis and Georgette Baker, 2000: Book written, illustrated, edited and by a home-schooled 11-year old boy and his mom. Great for inspiring your students to do some amazing work. It's available online at bn.com.

And then There Was One: The Mysteries of Extinction by Margery Facklam, 1990: A great book about extinction for advanced 2nd graders through grade 5. The first chapter covers the story of the Galapagos tortoises.

Galapagos: National Parks by Maxine McCormick, 1989: Suitable for grades 3 and up, this book is full of information and fun facts about the Galapagos. There are tips at the end about island "etiquette."

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss, 1971: I know you've read this one! Share it with your class again! This book was written the same year that George was discovered. Coincidence?

Hey! Get Off Our Train by John Burningham, 1989: A young boy dreams of a trip on his toy train where he rescues endangered animals. Grades 1-4.

Puppetry Information and Resources for Teachers

Hunt, Tamara and Nancy Renfro. Puppetry in Early Childhood Education. Austin: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1979. 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. World of Shadows. Englewood: Teacher Ideas Press, 1997. The *best* book on shadow puppetry in the classroom with wonderful information for all elementary grade levels.