

## LESSON PLAN

# TINY VOICE, BIG FEELING: CERAMIC FINGER PUPPETS



Suggested Levels: Grades 2 - 8

Designer: Tabitha Lusk



*Small sculptures can tell big stories. Through ceramic finger puppets, students explore motion, character, and communication using clay as a tool for expression and connection.*

## OBJECTIVES

**I CAN...** create a hollow ceramic form using slab and slip-and-score techniques.

**I CAN...** express emotion or personality through shape, texture, and color.

**I CAN...** use my puppet to tell a short story and reflect on feelings.

## NATIONAL VISUAL ART STANDARDS

### Generate and Conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

- Artists develop ideas by exploring imagination, storytelling, and personal experience.
- Students design and sketch an original ceramic finger puppet character through imagination and planning.

### Refine and complete artistic work.

- Artists reflect on their work and make revisions.
- Students refine their ceramic finger puppets by smoothing surfaces, strengthening attachments, and adjusting details.

### Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

- Artists create art by connecting their personal experiences, imagination and ideas to their work.
- Students create finger puppets inspired by their experiences, ideas and emotions and use them as tools for storytelling.



## SUPPLY LIST

### CLAY

- Clay body of choice

### BRUSHES & TOOLS

- Clay tools (needles, ribbons)
- Assorted brushes and sponges
- Small Dowels (for sizing finger openings)
- Slip and water containers.

### MISCELLANEOUS

- Plastic wrap or wet box
- Brushes
- Paper and pencils for sketching
- Glazes of choice

### MAYCO GLAZES

- Jungle Gems
- Designer Liner
- Stroke & Coat



### COLORS BY MAYCO

For this project we used Jungle Gems for playful, colorful bursts, Designer Liner for fine outlines and detailed features, and Stroke & Coat for areas that should stay simpler and more graphic. These glazes give bright accents, crisp detail control and clear base areas, perfect for small-scale puppet work.



### Accommodations

- Provide step-by-step photo examples and character prompts.
- Offer pre-formed slab tubes or partially formed basis for students needing assistance.
- Allow extra time or pair students for peer support.
- Use thicker, chunkier forms to reduce breakage.



### Teacher Tips

- Keep wall even and slightly thicker to prevent cracking.
- Test fit opening against fingers, accounting for clay shrinkage.
- Encourage playful storytelling to boost engagement.

# MEET THE MASTER

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## Art History Connection



**Jim Henson (1936-1990)** was an artist, storyteller, and puppeteer who believed that puppets could help people learn, laugh, and understand their feelings. He is best known for creating **The Muppets** and helping develop **Sesame Street**, a show designed to teach children about letters, numbers, kindness and emotions.

Henson thought puppets were powerful because they allowed characters to say things that people sometimes find hard to say themselves. His puppets showed that it's okay to be silly, curious, nervous, brave, or confused, all at the same time. Jim believed that puppets aren't just tools, they are tools for communication.

## Secondary Cultural Connection: Traditional Finger and Hand Puppets (Global)

**Guignol Puppets (France)** - Guignol puppets began in France in the 1800s and were known for their humor and bold, funny characters. They often told stories about everyday life, showing how puppets can speak up in playful and powerful ways.

**Wayang Puppets (Indonesia)** - Wayang shadow puppets use light movement music, and storytelling to share important stories and life lessons. This tradition shows how puppets can teach values and keep cultural stories alive.

**Punch & Judy (England)** - Punch and Judy shows began in the 1600s and are filled with exaggerated characters and big, dramatic emotions. These performances remind us that puppets can make personalities and feelings feel larger than life.

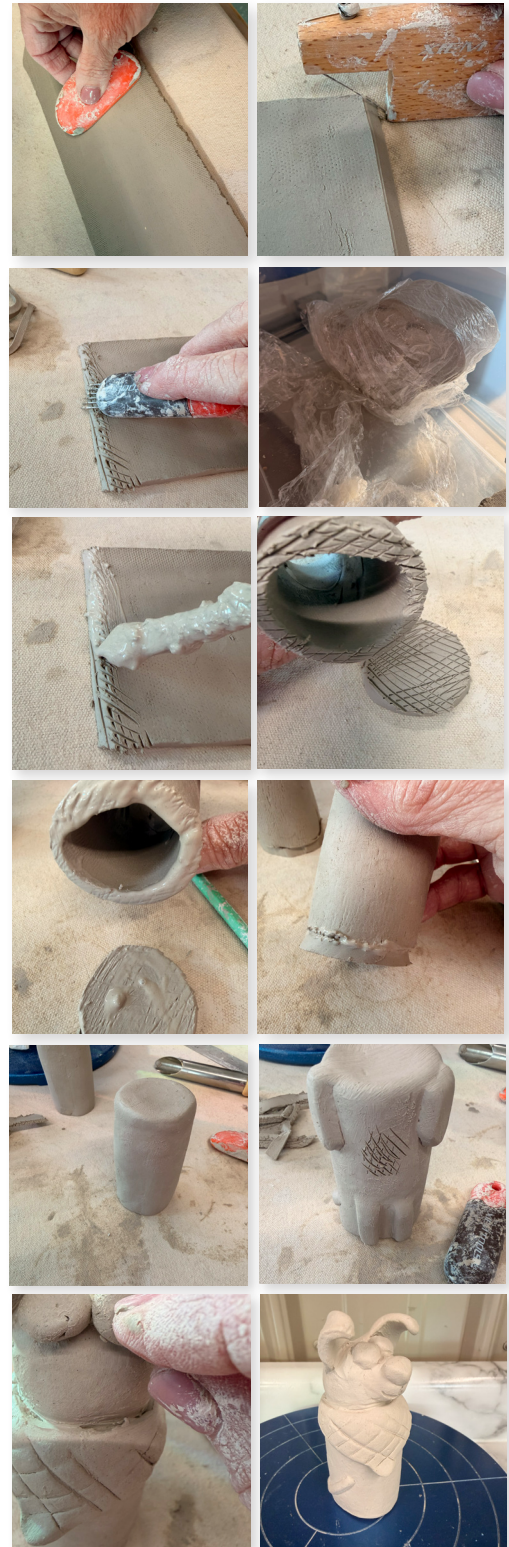
## Teacher Script

*"Artists have used puppets for hundreds of years to tell stories, teach lessons, and express emotions. Jim Henson believed that puppets could help people understand themselves and each other. Today, you'll create a tiny character that has something to say, maybe something silly, kind, brave or honest."*

# DIRECTIONS - CLAY BUILDING PROCESS

## *Ceramic Finger Puppet (Step-by-Step)*

1. Sketch a character and plan key features.
2. Roll a sand slab, form into a tube, join with slipping score and add a cover to the top; leave bottom open for a finger.
3. Add facial features, hair, hats, or small attachments, using coils or pinch forms; keep addition to small and secure.
4. Smooth surface, reinforce weak areas, check fit (allow extra space for clay shrinkage)
5. Dry slowly, bisque fire, glaze exterior (use Designer Liner for details), then glaze fire.
6. Use puppets in short skits, partner storytelling, or reflection activities



## DIRECTIONS - DECORATING PROCESS



This simple clay project helps your students get creative and create a character they can use in a story. Make sure to use Mayco glazes to give your student's pieces extra personality!



## EXTEND THE LEARNING *using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory*

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### LINGUISTIC (Word Smart)

Write a short script or character biography.

### SPATIAL (Picture Smart)

Plan facial layout and proportions.

### INTERPERSONAL (People Smart)

Perform partner puppet skits.

### BODY KINESTHETIC (Body Smart)

Act out movements using puppets.

### NATURALIST (Nature Smart)

Design animal puppets inspired by habitats.

### LOGICAL/ MATHEMATICAL (Number Smart)

Measure proportions and plan balance in puppet form.

### INTRAPERSONAL (Self Smart)

Reflect on emotions represented.

### MUSIC (Music Smart)

Add rhythm or sound effects to performances.

# RUBRIC

	<b>EXCELLENT (4 PTS)</b>	<b>GOOD (3 PTS)</b>	<b>SATISFACTORY (2 PTS)</b>	<b>NEEDS WORK (1 PTS)</b>
<b>CREATIVITY &amp; SYMBOLISM</b>	Puppet clearly shows original character, emotion, and thoughtful choices.	Show some creativity and clear character.	Basic or familiar design with limited symbolism.	Little or no symbolic intent.
<b>CRAFTSMANSHIP</b>	Even walls, secure attachments, clean finish.	Minor flaws, but sturdy.	Noticeable issues, but intact.	Poor construction or brakes.
<b>TECHNIQUES</b>	Strong use of slab, slip-and score, and detail methods.	Adequate technique.	Limited technique use.	Technique not demonstrated.
<b>EFFORT &amp; ENGAGEMENT</b>	Used time well; completed with care.	Good effort.	Inconsistent effort.	Minimal effort, incomplete.
<b>PRESENTATION &amp; REFLECTION</b>	Puppet used effectively in storytelling; thoughtful.	Clear presentation and reflection.	Basic presentation or reflection.	No presentation or reflection.

**Total Score: \_\_\_\_/25**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVELS</b>
<b>4 POINTS (A): EXCELLENT</b>
<b>3 POINTS (B): GOOD</b>
<b>2 POINTS (C): SATISFACTORY</b>
<b>1 POINTS (D): NEEDS WORK</b>