

# CPS SOURCE bySunday

Fantastic adventures of a wandering hero, star-crossed lovers and romantic tales, hermits teaching magic to their apprentices, and abandoned children seeking lost loved ones - it sounds like a fantastic story time, doesn't it?! The shadow theater of Southern Thailand, known as **the Nang**, tells these tales of love, current events, and tradition using what are called **shadow puppets**.

The Nang shadow puppets teach important Thai values, historical events, and mythologies using two main types of puppets: the **Nang Talung** and the **Nang Yai**. The Nang Talung is played with leather puppets that usually have movable arms controlled by a stick or string, like the one pictured below, who shows the character of a Ruesi, a magical hermit that appears in many stories.

The Nang Yai are large and do not move, but the themes, scenes, and characters are often the same. The Yai below is also a Ruesi, but you can see that he cannot move around like the Talung.



Ruesi Hermit #1981-0274a  
Nang Yai Shadow Puppet  
Thailand, 20th century  
leather, dye, paper

Both types are found all over Thailand and each Nang figure is made the same way no matter if they are Talung or Yai, so they can easily be recognized. For example, the faces of men are seen in profile (sideways), but the women all face the front. When light shines through the faces of the women during performances they appear to glow.

You can make your own shadow puppet theater using a flashlight and cutout paper figures for shadow puppets. Make some shadow puppets and place them between the light and a blank wall or screen - as close to the wall as possible works best. Use your favourite nursery rhyme or fairytale as inspiration.



Ruesi Hermit  
Nang Talung Shadow Puppet  
Thailand, 20th century  
leather, plastic

#1981-0268

## EXPLORE

To see more artifacts, visit the MoA's online databases:  
<https://anthromuseum.missouri.edu/?q=online-databases>

Database search words: Thailand, Shadow, Puppet, Buddhist, Hindi

### Tips for Using the Museum Databases

- Log in as a "Guest."
- Enter search terms into one or more fields and click the "Perform Find" button in the status area on the left-hand side of the screen.
- Use the book icon in the status area to move from one record to another in the found set.
- Click on the magnifying glass icon to return to find mode and perform additional searches.
- When finished working with a database, please be sure to click the "Log Out" button in the status area to close your session.

# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THAILAND?



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## Shadow Puppets

Shadow puppetry is a very, very old art. It has probably been around for as long as people have been making shadows. Shadow theatre has thrived in Turkey, India, Southeast Asia, Egypt, and Europe. Even today in the Indonesian islands of Bali and Java, master puppeteers perform traditional tales accompanied by live music, bringing to life many different characters in epic legends that sometimes last all night long. Many of these stories concern the origins of the moon, the constellations people see, and the mystery of the starry sky.



Through puppets children learn about these myths and legends and can have fun making up their own.

All you need is a darkened room, some cut out shapes and a screen in front of a light source.

Shadow puppetry gives children a chance to 'touch the sky'



## Making Shadow Puppets

★ GOAL: To discover one's own and other cultures' different stories and legends about the sky.

★ MATERIALS: cardboard, tracing paper, a graphite pencil, scissors, a fine scalpel, tape, paper fasteners, straws, or fine sticks

- a screen (a white sheet)
- a light source
- a script



★ AGE GROUP: Supervised, group activity for 6 years and up

### WHAT TO DO:

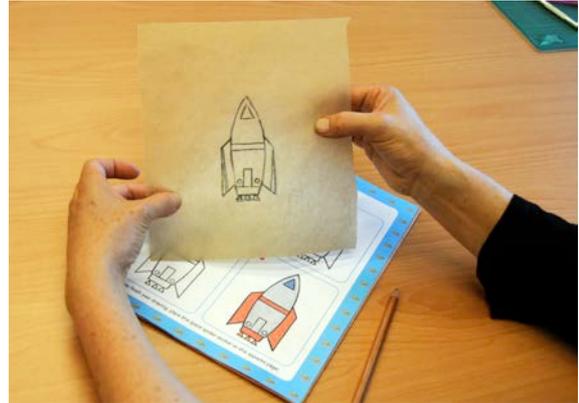
- Choose your story or inspiration. If you have found a story in an illustrated book, you can photocopy the pages and ask children to choose which characters and objects they will need to tell the story (the weaver, the princess, the moon etc..) Or, you can ask children to make up their own puppets and draw the characters directly onto cardboard.



- If you have found an image in a book, place translucent paper such as tracing or baking paper over the image you wish to copy.



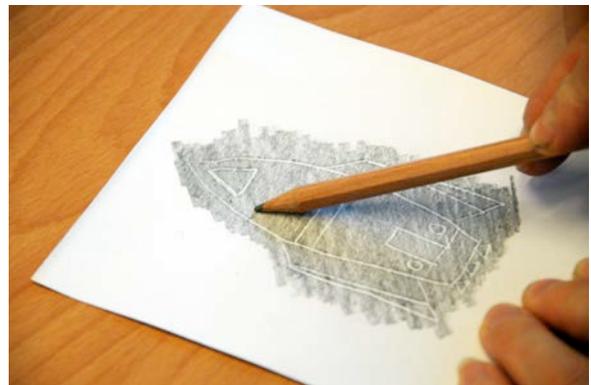
- When you have finished your picture, hold it up to make sure that the outline is clear. You may want to add some detail, or features, but keep it simple.



- Place your tracing on a piece of cardboard and retrace the outline, pressing down hard with the pencil.



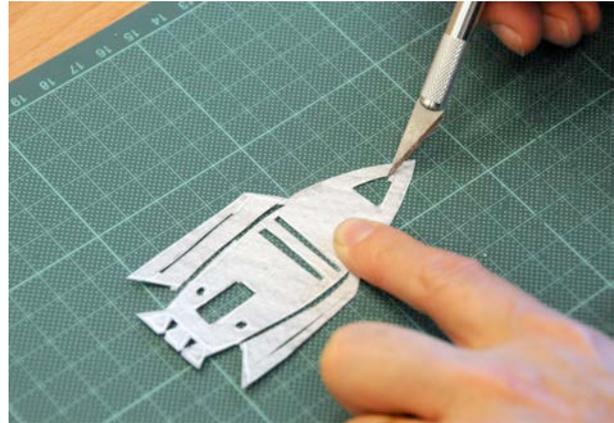
- Scribble over the cardboard until all the outlines of your image appear.



- Carefully cut the puppets out of the card (or else get an adult to do it.)



- For more fine detail, use a fine scalpel blade to make holes for eyes or windows (ADULTS ONLY PLEASE!) Note how the detail is minimal and does not weaken the overall structure of the puppet.



- If you want a character to move its limbs, cut at the joint in elbow, knee or shoulder etc. Overlap the two sections and fix a paper fastener in the middle. This will create an axis from which the whole limb will move.



- For the simplest puppets, you can use a bendable straw to attach to the back. You can also use fine bamboo sticks, or chopsticks for your puppeteer handles.



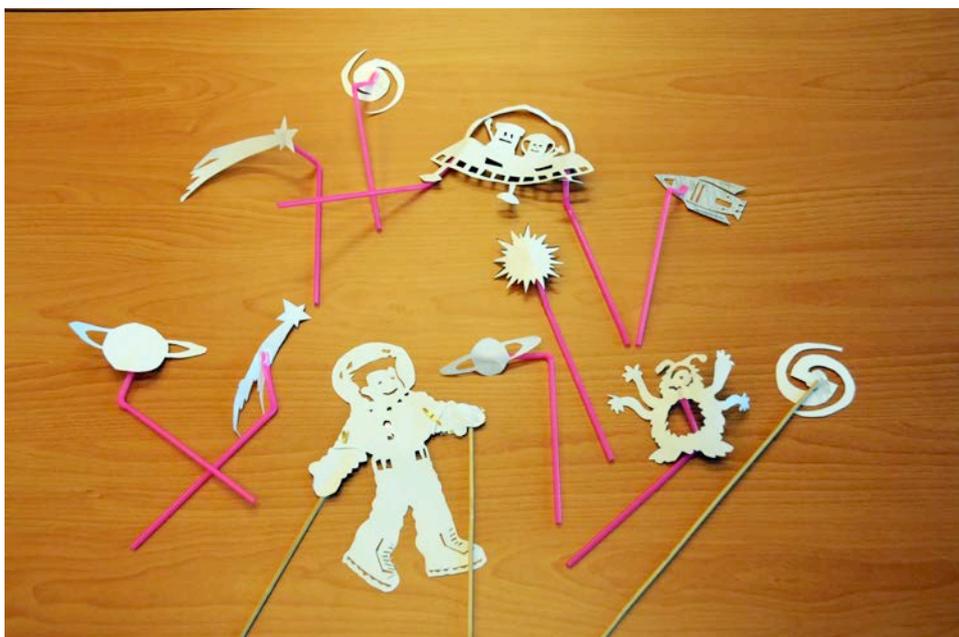
- Place the very tip of the straw or stick at the centre of the puppet and tape down securely. If you are manipulating the limbs, attach another stick not to the joint but to the end of the limb, such as the hand or foot.



- If you are using straws the slight bend will give you flexibility with how you hold the puppet against the screen.



- Assemble the cast and the puppeteers



- Once you have decided on the story it is the light that will bring the shadow puppets alive on the screen. You can darken a room and hang your screen in front of a window. Stand behind the screen and press your puppets against the sheet.



- Alternatively shine the light at the wall and move the puppets between the light and the wall. Remember light travels in straight lines, so the closer a puppet is to the light source, the more it blocks the light and the bigger the shadow becomes.



Source:

Lara Albanese et al for UNAWE Italy

UNAWE is an international programme to inspire young underprivileged children with the beauty and scale of the universe. Universe Awareness illustrates the multicultural origins of modern astronomy in an effort to broaden children's minds, awaken their curiosity in science and stimulate global citizenship and tolerance. *Universe Awareness is imagination, excitement and fun in the universe for the very young.*

