

future

river reflections

a river festival





How will our rivers look in the future? How healthy will they be?

How do we want our rivers to be in the future?

When we talk about the environment and the future we often use the word 'sustainable'. The key to sustainability is finding a balance between people, the environment and economics.

Managing our rivers is not an easy task. As a community we have to learn about how to take responsibility for the care of rivers and make decisions that will affect the future. It is important that people know what a healthy river is, and understand the various factors that influence river health. It is also important that people value rivers and make connections with their environment.

A river festival

A River Festival is a celebration that uses the arts to inspire and educate people about rivers.

The activities listed below are ways you can create puppets to use in your own special River Festival for your river or creek.

They can be used to create a special event for the community and be timed to coincide with other related events happening across your State or Australia. The festival may be a single performance given by your class to the rest of the school or it could be a larger event held on the banks of your local creek or river. Through music, drama, puppetry and dance you can create a performance that entertains and inspires people and helps them to understand the importance of taking responsibility for the care of our rivers.

Key messages

Think about the messages that you would like to communicate to your audience. It is important that the messages you choose are clear and easily understood. Brainstorm ideas with your class and select those messages that you feel are important.

You may choose to give facts and figures about your river and select information that the community may not readily know. The messages may relate to the many issues that surround river health such as animal and plant communities, water quality, river flows and ways that people use the river.

It may be simple statements that are incorporated into the performance or perhaps ideas that flow through the puppets and music. Think about how you can really boost the impact of these messages by 'entertaining' rather than just 'telling' your audience.

Themes

Create a framework for your festival that is practical and allows you to connect all the individual elements in a performance. It may be a play with a storyline where the actors dress up as river characters or it could be a performance based on puppets using a backdrop of video clips of your local creek or river.



Baxter Primary School 2001. Public performance - "Water Journey".

SOURCE: RICHARD COOKE. RAW SPIRIT STUDIOS.

Timing of the festival

Plan your festival to coincide with other associated events. This will help to increase your event's appeal to the media and make the job of publicity easier.

Some suggestions include:

- > National Water Week (third week in October)
- > World Environment Day (June 5)
- > NAIDOC week (National Aboriginal Islander Day Of Celebration) (July)
- > Community events such as field days, agricultural shows, fairs and fetes.

Involving the Arts community

Enlist the support of your local artists in the festival project. Identify the artists in your school community, musicians, dancers, puppeteers, poets, writers and sculptors, provide them with an outline of your ideas for a festival. They may be willing to speak to the class or provide a workshop experience to assist students in designing and creating features of the festival. Artists may like to give performances as part of the festival or have stalls to market their particular craft or skill.

Involving Indigenous communities

Identify the traditional owners of this river. Find out as much as you can about the indigenous community associated with your region. Discuss Aboriginal art as a form of sacred story telling.

Research traditional music forms such as clap sticks, didgeridoo. Discuss the purpose of music to traditional lifestyles. What are song lines?

Listen to contemporary Aboriginal music. Tune into an Aboriginal radio station.



Creating puppets

Frogs

Listen at night to the sound of a frog.

- > Where does it live? What kind of frog is it?

- > See if you can find out which species it is.

- > What does it look like? What does it eat? Does anything eat it? When does it lay eggs?

Learn all you can about it.

One very special frog is the Growling Grass Frog, also known as the Southern Bell Frog. One of the reasons its' survival is threatened is because one of its predators is a small fish introduced to control mosquitoes. Unfortunately that fish likes to eat tadpoles too.



Imagine the life of the frog.

You swim. You breathe air. You leap many times your own length.

You sing a song that can be heard from a considerable distance away.

You have keen eyes for seeing at night.

You have sensitive ears and remain alert to the slightest vibration that may indicate danger.

Draw a picture of a frog sitting. Draw another picture of a frog leaping. Then draw a picture of a frog swimming. Fill in the background to these pictures.

Creating puppets

Pictures are ideas. Ideas can be communicated in many ways. You may draw a food chain to which the frog belongs. Draw the life cycle of the frog. Draw the habitat upon which the frog depends.

Read about frogs. Learn what you can from books with pictures. Watch a video about frogs. Find a frog expert and ask them about frogs. Become an expert yourself.



Birds

Go to a place where you know you will see birds. Look and listen. Wonder. Establish an interest in a particular bird. Stay with that one. Watch it closely. Look through the bird's eye. Become the bird for a moment. Sense what it is to be that bird. Look. Walk. Take off. Flap your wings. Glide. Turn. Descend. Slow up. Break your flight. Reach for the Earth. Land. Stand. Reflect. Jot and scribble. Write down your thoughts.



Making newspaper frogs

Materials

- > Newspaper
- > Calico strips
- > PVA glue
- > Ping pong balls
- > Wall paper paste
- > Paint
- > Fabric scraps
- > 2 pieces of bendable wire 600mm in length
- > String
- > 2 or 3 sticks, approximately 300mm in length.

Step 1

Use your drawings as designs to make three dimensional images of these characters.

Step 2

Using newspaper and masking tape, scrunch up the newspaper to make a head and body over one end of a stick.

Step 3

Make legs out of newspaper except for the upper hind leg. Use two pieces of wire passed through the body for the upper hind leg securing it to the lower hind newspaper legs and bending to the best position.

Step 4

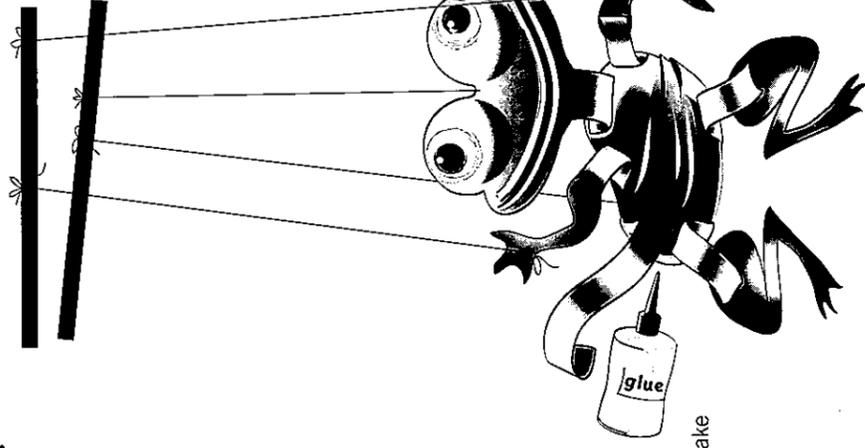
Tape ping pong balls for eyes.

Step 5

Paper Mache over the whole lot but make sure the calico joints are kept free of glue. When the paper Mache is dry decorate your frog puppet by either painting it in bright colours or clothing it in brightly coloured fabrics.

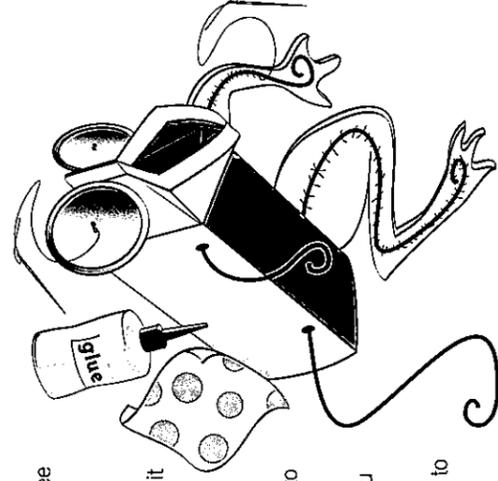
Step 6

Use as a rod puppet or attach strings to the body and tie them to a stick (The strings should reach the floor when you hold your hands out in front of you). Attach strings to the legs and tie these to two other sticks.



Play with your puppet and see what it can do.

Make the other characters in a similar way. Perhaps you will make a bird that likes to eat frogs. What bird is that? Make it using recycled materials such as milk cartons, plastic bottles, wire, fabric and foam rubber. Start by making the main body parts then join them all together remembering that the puppet only needs to stand up when you operate it. Keep it loose and use your hands to move it.



Making milk carton frogs

Materials

- > Milk carton (all sizes are good)
- > PVA glue
- > Wire
- > Fabric scraps
- > Acrylic paint
- > Needle and thread
- > buttons or cardboard
- > 5-10 mm thick foam rubber sheet.

Step 1

Coat the carton all over with PVA glue and clad the carton completely with fabric, leaving the pouring spout open. This becomes the frog's mouth. Dab the glue onto the fabric to ensure that it adheres. This glue does dry clear so you needn't worry about the whiteness while it's wet. Acrylic paint may be mixed with the glue. Leave all of this over night to dry. The body of the frog is now complete.

Step 2

Make two pairs of holes for two pairs of legs. Pass a piece of wire through each pair of holes for front and back legs. Smaller ones up front. Bigger ones at the back for jumping. Bend the end of each wire around in a circle. This is safe and provides a frame for the foot. Leave the leg itself straight for now. Just bend it at each hole so it stays. The wire is the bones.

Step 3

Flesh the legs with 5-10mm foam rubber sheet. Cut the leg shapes from hip to toe with scissors. Sew these to the wire using strong thread. Bend them to shape. Let the legs swing free. Puppets work better when they are loose.

Step 4

Think about the eyes. Use buttons or cardboard or any other material that suggests frog's eyes to you. Glue them to either side of the milk carton spout. Simple eyes are best although you may wish to add lashes or work out how to blink them. Eyes give the puppet life so take time to shape and paint them to be really good lookers!

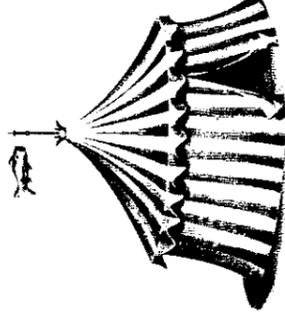
Making plastic bottle birds

Materials

- > 2 litre plastic bottle (body)
- > 1 pear shaped head crafted from newspaper and masking tape and covered with paper mache or plastic pear
- > cardboard (beak)
- > wire (light weight gauge for wings and legs)
- > silk material or very light weight material found in a fabric shop (for very light floaty wings)
- > fish net stockings or any other discarded stockings or tights (one leg)
- > beads (eyes)
- > sticks
- > needle and thread.

Step 1

Cut the bottom out of the bottle with a pair of scissors. Put the head small end first into the foot of the stockings leg. Put the bottle in neck first close up to the head. Put your hand inside the bottle. Hold the head with your other hand. See the head and body of the bird and play around with it like this for a while, imagining the other bits.

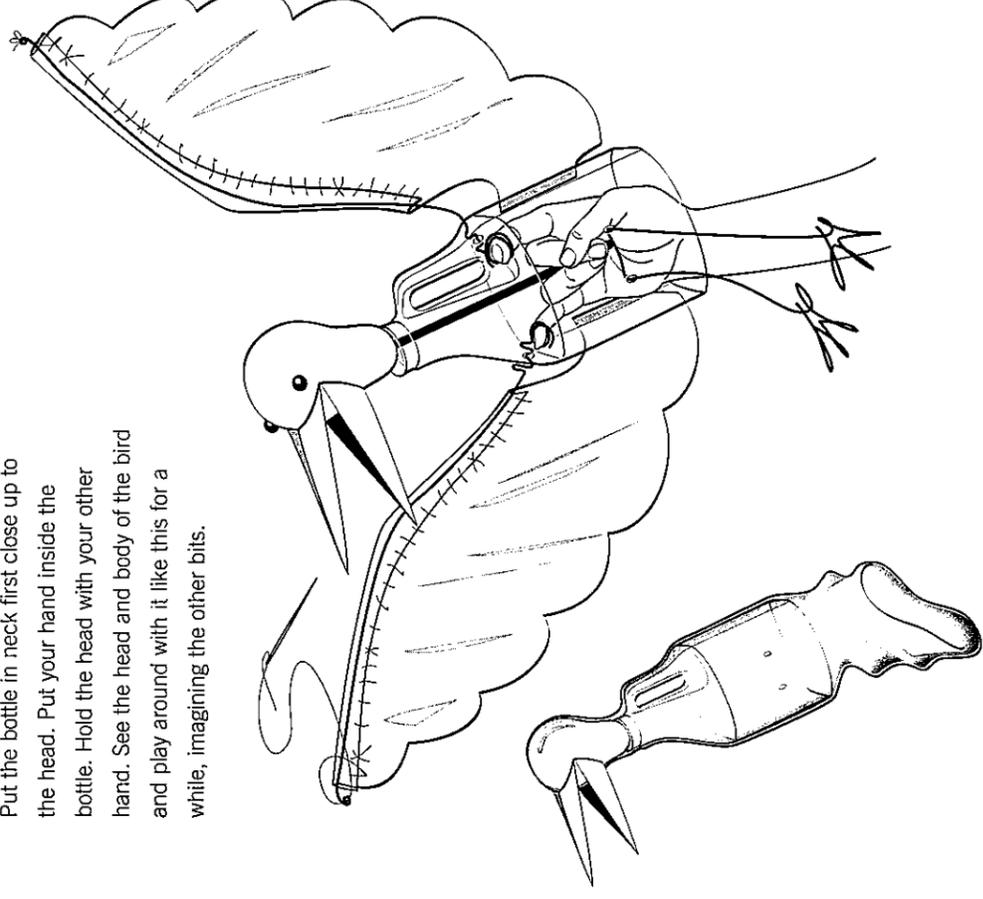


Step 2

Consider where the wings go. Make a small hole in each side of the bottle. Cut two pieces of wire that are one and a half times the size of the plastic bottle. Put the ends in each hole. Bend them into rings for your index and little fingers to loop into inside the bottle. Hold the bird up and fly it. Play around until it feels about right. Sew the floaty fabric to the outstretched wings and onto the body.

Step 3

Fix the small stick into the head. Attach the eyes. Put a piece of wire through the bottle where the legs go. Make a cardboard beak with masking tape. Glue it to the head. Move it. **Be the bird.**



Setting the scene for your performance

Make the scenery for your puppet play using cardboard and sticks and other natural materials. Create the underwater and above water worlds that the frog depends on. Put it all together and have a go at telling the frog's life story. A backdrop of video clips using a Power Point presentation is another way of creating atmosphere.

Practice the movements and add music including percussion, instruments and vocal sounds. Find a voice for your frog so that it can clearly tell its own story.



Baxter Primary School 2001. Public performance- "Water Journey".

SOURCE: RICHARD COOKE. RAW SPIRIT STUDIOS

Practice with your friends. Introduce other puppets of river creatures. Make a video of your rehearsal so you can see what it looks like. Invite some friends to watch and give you feedback.

Really express yourselves fully when you do this. Don't hold back. Be outrageous and entertaining. Enjoy yourselves fully.

Listen to what your audience has to say. You will be surprised how much people get out of it. Look after your puppet. You may get to use it again. Put it on display somewhere special. Write an article for your school newsletter about your show. Be proud of yourself for making a real difference to the way people think about river creatures and rivers.



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Helping Create a Better Environment

Author and Project Manager: Catherine Buxton, Buxton Connections
Commissioned by Jane Ryan and Katrina Whelan, Waterwatch Victoria
Puppet designs by Ian Cuming, www.puppetability.com
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