

Adapting Children's Picture Books on Immigration for  
Creative Shadow Puppet Plays

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Background.

The Mather School is a Boston Public Elementary School that currently serves 616 students in grades K1-5. The very diverse student population is made up of 38% Black (Cape Verdean, Caribbean, African American), 31% Asian (Vietnamese), 21% Latino, 5% White, and 5% Mixed/other. Additionally, 15% of Mather students receive Special Education Services, 38% are Limited English Proficiency, 43% of whom the First Language is not English, and 84% are Low Income.

Overview.

A survey of Children's Literature, particularly picture books about immigration stories, reveals a treasury of new books that can engage, entertain and delight children while addressing many of the challenges that immigrant children and their families face. Adjustment, conflict, loss, language barriers, poverty and sacrifice, as well as hope, determination, and friendship are often found in these stories. Using these books should help promote empathy, kindness, discussion, and adjustment for all Mather students as they begin a new school year with new classmates. The collaborative nature of the project will help build teamwork among groups and help the students get to know each other. In addition, it parallels the norms embedded in the Mather Way:

- Believe in yourself and never stop trying.
- Respect and celebrate everyone's differences.
- Encourage others to do their best.
- Use kind words to solve problems.
- Treat all property with respect.

Goals.

-To teach students how to adapt children's picture books on immigration for use in creating shadow puppets and performing shadow puppet plays.

- To teach students how to create shadow puppets.
- To teach students some team building exercises to help them get to know each other better and to work collaboratively.

Audience. Grade 4 and 5 students

Duration. Eight, 1 hour class periods.

(Day 1)

Objective.

Students will be able to read and select which Children's Book their group would like to adapt for their shadow puppet play.

Procedure.

Four students are assigned to a table. There are six groups. Each table will have 6-8 children's picture books on the topic of immigration. The selected books are from the list of recommended sources below.

Students will read the book jackets and reviews, examine the texts and illustrations before deciding, as a group, which story to read and use for their 3-5 minute shadow puppet play. They can use one important part or simplify the whole story. Once selected, they read the whole story together. Provide students with a checklist for story selection that includes the following:

- Does your story have a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Does your story have characters with interesting shapes?
- Does your story have a particular setting?
- Does your story have excitement and action?
- Will your characters move in some way to advance the action?
- Is the story interesting to you?
- Will it be interesting for the audience?

Once students decide, they put their names and room number on a sticky note and attach it to the book cover.

(Day 2)

Objective.

Students will be able to create a visual storyboard that helps identify the characters, setting, beginning, middle, and end of their story or one important part of it they wish to dramatize.

Procedure.

Define and show examples of storyboards.

Provide each group with sticky notes and pencils. Students will draw on the notes to show the beginning, middle, and end of their chosen story and include the main event, characters and setting that their story will need. They should arrange the cards in order of the sequence of the action to be told. They should edit so they only have about 6-8 cards in their storyboard that clearly shows what will happen in the story. When finished put Title and room number on a blank sheet of paper and adhere the notes in sequence to the paper.

(Day 3)

Objective.

Students will be able to create a written script for the main action and dialogue of their 3-5 minute shadow puppet play.

Procedure.

Using their storyboards, and referring to their text, students will write a very short script about all or one important part of the book. The script will provide the words that each character or narrator will say in the play. Students should identify who is saying each line by character. If you use a narrator to advance the story, label those lines with an N. If there are lines that the whole group will say in unison, mark them All. Students should include main characters that have something important to say and do. Tell the story in your own words and include important phrases from the text. Students should identify the scene where the action takes place and provide stage directions that tell where and when puppets enter and exit the stage and how they move. (Shadow puppets have to move. There must be action or your play will be boring for the audience to watch.) When finished, paper clip the script to the storyboard and copies will be made.

(Day 4 and 5)

Objective.

Students will be able to create shadow puppet characters, backgrounds, objects and sound/music necessary.

Procedure.

Demonstrate how to make shadow puppets and show actual examples as well as Internet sources. Materials needed for the puppets are simple. (Black card stock, white or light colored pencils, scissors, masking tape, very small paper fasteners, hole puncher, and bamboo skewers or 14-16-gauge wire.)

Students draw characters on black card stock and cut it out. Make the part you want to move extra long. Cut off the part you want to move, overlap the torso, and punch a hole where you want to place the joint. Attach a paper fastener where the joint is. Place a piece of tape over the top of the skewer or wire, leaving about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " space at the top. Tape another piece across that top piece of tape for a flexible hinge and attach it to the back of the puppet. Or simply tape your rod to the puppet. Only make one or two things move on your puppet. (It is too difficult to hold and operate more than two rods per puppet.)

Make a large screen by stretching and stapling a white sheet or muslin onto a wooden frame. Build triangular wooden sides and attach with c-clamps to table. (Alternatively, each group can have one made out of a cardboard box.) Use a utility light for your light source. An overhead projector can also be used with puppets lying on the projector itself. Have students experiment:

- creating different size puppets to create depth
- adding color with cellophane
- using different types of paper
- making multiple puppets on one rod
- add sound effects with percussion instruments
- add recorded music
- cut puppets with fancy edged scissors
- use different textured fabric or feathers
- add sound effects using percussion instruments
- add recorded music to set the mood

(Day 6)

Objectives.

Students will be able to assign roles, rehearse, and time their performance.

Students will be able to edit and have final rehearsal for their 3-5 minute performance.

Procedure.

Practice lines then practice with puppets and screen. Experiment by changing the distance of your puppets from the screen. Give your character a particular voice but make sure you speak loudly and clearly. Add sound effects or music. Rehearse your play and time it. Edit as

needed. Put all your scripts and puppets in your group folder. Students can schedule additional rehearsal times if needed. Each group will perform their shadow puppet for the class next time.

(Day 7)

Objectives.

Students will be able to perform plays for their own class.  
Students will assess and give feedback after each performance.

Procedure.

Pass out the folders containing group work. Make a schedule for the performances. After each group performs, the audience gives feedback.

Suggested comments:

- the plot, story, script
- the characters
- the voices of the characters
- the action of the play
- the gestures of the puppets
- the sound or music
- innovations

Suggested changes?

(Day 8)

Objective.

Students will be able to complete a written reflection on the collaborative experience.

Procedure.

Provide students with a template for a written reflection about all aspects of the collaborative experience.  
Include student's name, date, and title of their shadow puppet play, the adapted text, and the author.  
Include the following prompts with space in which to write their responses.

- I made.....
- I felt.....
- I think.....
- My group.....
- I helped my group.....
- This story reminds me of.....
- I wish.....

## Extensions of Learning

- Each group of students will be scheduled to perform again for the kindergarten classes.
- Performances will be filmed and shown to students so they can see their own performances.
- Filmed performances will be shown to parents at a later date on Success Night.
- Introduce students to the artistic and unique silhouette films of Lotte Reiniger.

## Pre-Activities

Before each class, the group will gather in a circle on the rug to engage in team building and name recognition warm-up exercises and games like those led by Sarah Zatz during the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute of 2016, The Immigrant Experience in California through Literature and Theatre.

### GATHERING GAMES/ACTIVITIES

#### Snaps Game

- o Form a circle.
- o I'm going to throw a snap to an object in the middle of the circle. Everyone try it.
- o Now I'm going to imagine that the object throws a snap back to me, and I catch it. Everyone try it.
- o Let's repeat this: throw, catch; throw, catch...
- o Now I'm going to remove the object from the circle. Only one of us will snap at a time. I'm going to catch the snap from the person to my left, then throw it to the person to my right. The snap continues around the circle.
- o Remember that you must snap two times when it's your turn: catch, then throw.
- o Next level: the snap can travel anywhere across the circle.
- o Next level: the participants move randomly throughout the room while continuing to keep one snap moving through the group.
- o Variation with voice and content: when a participant catches a snap, that person speaks a content word or phrase (a name; a concept; a belief statement; etc). The whole group repeats that word or phrase. Then, the snap is thrown to the next participant.
- o Variation: Throw the snap with a word that reminds you of home, or a word of a food that you ate last night, or a feeling or emotion from the previous activity, etc.

#### Name Game – Go Around the Circle

- Participants Form a Circle
- Go around the circle and introduce yourself, using your full name, where you were born, and your birthday.
- Go around the circle and share a meaning of one of your names, or if you were named after someone (1 sentence per person)
- Go around the circle again and share your name you go by and:
  - o With an identifier beyond your "job" (mother; musician; soccer player;etc)

- o With a gesture attached to the identifier
- o With group repetition of the gesture and identifier
- o With group repetition of the gesture, with no voices
- o Add two claps between for rhythm.

#### Crossing the Circle / Stepping Into the Circle Game

o Cross the circle if the statement applies to you. Or, step into the circle if the statement applies to you.

1. I was born outside the US (including indigenous peoples)
2. One of my parents was born outside the USs
3. Both of my parents were born outside the US
4. 1 or 2 of my Grandparents were born outside the US
5. 3 or 4 of my grandparents were born outside the US
6. I currently live in the city where I was born
7. I currently live in the state where I was born
8. I have lived in more than 2 countries other than where I was born
9. I am an artist
10. I am a teacher
11. I work in communities
12. I work with youth
13. I am a performer
14. I've never been on stage before
15. I love my current job
16. I have switched careers
17. I have felt like an outsider
18. I frequently feel like an outsider
19. I speak more than one language fluently
20. I have had an argument with a family member about politics
21. People judge me based on my appearance
22. I frequently feel unsafe
23. I have cried in the last week
24. I have been part of a political demonstration or protest in the last year.
25. I think of myself as a spiritual person.
26. I have confronted people from my life that have hurt me
27. I have thanked people from my life who have helped or supported me
28. I believe in second chances
29. I believe in fate
30. I believe in love

Invite Participants to share their own prompts.

Students can discover things they have in common by stepping into the circle and back out in answer to stated prompts.

Students can learn classmates names by saying their name and rolling the ball to someone else.

Students can learn names by receiving and sending a ping or a clap.

Students can learn something about each other by saying their name and saying something they like such as a particular food and sending it to someone else. (Or, they could say their favorite animal, or sport.)

After the pre-activities for a lesson are concluded the day's objective and procedure will be introduced. Film clips and demonstrations are

given. Materials will be placed on the tables prior to the pre-activities. Time is given for questions then students go to their tables to begin. A ten-minute warning is given before the end of class. Clean up begins in five minutes so that all materials are collected and kept organized.

### Recommended Sources.

The following list is a compilation of age and content appropriate picture books about immigration that I found from recommended reading lists on line.

### Possible Immigrant Themed Picture Books to be used.

A Picture Book of Cesar Chavez by David D. Adler  
Xochitl and the Flowers by Jorge Argueta  
The Thanksgiving Door by Debbie Atwell  
My Grandfather's Goat by Jim Aylesworth  
Peppe the Lamplighter by Elisa Bartone  
Halmoni's Day by Edna Coe Bercaw  
Journey to Ellis Island by Carol Bieman  
Two White Rabbits by Jaiño Buitrago  
A Picnic in October by Eve Bunting  
How Many Days to America by Eve Bunting  
One Green Apple by Eve Bunting  
Dia's Story Cloth by Dia Cha  
Goldfish and Chrysanthemums by Andrea Cheng  
Behind the Mask by Yangsook Choi  
The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi  
Mama's Nightingale by Edwidge Danticat  
Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley  
Home at Last by Susan Middleton Elya  
Nadia's Hands by Karen English  
From North to South by Rene' Colato Lainez  
Waiting for Papa by Rene' Colato Lainez  
The Matchbox Diary by Paul Fleischman  
The Seeds of Friendship by Michael Foreman  
America, My New Home by Monica Gunning  
The Upside Down Boy by Juan Felipe Herrera



When Jessie Came Across the Sea by Amy Hest  
The Color of Home by Mary Hoffman  
LaMariposa by Francisco Jimenez  
Fishing Sunday by Tony Johnston  
Tattered Sails by Verla Kay  
Here I Am by Patti Kim (wordless)  
My Two Blankets by Irena Kobald  
In the Small, Small Night by Jane Kurtz  
Landed by Milly Lee  
I Hate English by Ellen Levine  
Nora's Chicks by Patricia Maclachlan  
My Chinatown by Kam Mak  
Life Without Nico by Andrea Matumna  
The Dream on Bianca's Wall by Jane Medina  
Just Like Home by Elizabeth Miller  
My Name is Bilal by Asama Mobin-Uddin  
In English, of Course by Josephine Nubisso  
I'm New Here by Anne Sibley O'Brien  
Sumi's First Day of School Ever by Soyung Pak  
Good-bye, 382 Shin Dang Dong by Frances Park  
The Have a Good Day Café by Frances Park  
At Ellis Island by Louise Peacock  
A Gift for Nadia by Marie Fritz Perry  
My Name Is Yoon by Helen Recorvits  
We Came to America by Faith Ringgold  
Lakas and the Manila Town Fish by Kwento Anthony D. Robles  
America is Her Name by Luis J. Rodriguez  
Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say  
Music for Alice by Allen Say  
Tea with Milk by Allen Say  
Cooper's Lesson by Sun Yung Shin  
Anna & Solomon by Elaine Snyder  
Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Maria Suret  
Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote by Duncan Tona Tiuh  
Migrant by Maxine Trottier  
Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynn Williams and Khedra Mohammed  
Apple Pie Fourth of July by Janet S. Wong  
All the Way to America by Dan Yaccarino  
Brothers by Yin

Coolies by Yin

Naming Liberty by Jane Yolen

When I First Came to this Land by Harriet Ziefert

The following is a list of Internet resources for shadow puppet making and shadow puppet theater.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSVd\\_OAKTKc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSVd_OAKTKc)

(Shadow Puppet Tutorial)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOlnvDdMFNE>

(Quick Art-Shadow Puppets)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsdMqNicris>

(How to Make a Shadow Puppet)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfydro4X2t0>

(The Wayang Puppet Theatre)

<https://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHw-4Uocj40>

(How to-Kenneth Wingard's DIY Shadow Puppet Theater-Home and Family)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eM-1smFGuw>

(Shadow Puppet Theatre by Richard Bradshaw(Australia) -Broken Bridge)

[https://www.ARTSEEDGE:Kennedy-center.org/interactives/shadowpuppets/shadow\\_puppets.html](https://www.ARTSEEDGE:Kennedy-center.org/interactives/shadowpuppets/shadow_puppets.html)

(Playing with Shadows-an Introduction to Shadow Puppetry.)

\*This comprehensive site even has an interview by Ping Chong about how he uses special effects with shadow puppets in Cathay: Three Tales of China.