
Doorway Puppet Theater with Amelia Strader

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview of puppet theater workshop

- Hey kids of all ages. Are you bored and looking for something fun to do? Let GoGo Craft help you out. In this workshop, I'm gonna teach you how to make this really cool puppet stage. It's quick and easy to make and inexpensive. It only takes one afternoon. And then later, I can show you how to make puppets for your puppet theater, or use your very own toys. (children laughing)

Chapter 2 - Create Puppet Theater

Materials needed for puppet theater

- To make the puppet stage, you can easily get these materials that you need at a local craft supply store, or you might have them around your house. You'll need scissors, a glue gun, and if you're making the puppet stage with really young kids, a glue gun gets a little hot, so you might wanna supervise them. You'll also need construction paper. You'll need a ruler, a pencil. I prefer to use a mechanical pencil, but whatever you have around. An Exacto knife, a glue stick, a measuring tape. You'll need a yard of fabric that's 45 inches wide, cotton fabric for the curtains. And for the skirt for the puppet stage, you'll need two yards of a nice cotton, also 45 inches wide. This is a little bit more than you need, but in case you mess up, you'll have extra fabric. You'll need some ric rac to trim your puppet stage, but you can use whatever ribbon you'd like. Some duct tape, some wrapping paper, whatever cute pattern you'd like. And you'll need a piece of foam core that's 32 inches wide by 42 inches wide. That's 3/16 thick.

Measure and mark puppet stage area

- The cool thing about this puppet stage is that it fits in your doorway. So the first thing to do would be to plan out the doorway and you're going to measure it from the inside of the door frame, from the very inside. So just use a measuring tape or whatever tools you have around. In this case, the door that I'm thinking of is 36 inches wide from inside the door frame. So once you have the measurements that you like, you're going to take, in this case it's 36 inches wide for me, plus four inches. And the four inches that you're adding on are for the tabs that are on the side of the puppet stage that are going to attach to the door frame. Okay, so I'm gonna start drawing my puppet stage. I'm gonna take my measuring tape. And one thing to note is that this piece of foam core is 40 inches wide. So since my door frame is 36 inches plus four equals 40, I'm not gonna have to do any additional cutting on the width. So I'm just going to mark out the height of my puppet stage. In this case I'm going to make it 20 inches in height and I'm gonna repeat this step on the other side of the foam core marking off 20 inches. And then I'm gonna make two more marks with the tape measure from the bottom marking 20 inches. And we're gonna connect these lines so make as many marks as you feel comfortable making. We're gonna cover this with wrapping paper so no one we'll see your pencil marks. Then I'm going to take my ruler and start connecting the lines. And then we're going to make a mark for the center of the puppet stage. Since it's 40 inches wide I'm gonna make a mark at 20 inches right here. Repeat this step at the bottom of the foam core and just for kicks we can do one more right here, perfect. And then I'm going to connect the lines again like I did before. This is the center line. It's just a really handy thing to have to give you a better idea of the proportions of the puppet stage. And the next step is to draw out the tabs for the puppet stage.

And each tab is two inches wide. And it just so happens that this ruler if have here is two inches wide so I'm just going to line it up with the edge of the foam core. And all the way to the bottom like that. And I'm gonna repeat this on the other side of the foam core with my two-inch wide ruler. Again, you can make whatever marks you want on here, whatever's gonna help you out because this is gonna be completely covered with wrapping paper. And the next step is to add the decorative edge to the top of your puppet stage. I'll show you an example. This is an example of one that I created and we're gonna add on this decorative edge to give you a better idea of what the next step is. So you wanna leave yourself plenty of space at the top to create your decorative edge. In this case I'm gonna leave four inches. So I'll mark four inches from the center right there and also from the sides and the opposite side and maybe one in the middle for good luck. And again, on this side. And now we're gonna connect these and just follow your marks with the ruler until you reach, there's a line across the entire top here like that. Okay, so now comes the fun part. You can add whatever kind of decorative edge you want to the top of your puppet stage. It can be square, it can be curved, whatever you like. It could be wavy, zigzag, whatever you want. So just freehand draw whatever pattern you like. This doesn't have to be perfect. And so now I've reached the center, I'm gonna repeat it on the other side and if it's not perfect you can just go and clean it up later with a pencil. Like really you can make whatever marks you like. Okay, that's it. And now the top pattern of your puppet stage is done. Next I'm gonna draw the center cutout for my puppet stage. And I'll explain to you what that is by showing the little demo that I made earlier. So I wanna make the marks to cut out the center of the puppet stage where the puppet show action is gonna happen. So the marks you wanna make are five inches from the tab, you wanna mark that. That's how the distance between the edge of the tab to the inside puppet stage, the same on both sides, and three inches up from the bottom of the puppet stage here. Take your ruler again. You're gonna measure out five inches from the left and the right tabs. Same thing in the middle here, five inches, all the way from the top of your puppet stage to the very bottom. And you're gonna connect these lines. I'm gonna repeat this step on the opposite side. Five inches, again towards the bottom, and connect the lines. Remember we need to make a mark that's three inches from the bottom of the foam core. So I'm going to mark three inches and the same thing on the left and the right sides. Now I'm gonna connect these marks. The last thing you need to do is make a mark two inches from the very top of your puppet stage. And if you don't like these measurements you can make whatever measurements you like for your puppet stage. Connect these. Connect, and yah, the measurements are done. You've completely drawn out your puppet stage and now you're ready to cut it out.

Cut out puppet stage

- I'm gonna start cutting the puppet stage now, and you need to protect your work surface before you cut your foam core. So, I'm just gonna use a piece of cardboard to place underneath this. But if you have a special cutting board, that's good too, or you can just use a scrap of cardboard from an empty box. So, I'm gonna use an X-ACTO knife to cut out the interior of my puppet stage, and to cut the details on the top. If you're making the stage with kids, then they need a little bit of supervision when they're cutting, or you could just cut it out for them. I'm going to begin by cutting the interior of the puppet stage. I'm using a ruler to assist me cut the opening of the puppet stage. It's just a good guide to have when you're using an X-ACTO knife. And you wanna be really careful. You want to keep your fingers in on your ruler, and take it slow when you're making the first few cuts. So, your first cut is gonna be a very shallow cut. And then, the next ones can be deeper. And

you need to cut two or three times to make sure you've cut all the way through the foam core. I'm going over my last cut to make sure it went through all the layers of foam core. But if you don't get it cut through all the way, you can go back and fix it. And if you make a mistake with the cutting, it's okay, because the mat board is gonna be covered with wrapping paper. And then, from time to time, I'm gonna check underneath the foam core to see if the cut went through all the way. Okay, yay, it's the final cut, and now I'm gonna pop out the center, sweet. Put aside, you can use it later if you like. And here is the center of the puppet stage cutout. Next, I'm going to cut along the top decorative edge of my puppet stage. After that, you're going to perforate the tabs that fit in the side of the doorway. You wanna cut it almost to the end, but just leaving a tiny, tiny layer of foam core left. But you don't wanna cut all the way through. Okay, you can kind of test it, maybe a little bit more. You just don't wanna go through that bottom layer of foam core. Okay, we're gonna test it again. Yay, this is really good. I left the bottom layer of the foam core uncut, so it bends like this. If you accidentally cut through the foam core, that's not a problem. You can turn it on the other side, and you can just put a line of masking tape all along the edge, because you're just basically creating a hinge. Then, you're gonna repeat the tab on the opposite side. And once you've finished that, you're completely done cutting.

Decorate puppet stage

- Let's decorate our stage. I chose this really cute Russian doll wrapping paper to cover the front of my stage. The first step is to take your glue stick and just cover the one side of the foam core. I'm not going to add glue to the tab, because we're not covering that with paper, so don't add glue to the tab, but everywhere else, you can add the glue. Okay, that should do it. I'm placing the first layer of wrapping paper onto the stage and I'm going to line up the edge of the wrapping paper with the edge of the tab here and also making sure I'm covering the top, the very top of the puppet stage. Take your time. The glue stick doesn't dry instantly, so you have a little time to wiggle. Okay, I have the first side on. I'm going to repeat on the opposite side. And remember, you don't want to add any glue to the tab. Glue sticks are really great to use for this, because the glue amount that they add to the surface is a really thin layer, so you won't create any lumps and bumps underneath your wrapping paper. Put this aside. And now I'm gonna take my wrapping paper and place it on the other side. You could also use a full sheet of wrapping paper. I just happened to choose this wrapping paper and it comes in limited size, so I have to use two sheets. I'm trying to line it up as best I can, matching the pattern that's created in the wrapping paper. And then once you have the top lined up you can kind of rub it with your hands like this to make sure it's secured. That's good, that should do it. And then I'm gonna go back and make sure that I don't have to add any glue to this side of the wrapping paper, and it looks like I do, so I'm gonna take my glue stick. This is just some finishing touches here. Make sure I have enough glue. And on the bottom you don't have to worry about the middle of the paper, that's where the hole for the puppet stage is, just the top and the bottom of the puppet stage. And you can kind of check underneath and add a little glue here. That should do it for now. The next step, we're gonna flip the puppet stage to the back side and cut out the excess wrapping paper. I'm gonna protect my work surface, so I'm gonna use my cutting board again. Place it underneath the puppet stage in the general area of the opening. Take my X-ACTO knife, cut along the inner edge of the opening. This is a lot easier to cut compared to the foam core. You basically only have to cut once or twice, just the corners can be a little difficult, you might have to go over those twice. I'm just gonna test to see if it's loose. It needs a little bit of cutting. I'm cutting at the top. Okay, the center is out. The next part you wanna cut loose is the top

decorative edge. And I'm just following the inside edge of the foam core. And now the bottom of the stage. That's done. You can check the front side. Cool, this looks good. One last thing to clean up is if the paper could cover the tabs you can just trim it away. I'm going to take my pencil and ruler and mark two inches from the edge of the foam core with my pencil. I just, this might not happen to you, it just depends on the wrapping paper you're using. But I just wanna kind of really carefully cut along that edge through the wrapping paper. Okay, the final piece of paper is off, I'm gonna put that aside. And I'm gonna decorate my puppet stage with bunting. I made this triangle template for myself and I have all this cool construction paper in different colors and I just traced around the template and cut as many of these in whatever color you like. So after these are all cut, prepared, and I'm going to just arrange them on the stage, like this. I chose colors of paper that are in the wrapping paper, so blues, reds, pinks, all these colors are in the wrapping paper, 'cause I kind of wanted it to coordinate. You could always do contrast color. Okay, I really like this arrangement, so I'm going to take my glue stick and adhere them to the puppet stage. Just a thin layer. And I'm just gonna go along and add glue to the part that's actually attached to the stage, the part that overhangs I'm not gonna add glue to. If you don't like this arrangement you have a couple of minutes to remove it and stick it back in an arrangement that you like. But these are triangles, but you could decorate your stage with all kinds of things. You could add paper trees, you can use felt instead of paper and use a glue gun to tack it down. It's really all about having fun and decorating your stage however you like, putting your personality into your stage. Okay, last one. The next step, I'm going to take some of the trim that I collected here, in this case I'm using rickrack. Well, you could use ribbon, you can add buttons, whatever you prefer. And I'm going to add this right on the very edge. I'm going to attach the rickrack with a glue gun. The glue gun is the best thing to use for this. Just put a tiny dab along here. Glue gun dries really fast, so just glue as you attach the rickrack, or whatever trim you're using, 'cause it dries way fast. So just go along the edge with the glue gun. You could even add bunting to the bottom or some kind of cool fringe, just really put your personality into the stage. It's yours to decorate. Make sure it's all safe and attached. And then trim off the extra off the edge. Fabulous. And I've added all the decorations that I want, so my stage is complete. But if you wanna add more that's cool, you can add whatever decorations you like.

Make stage curtains

- Now I'm gonna make the curtains. This is my fabric that I chose for the curtains. It's a 45 inch wide cotton in a really cute pattern. Cut that in half. And then on the fold line, cut that. And that's gonna be one of your curtain halves. And the other half is gonna be the opposite side of the curtain. So I'm gonna iron the fabric, first of all to get out all the wrinkles, but also ironing the edge to make it easier to sew the edges because you want to hem the edges of the curtain. I'm folding the edge, the selvedge edge. I have about half an inch. It doesn't have to be exact. And then I'm gonna take my iron on a cotton setting and a little bit of steam. And I'm going to iron half an inch fold. Just like this. And then once you have that, you're gonna fold it again. Half an inch. And you can see this nice clean edge forming. I'm gonna steam this with the iron. This will make a nice crisp edge that's gonna make it a lot easier to sew. Okay, I'm going to turn the fabric wrong side up, right side of the fabric facing down. Repeating this step on the opposite side of the curtain. This is the left and right sides of the curtain. Half an inch. Fold again. There's a nice crisp edge. I just want to reiterate. This is the folded edge is the one side of the curtain. And this is the other side. This is the bottom edge, the bottom hem, and this is the top. So you're going to sew both sides and the bottom hem. But you don't have to finish the top edge of the curtain. So I'm going to turn the fabric and we're gonna iron

the same half inch double turn on the bottom hem. Using a little bit of steam. Half inch. Fold it again. The curtain is finished ironing and now I'm ready to sew. I'm going to sew first the bottom edge and then the sides of the curtain. But before I sew, I'm gonna add a few pins to secure the fabric. This helps to keep the fabric from wiggling around. But it's ironed, so you don't have to add too many pins. The important pin to add is at the corner here where the bottom hem meets the side. And same thing on the other side. Now that I've got it pinned, it's ready to sew. I'm going to do this step twice for each curtain that goes in the puppet stage. Okay. And I already have my sewing machine preloaded with thread that matches the color of my fabric. And I'm going to sew the side seam. And I'm just going to have the line of the edge of my fabric to the edge of my foot. And I'm gonna start sewing. Don't forget to back up your stitches. This knots the thread. And I'm just sewing. I'm going along. I'm using a two and a half inch straight stitch. Okay, slow down when you get to the corner. Okay, make sure your needle's inserted in the fabric. Pick up your foot, turn. And I'm sewing the curtain all in one stitch, which is really quick and easy, so you don't have to stop and sew the sides first and then the bottom. This, I'm just doing in one shot, which makes it a lot faster. Okay, I'm getting to the edge and I'm gonna stop before the next few edge stitches because I want to knot off the thread. So I'm gonna stitch a little bit, go back, come forward. And that should secure the thread so that you don't lose all the work you just did. Okay, you have one curtain completed. I'm gonna take out the pins. Make sure you don't leave any pins in. One is done. And then repeat this process for the other curtain.

Create stage skirt

- Okay so I'm going to create the skirt. So I'm gonna grab the fabric that I need, put down this like little pressing cloth to protect the table. And I chose this solid blue fabric for the skirt. Two yards of fabric is what you're gonna need. And you need to cut your fabric to the width of your puppet stage times 1.25. And you wanna add the extra on that'll create the gathers for the skirt for your puppet stage so it'll look really cute. Okay before we sew it, we're going to do a similar ironing process to finish the edges of the skirt. So I'm gonna unfold my fabric here, and same thing it's 1/2 inch double turn. So I'm gonna fold the raw edge here, take my iron. It's on a cotton setting. And just loosely fold it, doesn't have to be exact, not measuring this. All the way to the edge. Give it a little steam. This will help keep the, the folded edge nice and neat. And I'm gonna turn it one more time. Halving, this gives it a nice clean edge. (steam hissing) Have a nice double-folded edge. This is one side of the curtain. I'm gonna repeat this process on the other side. (steam hissing) Okay I finished ironing the last side, and I just want to go over this to make sure everybody understands. So I ironed both sides. This is a 45 inch wide piece of fabric. So the top selvage edge, this is the top of the curtain. These are the sides where we ironed, and this is the bottom. And since it's also the selvage edge, it's automatically finished so we don't have to hem that which is really cool because it'll be much faster. And now I'm gonna start sewing. Okay I put a few pins in my fabric to hold the ironing, the fold down, putting it in my sewing machine. Same technique as before, align the edge of my fabric with the edge of my foot. Start sewing, (machine whirring) back up a little bit. That knots the fabric, the stitching. (machine whirring) And just keep sewing. And I'm coming to a needle, and I know a lot of people like to take out the needles from their thread, from their fabric, before they stitch, but I don't care, I just sew over my needles. (machine whirring) Okay I'm at the ends. Taking my last few stitches. Gonna back up, go forward. This knots the thread and keeps it secure. Now going to cut. And I'm gonna repeat on the other side after I take out all these pins. (machine whirring) Okay, the skirt is completed. I'm gonna remove the pins, and then we can attach it to the puppet stage. The

curtain is complete. And now I'm going to take one of the selvage edges. I want the hemmed edge facing me, and make sure your puppet stage is face down. And this is the selvage edge, and now I'm ready to pin the skirt to the puppet stage, and I'm pinning it first because it's gonna be gathered and the pins will help hold it in place. Because after I gather it, I'm gonna tape it down. Take one pin, this is the hemmed edge going against the pinning it to the edge of the foamcore, and then I'm going to take the other hemmed edge and pinning it to the edge of the other side, like that. And I'm gonna find the center of the skirt and pin it to the center of the, of the foamcore here. Find the center again on focusing only on this side, find the center, pin it. Just an easy way to gather your curtain evenly just by pinning it. Same thing find the center, pin it down. It doesn't have to be perfect. This is just like a fun way to gather it. And I'm gonna keep pinning until I have most of the fabric tacked down the way I like it. Maybe a few more pins. Okay and that should do it. Before I use the duct tape. Okay now this is nicely gathered. I'm going to need my duct tape. (tape squeaking) Okay I'm going to cover half the fabric with the tape just like this. No one's gonna see this so don't worry if it gets messy. It's just the backside of the stage. You can take the pins out as you go, it's gonna make it a lot easier. (tape squeaking) You wanna make sure that you get the fabric caught under the tape and attach it to the foamcore. (tape squeaking) And if you don't feel like you got a good secure amount of foamcore the first time, you can just go over it with more duct tape. Okay, cut the excess off. Take out the pins. Okay you know what, I think I'm gonna add another layer of tape, just to be on the safe side. (tape squeaking) This one's gonna be lot easier to put down. (tape squeaking) Okay that should do it. That's gonna secure the fabric to the foamcore.

Attach stage curtains

- I'm moving onto the curtains. I'm taking my two curtains that I stitched. The first one, I'm placing the fabric face down with the hem facing me, and the raw edge at the top near the puppet stage. And this one is also gonna be gathered, so I'm gonna do the same pinning technique. Grabbing a pin, I'm going to tack it an inch above the opening. And then, I'm gonna take another pin. This time, you can place the edge, maybe a little bit off center. More towards the side of the stage. This gives it more gathers. Pin it. Find the center of the fabric, pin it to the center of the foam core, and just keep pinning till you get the gathers that you like. Okay, take my duct tape, cover half the fabric over, and catching the foam core underneath like that. Cut the excess. Again, don't worry if it looks messy, because no one's going to see this besides you. Take out the pins. Just for safety sake, put on another layer of duct tape. Cut it, I'm gonna do the same on the other side with my second curtain. Okay, I'm smoothing the last piece of tape, and your puppet stage is ready, yay. You can add tie backs to the side of the curtain out of ribbon or yarn, whichever you like. And your puppet stage is complete, and you're ready to star the puppet show. - [Kid] Hey. (laughter and mumbles)