

## SILHOUETTE SCENES



### TIMESCALE

1-1/2 hours (can do in 2 parts)

### INTRODUCTION

Silhouette and cut-out art is very appealing to children and is relatively easy for them to tackle. The project uses simple paper-- cutting and collage to illustrate a scene from the play. Children as young as six or seven will be able to do this project but they will

### OBJECTIVES

This project will encourage children to discuss different and unusual illustration techniques; and think about how they might decide what is essential to show in any scene, and what is less important. It may also be possible to draw from the children the interesting idea that silhouettes are effective because they don't show too much – they allow the viewer to fill in detail with their own imagination.

In terms of practical skills, working with cut-outs develops children's drawing, their fine motor skills, their awareness of perspective, angle and profile, as well as the crucial importance of design and layout.

### LAUNCHING THE PROJECT — IMMERSION IN SILHOUETTE AND CUT— —OUT ART

To fire up the children's imaginations and get them talking about how silhouette art might be made, you could show a range of sources. They might already be familiar with the work of **Jan Pienkowski** – his beautiful illustrations to Joan Aitken's fairytales are often found in primary school:



With Pienkowski's work, point out how a colourful background provides the best contrast with the black silhouette shape, as well as noting how characters are usually viewed in profile, and how their pose needs to convey their emotions.

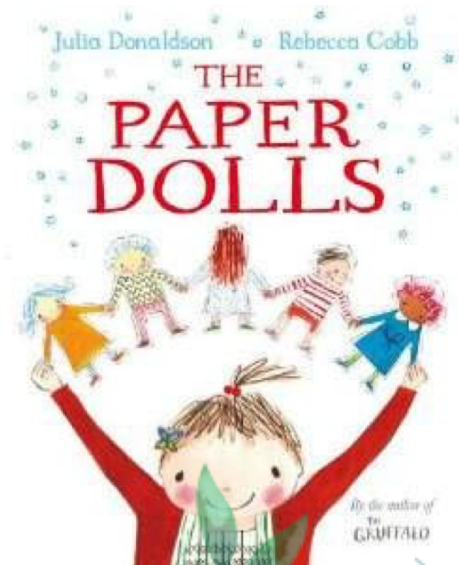


**Hans Christian Andersen** made cut-out artwork, alongside writing his famous stories. With Andersen, it's nice to see the effect of a white cut-out against a dark background, and also to talk about how folding helps create symmetrical shapes:



The fairytale films of **Lotte Reiniger** show how cut-outs and silhouette art can be used to create films, using stop-frame animation techniques. A range of her work can be found here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=lotte+reiniger](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=lotte+reiniger)

While for much younger children, **Julia Donaldson's** book *The Paper Dolls* is a nice way into the art of paper folding and cutting:





## SILHOUETTE SCENES

### RESOURCES

You will need:

- Scissors
- Black paper (not card)
- Watercolour paper or good quality cartridge paper and a tray
- *Either* marbling inks *or* oil pastels and watercolour paint or anything you can use to make a light coloured background

### **PART 1 – CREATING A BACKGROUND AND DESIGNING A SCENE**

Ask the children to think about what may be on the Island where Prospero and Miranda live. Children should decide what they will need to show—for example, a silhouette of a tree, of Caliban (half man/half fish), flowers.

They will start by making the background for artwork (if time is an issue, these can dry while the children are making their cut-outs, condensing this project into one session). The example used here is Hamlet seeing his father's ghost. The background needs to show that it is dusk or sunset. There is any number of ways to make a vibrant background for cut-outs.

### **OPTION 1:**

One approach, referencing Pienkowski, might be to use marbling ink: Drop a few different colours of oil based inks so that they float on the surface of a tray of water. After swirling the ink around, place a sheet of cartridge paper on top -- the kaleidoscopic pattern is absorbed into the paper.





## OPTION 2:

Another approach more appropriate might be to use oil-resist and watercolours:



Using oil pastels, children shade onto watercolour or cartridge paper. They might think about creating weather or a texture that is suitable for their scene.



Next, use watercolour paint and a large brush to paint a watery 'wash' over the oil pastel shading. The oil will repel the paint, filling in gaps where there is no pastel. The result is very striking.

## OPTION 3:

Use anything you have at home to create a background- it might be a collage of old wrapping paper/food packaging or felt tips and coloured pencils. The key thing is that your background is light so that the silhouettes show up.

**REMEMBER, WHATEVER OPTION YOU GO FOR, THE LIGHTER THE BACKGROUND THE BETTER THE SILHOUETTES WILL LOOK.**



## **PART 2: CREATING YOUR SILHOUETTES**

Next, get children to think about the action they wish to show, and how their character is feeling.

### **DRAWING THE SILHOUETTES**



Children should draw their scene in pencil onto black paper. There is no need to shade in, or add detail – they should focus on creating a strong outline for their characters and any other features of the scene. Remember that small drawings are much harder to cut out – and simplicity of line is key!

### **CUTTING OUT AND ARRANGING THE SILHOUETTES**

#### **HINTS TO HELP THE CUTTING—OUT PROCESS**

- Roughly cut around the feature or character you want to tackle first – it's easier to cut detail if you are holding a smaller piece of paper.
- For any really tiny detail such as noses, do this bit last, when you have cut out the main shape.
- If the thing you are cutting out is symmetrical, fold it in half and cut one side.
- For children needing adult support – consider making a line of paper dolls that they can then customise into the shape they want.
- Inevitably someone will cut off a leg or arm or other important bit from their character! Don't worry – just save everything in an envelope. It can be glued back on at the final stage and the effect will still be great.
- In reality, very few cut--out pieces are needed to suggest a narrative – concentrate on cutting out the most important ones.



## ARRANGING THE CUT—OUTS AND STICKING DOWN

This is the fun part where the cut-outs and background really come together.

Children should play around with the lay out of their cut-outs before they stick them down. They may work better arranged differently from their original drawing. Hold back on the glue stick

Here is Hamlet meeting his father's ghost against a marbled background:



Here's the same scene imagined slightly differently, in front of the oil resist/watercolour background.



**DON'T FORGET TO SEND US A PHOTO OF YOUR  
FINISHED PIECE OF ARTWORK!**