A fun and colourful session exploring how puppets work, including an opportunity to make a puppet to take home. Children will explore many different types of puppets, investigating the materials they are made from and how they move. They will see a traditional Javanese shadow puppet and will make their own 21st century version.

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

- **English**: becoming very familiar with traditional stories; recognising and joining in with predictable phrases; developing pleasure in reading; participating in discussions, taking turns and listening; participate in performances and role play
- **DT**: select tools to perform practical tasks (eg cutting and joining)
LESSON PLAN

Objectives
To give pupils the opportunity to investigate different types of puppets and to understand how they work.

Resources
Box of different puppets
Magnetic puppet theatres and torches
Shadow puppet equipment
Craft equipment for making puppet

Teaching activities

Introduction (5 minutes)
Ask the children what they know about puppets. Introduce different types of puppets.

Activity 1 (15 minutes)
Children to explore the puppets in their box, in groups.

Activity 2 (10 minutes)
Investigate magnetic toy theatres.

Activity 3 (10 minutes)
Meet the shadow puppets and watch a short show.

Activity 4 (15 minutes)
Explain and make shadow puppet.

Background information
Puppets have their origin in ancient cultures, including those of India and China. In Europe, travelling puppeteers reached the height of their popularity in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Museum has a large collection of puppets and puppet theatres that reflect their universality.

Spring mechanisms
The jack-in-the-box is probably the best known toy that uses a spring to make it move. When the lid is pushed closed the spring is compressed. When it is opened the spring is released and the toy jumps up as far as the spring allows. The longer the coil of the spring, the greater the force of energy released. The toy seems to have originated in the 16th century (the country of
origin is unknown) when it was known as a Punch-Box, which suggests that it may have been based on the puppet character that we know as Punch.

Early examples either have carved wooden or papier mâché heads and spring out of wooden boxes. The Museum also has 20th-century versions made from various materials including tin and plastic.

**Word list**

- Glove puppet: A simple puppet operated by putting your hand inside it.
- Jumping Jack: A toy which, when you pull a string, the arms and legs move.
- Marionette: A puppet worked by a string.
- Pop-up: Push the slider up, and the toy pops out of the cone.
- Rod puppet: The type of puppet used in Victorian paper theatres which slide on from the side of the stage.
- Shadow puppet: A show performed by holding up the puppets in front of a strong light and throwing the shadows onto a sheet of white paper or cotton. Popular in Java and China for over 1,000 years.
- Silhouette: Making a shape against a light background, popular as entertainment in Victorian times.
- Torsion toy: A simple Victorian toy. When you squeeze the base together it creates tension in the strings making the puppet spin around.

**THINGS TO DO AT THE MUSEUM**

Look at the puppets and the puppet theatre in the Museum.

**THINGS TO DO IN THE CLASSROOM**

The shadow puppet shown in the teaching session at the Museum is called Ramayana. Ask children to find out about the story of Ramayana. Hang a white sheet across the corner of the classroom. Use a directional lamp to encourage children to experiment with casting shadows from behind the sheet. If you can find a shadow puppet see if the children can operate it. Children can make very simple stick puppets (i.e. draw and cut out a cardboard figure and attach to a stick of dowelling or a plastic straw). Create a puppet ‘theatre’ by putting a cloth over a small table that has been turned on its side. Children can crouch behind the table and operate the puppets from below. Some children may be able to devise their own puppet plays, others may find it easier to recreate familiar stories such as fairy tales.