

# Puppets Tell the Story

... but you create the happy ending!



Complexity



8-13 years



90-120 minutes



4-30



Human Rights

## Type of activity

Drama with puppets, discussion

## Overview

Children create a puppet show based on a familiar story with a human rights violation. The group creates a new conclusion that responds to the violation.

## Objectives

- To recognise human rights themes in familiar stories
- To practise finding solutions for human rights violations
- To have fun and work together

## Preparation

Prepare a model puppet to use as a demonstration.

## Materials

- Puppets, dolls, or materials for making puppets (see also some ideas below in Tips for facilitators)
- Puppet theatre or a piece of material to make a stage

## Instructions

1. Arouse the children's interest by asking them to think of stories they know which are about injustice or unfairness. Help them to see that these stories, and the characters within them, often reflect a somewhat exaggerated version of real-life situations. You could suggest some ideas and/or access to stories for stories (e.g. a folk or fairy tale, a scene from a children's book, a film or TV programme).
2. After recalling a few stories, list a number of them on a flipchart, summarising them in a few words.
3. Divide the children into small groups and give each group a different story to work on. If you don't have enough stories, you can give some groups the same story to use. Tell them to begin by retelling the story, in case others in the group do not know it, and then make a list of all the characters in the story. Each group should also name any children's rights or human rights which have not been respected in the story.
4. When the groups have drawn up a list of all the characters, tell them that they need to prepare a puppet show to present their story to the rest of the group. Explain that they have 45 minutes to create their puppets and rehearse their presentation. Every child in the group should have at least one role in the presentation. If there are not enough characters in the story, allow them to create new ones! Show them how to make the puppets, according to the method you have chosen.
5. Invite each group in turn to present their puppet show. When they reach the point where a human rights violation happens, you or the presenters should shout, "Freeze!" The puppet show

stops and the children discuss:

- What is happening in the story? Which human right is not being respected?
  - What can be done to protect the characters involved?
6. Ask the presenting group to improvise a conclusion to their puppet show, using one or more of the endings recommended in the discussion.

## Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Discuss the activity using questions such as these:
  - How do you feel about your puppet show?
  - Were you happy with the way you presented the story?
  - What was difficult? What was fun?
  - How did your group work together as a team?
  - How did you feel while performing your role?
2. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
  - Have you ever experienced or observed people being treated unfairly or badly, like in the puppet shows?
  - What is the link between these situations and human rights? Were any rights violated? Were any rights defended or enjoyed?
  - Did you manage to resolve the rights violations in the stories? How? Were there other possible ways of protecting the characters or making things better?
  - What could you do in real life to address a problem like this?
  - The Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the human rights that every child is entitled to. What can you do if you see children's rights being violated or disrespected?

## Suggestions for follow-up

The stories, and attempts to find solutions, may raise questions about human rights where children need and want more information. Help them find answers to their questions, especially in the CRC. Consider inviting speakers from relevant organisations to talk about their work and suggest ways that children can become involved or support this work.

## Ideas for action

Perform the plays for other children, parents or other members of the community. Ask the children to explain the human rights context of their plays and the violations they represent to the audience.

## Tips for the facilitator

Rather than being general, the topic of the stories can be focused on a particular problem or theme being addressed by the group (e.g. bullying or cyberbullying, gender discrimination, hate speech or verbal abuse).

The facilitator must be aware of the human rights issues in the stories in order to help the children

make the link between the story and human rights.

The facilitator should not intervene in the group work unless the group is facing difficulties in creating a presentation from a story.

Younger children may need help in thinking of appropriate solutions. Where several solutions are offered, the children may need help in deciding which to choose. Help them weigh up the advantages of each and possibly play through several endings. If you have different groups presenting the same story, you could ask each to play through a different ending.

If the children choose a long work, such as a novel or film, help them select a single scene to present that shows the injustice or unfairness.

This activity could easily be run over two or three days.

Puppets can be made in a variety of ways: use existing puppets, dolls or action figures; decorate socks; decorate paper tissue tubes or paper cups. The easiest way is perhaps to make paper cut-outs mounted on a stick. However, do not spend too much time on the puppets: the presentation is what matters. You should choose one method which will be used by all groups so that they do not waste time choosing.

Suggested children's classics: Cinderella, Peter Pan, Hansel and Gretel, The Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood, The Ugly Duckling. Suggested stories in other *Compasito* activities include: 'Dear Diary', 'Modern Fairytale', 'Once Upon a Time...' and 'Zabderfilio'.

## Variations

With older children, encourage the creation of stories that involve issues based on the children's personal experiences, or problems being addressed by the group (e.g. bullying, discrimination, violence, or conflict management).

Ask the children to change some feature(s) of a familiar story (e.g. to make the wolf in 'Little Red Riding Hood' the victim of hurtful gossip; reverse gender roles, as in the activity 'Once Upon a Time...').

## Further information

This activity could also be done with families at home.