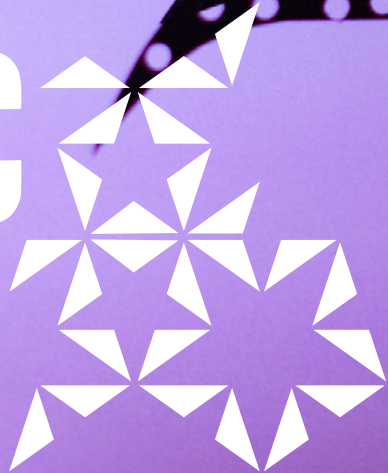


Shadow Puppets and Visual Literacy

Teacher Resource



**BALTIC
STARS**



About this resource

The activities in this resource have been created so that children and young people can approach storytelling in a visual way, where the artworks they create will trigger ideas, develop storylines and explore their imagination. This resource will introduce new approaches to drawing, painting and collage that encourage experimentation, risk taking and embrace curiosity.

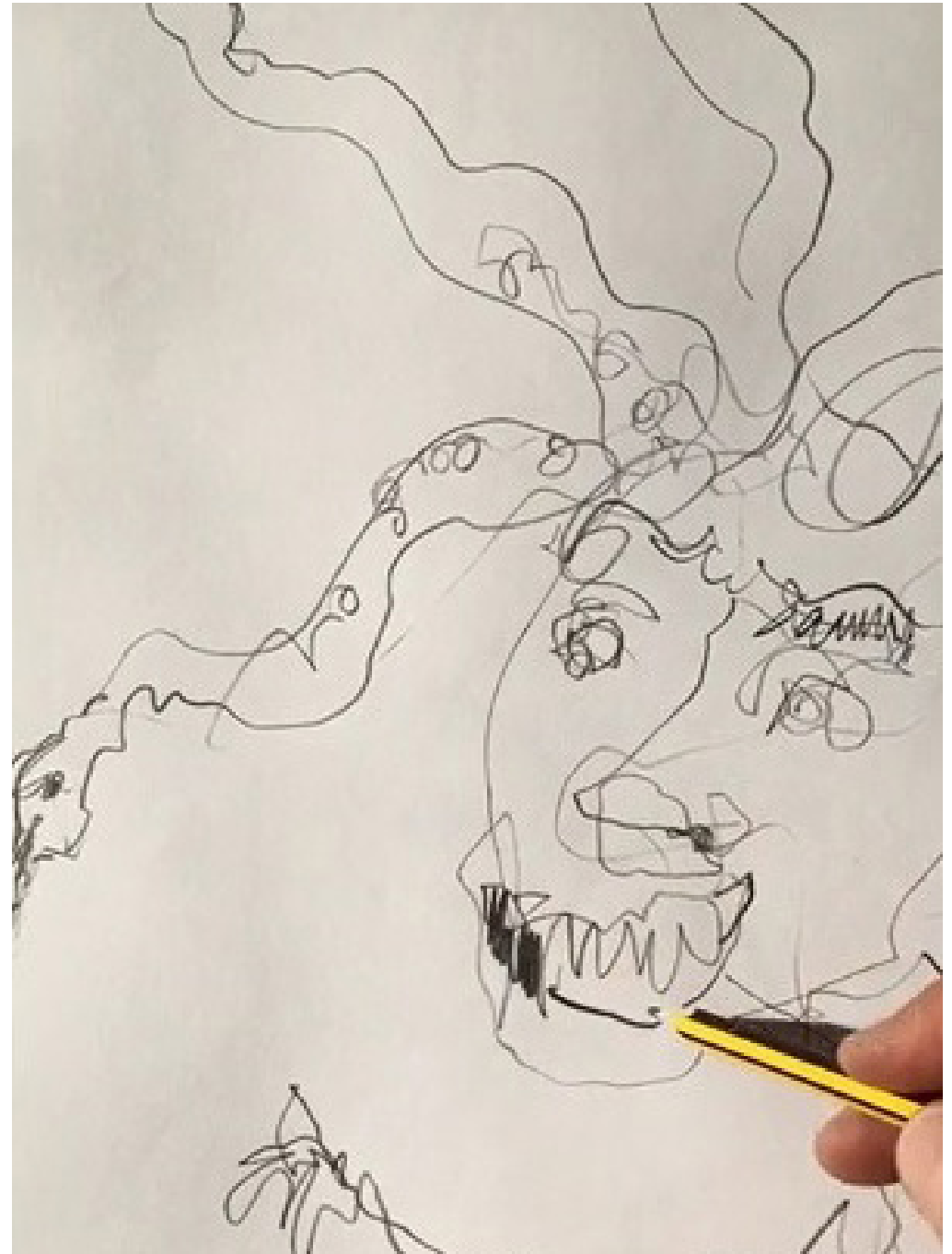


How to use this resource

This Shadow Puppets and Visual Literacy Resource is designed to be used for a school project and has been created by BALTIC Freelance Artist Paul Merrick.

Paul has created both written activities and a film demonstrating each activity in the same order. Teachers can watch the film and read the resource as an individual and deliver the activities back in class, or watch alongside pupils as the film provides opportunities to pause, think, make and reflect.

[Watch the film here: BALTIC Stars Online | Shadow Puppets with artist Paul Merrick.](#)



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About the artist

Paul Merrick combines painting with sculpture and ready-made objects. Investigating colour and form, Paul carefully selects and creatively works with found objects such as used and discarded scrap metal, table tops, headboards and dusty panels. By doing so, Paul gives the discarded, old objects a new lease of life which he presents as paintings.



What you will need for this resource

- A sketchbook or loose paper
- Black card
- Pencil
- Black paper
- Pen
- Tracing paper
- Paint brushes
- Long wooden sticks
(kebab sticks/skewers)
- Ink
- Coloured cellophane
- Scissors
- Paper fasteners
- Glue



Let's learn about shadow puppetry

Shadow play or shadow puppetry is an ancient form of storytelling which uses two-dimensional cut out figures known as shadow puppets. The puppets are held between a source of light and a transparent screen, for example, tracing paper. The cut out shapes of the puppets can sometimes have a lot of detail, be presented either in one block colour, or even have translucent colouring. Puppeteers are the people who control the puppets and can move the figures in different ways to make them appear like they are walking, laughing, nodding and dancing. These movements illustrate the story being told.

Shadow play is popular in various cultures and many countries around the world. It has an especially long and traditional history in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia, but also countries in Europe and Middle East and Far East Asia.



Stories to be inspired by...

Reading a story to your class is a great way to start exploring a topic. Below are some recommended stories and books based on the themes within this resource:

- *Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak (you will need to access this story for your Create Your Own Wild Thing activity)
- *Mythological Monsters*, Sara Fanelli
- *Whoo's There?*, Heather Zschock
- *The Gruffalo*, Julia Donaldson
- *Rosie's Walk*, Pat Hutchins

Let's explore...

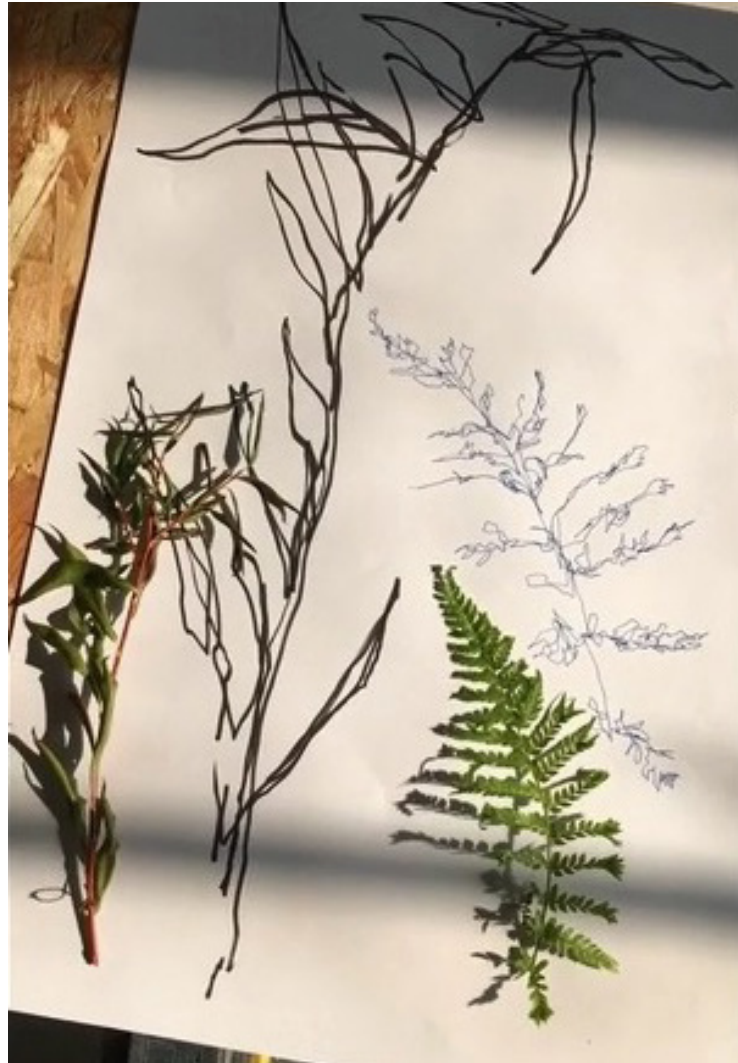
Go on a short walk around your school, or near where you live. Explore the hedgerows and pathways. Collect as many different leaves, fallen petals and even weeds as you can.



Let's play with mark making...

Use your pens and pencils to create different marks on paper. Explore the different ways you can use these drawing tools, for example:

- Hold your pencil really lightly, dangling from your fingertips letting the pencil nib dance across your paper. What do your pencil marks look like?
- Now hold your pen and draw a line. Now try drawing another line and another making each one darker and thicker than the last one. How do you do this? What movement does your arm make? What sounds does the pen make?



Let's think about shape and texture...

Leaves and flowers come in many different shapes and sizes. Lay out all the items you have collected from your walk and have a good look at each of them.

- What are their differences?
- What are their similarities?
- Are there any that are really big?
- Are there any that are really small?

Looking at your collection, think of as many different words or sounds you would use to describe each part of your botanical collection. On your paper, write every word or sound to create a bank of descriptions. This can be done individually or as a class.

Now, using a pen or pencil, place different leaves on the same piece of paper and trace around each one, make sure you get your drawing tools into each wiggly or edgy bit.



Let's draw what you can see...

Draw your leaves, fallen petals and weeds.
You do not have to draw the whole thing...
you are collecting information.

Look and add to your drawings the lovely marks,
shapes and textures you have started to explore.

Remember the different sizes of your foliage:
think about how you record them on your paper.



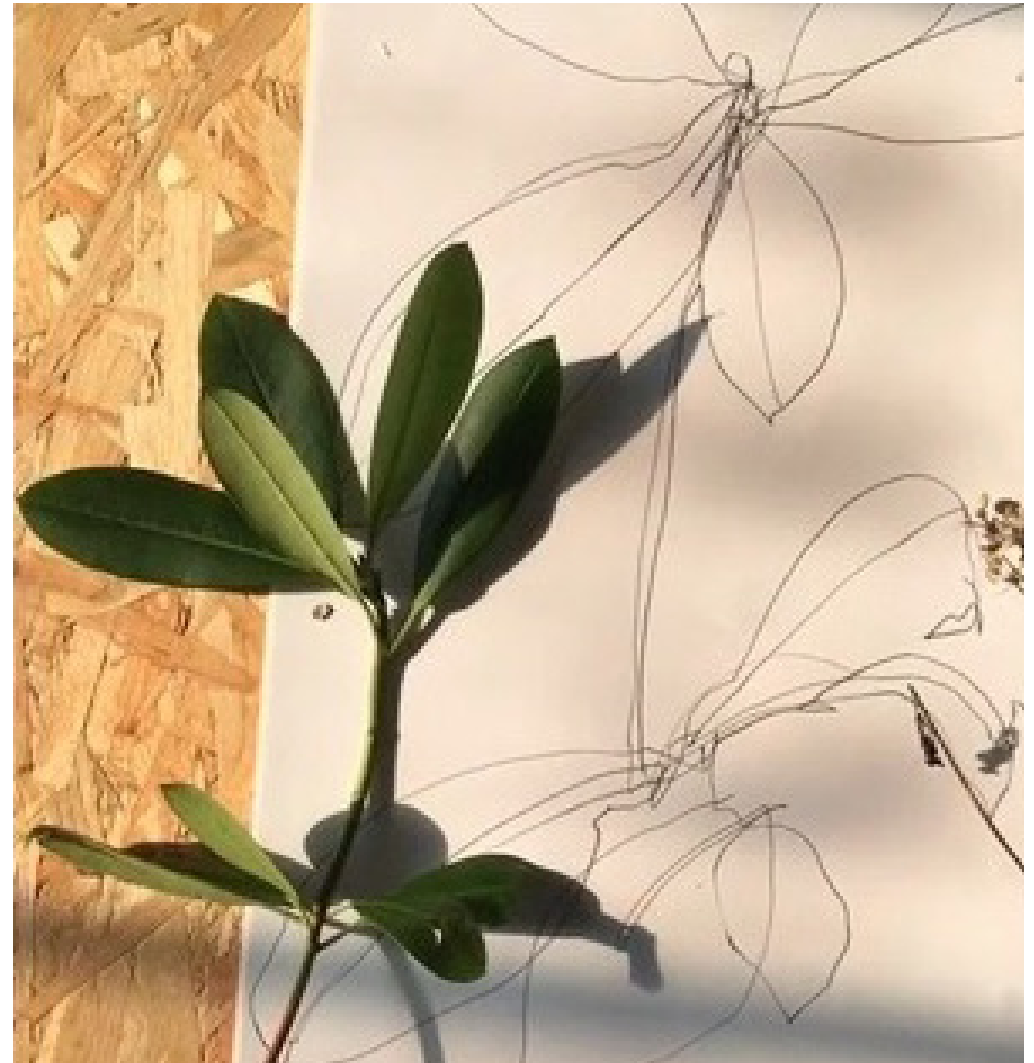
Be brave with your drawings!

Can you...

- Do a drawing by keeping your pen on the paper at all times?
- Have a good look at a leaf or flower and then create a drawing without looking at your page?

Don't worry about making a 'mistake', try embracing your mistakes and turn them into something new.

Remember to draw only what you can see...



Make your own Wild Thing!

Read the classic children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak.

Let's explore...

Look closely at the drawings of the beasties in *Where the Wild Things Are*.

What Wild Things has Maurice Sendak created? How did he draw them? What textures can you see in their tails and fur? What tools do you think he used to draw them? Do they remind you of any other animals?

Can you spy...

- Animals with horns and bushy tails...
- Birds with huge beaks but no wings...
- Big beasties with scales and fur...
- Beasties with human feet...

Let's play...

How do you think Maurice Sendak has created these mythical beasties?

Photocopy pages from the story in black and white. Cut out or tear away different parts of each creature, this can be done by teachers or pupils.

Without using glue, play around with the different creature parts to create your own Maurice inspired beasties. Play with different character combinations and see how many beasties can be created. If they enjoy this, you could do this with printed images of your pupils' favourite animals too.

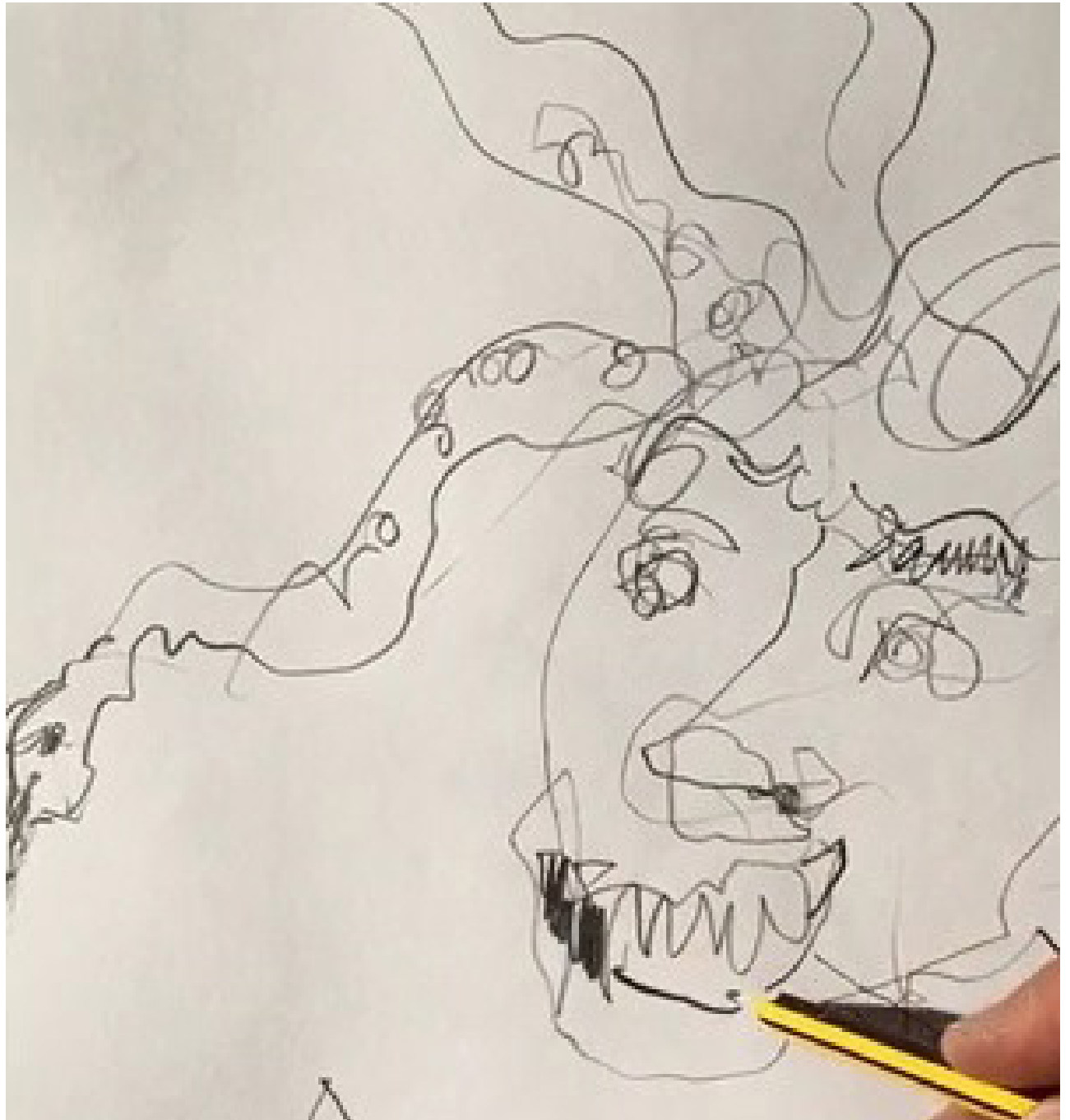
Let's create...

Settle on two or three beasties from your play time and draw your very own Wild Thing as big as you can! Include all of its features and expressions. Think about exploring how Maurice Sendak created texture with different marks and add this detail to your beastie's tail or fur. You can try this out as many times as you like until you're happy with your drawing. Teachers could encourage pupils to practise mark making like Maurice Sendak, using dots and dashes to build texture before they start the final drawing. Tracing animals from printed or copied images will support those who worry about drawing.

Top Tip!

You may also want to take inspiration from Greek Mythology: Minotaurs, Cerberus, Hydras and Sirens.

Remember to make your drawings big and let your beasties fill the whole page...



Shadow Painting

In this activity, we are going to begin looking at positive and negative spaces in shadow painting.

What is positive and negative space in art?

Positive space refers to the main focus of a picture, while negative space refers to the background. The easiest way to grasp positive and negative space is by looking at the black and white image on this page.

Here, we can see the plant is the positive space and the background surrounding it is the negative space.

What is shadow painting in art?

A shadow painting is where the main object/s are painted in a solid colour, often black paint or ink and the space around the object is a lot lighter. Sometimes, the edges of these solid objects are highlighted in a really bright colour to form a shadow effect.



Let's test...

Lay out your paint brushes and your black paint and/or ink in a little pot – be careful with the ink, a little goes a long way!

Using your brush, start by painting some marks on a piece of paper, just to get a feel for the brush and the way the paint and ink rests on the paper.

Let's play...

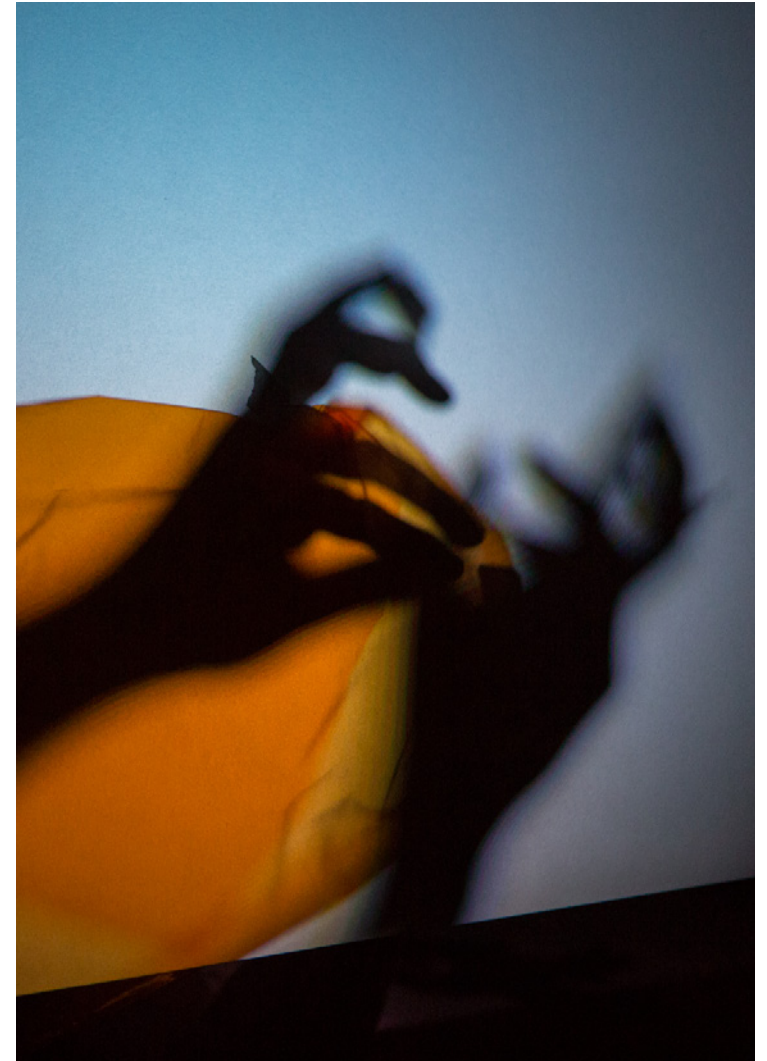
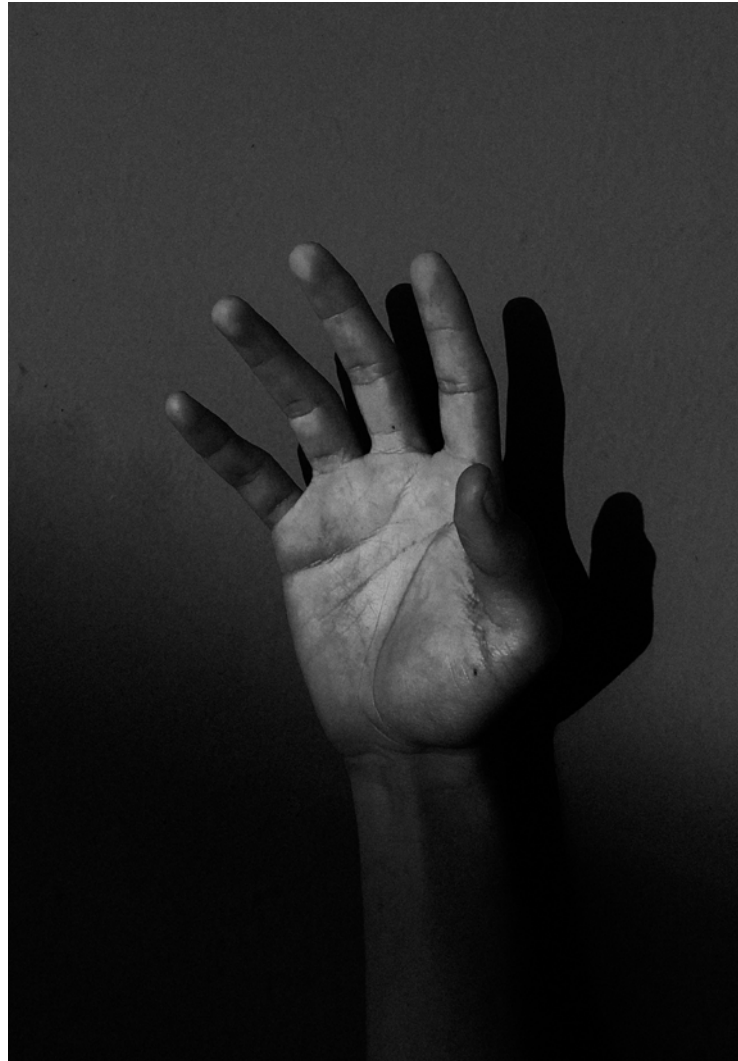
Now start creating different marks with your brush, paint and ink. What happens to the paint if you:

- Hold the brush lightly and gently move it across the paper.
- Swirl the brush around in different directions.
- Place the brush into the paint or ink and then tap - tap - tap the brush across the paper until the paint or ink runs out.
- Paint block shapes like squares and triangles.

Look at all the different marks on the paper and the way you have created them.

Let's think about shadows again...

Look closely at your hand. **Do you notice the lines and your nails?** Shine a light or torch so that it casts a shadow of your hand on the wall. **Look at the shadow: can you see the same details you noticed on your hand?** Repeat this with other objects or with pupils in the class. Can they guess what something is or who someone is from their shadow? Once the pupils have an understanding of shadows having little detail other than on the edges, they're ready for the next part.



Let's create...

Use a brush and black ink to create a series of shadow paintings. You could be inspired by your drawings of the outside objects or by your beasties from the images in the last activity. Use the ink to create your plants, trees or beasts as if they are seen only as shadows and think about the positive space (your object in black paint) and the negative space (the background of your painting).

Remember that you are not painting details like eyes or pattern because you will not see these details in shadow.

‘Drawing’ with Scissors

There are many different ways we can use scissors when creating art, they don't just have to cut things in half or cut shapes out of something. Scissors can be used to snip at edges, create feathery effects and can make long strips of paper curly.

For children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, scissors can be accessible for some and not for others. For this activity we look at creative methods with and without scissors.



Let's experiment...

Lay out a piece of paper and a piece of card. Hold and feel each one. What are the differences between them?

Try rolling, folding, scrunching, tearing and cutting each piece, get a good feel for the paper and the card. Is there one that is easier to work with than the other?

Let's experiment more...

Lay out scraps of different papers, for example, tissue paper, kitchen roll, newspaper, magazines and include the scraps of paper and card from the last activity.

Practise tearing! What happens to the paper or card when you...

- **Tear gently?**
- **Tear fast?**
- **Tear towards you?**
- **Tear away from you?**
- **Tear with your right hand?**
- **Tear with your left hand?**
- **Tear in a different direction?**

Try out the above actions on each piece of paper. When complete, lay your experiments in front of you and have a good look at each one.

What are the differences? Are the edges the same or do they have different textures? Which one do you like best?

If your pupils can, experiment with drawing with scissors...

Lay out a piece of A4 or A3 paper; printer or cartridge will do.

Draw some geometric shapes, squares, triangles and rectangles in different sizes and cut out each one. You could also print out some images for them to cut around.

Now practise with circular shapes, draw circles and ovals in different sizes and cut out each one.

A step further...

Try experimenting with different shapes, for example, trees, leaves, flowers, clouds, lightning bolts and the sun.

Practise your tears and scissor drawings before committing to the piece of paper or card you will use for your artwork in the next activity.

Create – Your Wild Thing

Now it's time to turn your beasties into shadow puppets. Go back to the beasties you have drawn and select which you would like to work with.

Be Brave!

Don't use pencils to do this, instead cut out the different shapes and patterns of your character. Think of this activity like you would if you were making a jigsaw... piecing together parts to make a whole. Move your different parts over the page until you are happy or you need to add more pieces.

If your pupils have difficulties with cutting and tearing, ask them to instruct you to cut or tear.

If your beasties arms and legs move, instead of using glue, use paper fasteners here to secure together. Once your beastie is made, glue a wooden stick like a bamboo skewer onto the back of your character and your shadow puppet is ready.

Remember to make your character BIG in scale so it can be seen.



Create – A Landscape

Look back to your drawings of your outside objects and think how you could create a new landscape with them. The items you collected could be part of...

- A wild jungle
- Under the sea
- A sandy desert
- Your own imaginary environment

Pupils could cut or tear the card to create a landscape, or draw their own. The landscape must be larger than their beastie-talk to them about scale.



Create – A screen for your Shadow Puppets

Now it's time to create a screen for your landscape and shadow puppets.

First, lay out your tracing paper on a flat surface. Next, move your landscape around the tracing paper and select where you would like to landscape to be. Once your location is selected, secure with glue.

In your surrounding, select a spot to place your screen, this could be against a window with natural light, between two pillars in a room or a cardboard box, ensuring you have a light source like a lamp. With your screen area chosen, stick down the sides of the tracing paper with tape.

With your screen in place it is now time to animate your shadow puppets! Play by moving your characters in, up, down and around the screen.



Final challenge...

With your illuminated landscape and characters, can you create your own mini-story?

Things to think about:

PLOT: What is your story about?

CHARACTERS: How many characters are in your story?

NAMES: What are the names of your characters?

VOICE: What kinds of voices does each of your characters have?

FEELINGS: What feelings do your characters have?

WHERE: Where does your story take place?

SOUND: What noises are in your environments? Whooshing wind or the pitter-patter of rain?

EXCITEMENT: Where are the exciting moments in your story? What happens?



Further Exploration

Let's explore artists who work with shadows...

[Henri Matisse](#)

[Sara Fanelli](#)

[Tim Noble and Sue Webster](#)

[Kara Walker](#)

[Cornelia Parker](#)

[Kumi Yamashita](#)

[Ida Ekblad](#)

[Alexander Calder](#)

Share your artworks with us!

We would love to read your pupils stories or see their films.
Teachers and Home Educators can share these with us by email:

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