

22. Puppets Tell the Story

..but you create the happy ending!

Themes	General human rights
Level of complexity	Level 2
Age	8 – 13 years
Duration	120 min.
Group size	8 – 24 children
Type of activity	Dramatisation of a story 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognize human rights themes in familiar stories • To practise finding solutions for human rights violations • To have fun and work together
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a model puppet to use as a demonstration.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puppets, dolls or materials for making puppets • Puppet theatre or a piece of material to make a stage



Instructions

1. Arouse the children's interest by asking them to think of characters from stories they know who have experienced injustice or unfairness. Help them recognize that these personalities and stories often reflect a somewhat exaggerated version of real-life situations. Suggest some sources for stories (e.g. a folk or fairy tale, a scene from a children's book, an episode from the media, such as TV or films).
2. After the children have given several suggestions, divide them into small groups of three or four. Ask each person in the group to suggest a story they know, retelling it if others don't know it. Encourage the group to name the right(s) violated when each story has finished.
3. When they have had time to tell their stories together, ask them to select one story to present to the group as a puppet show. Explain that they have thirty minutes to create their puppets and rehearse their presentation. Every child in the group should have at least one role in the presentation. Demonstrate how to construct the puppet, depending on the method you have chosen.
4. 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 action stops and children discuss:
 - a. What human right is being violated?
 - b. How can we change the action to respond to the violation and protect the character(s)?
5. Ask the presenting group to improvise the ending of their play using one or more of the endings recommended in the discussion.

Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking questions such as these of each group:
 - a. How do you feel about your play?
 - b. How did your group choose this story to perform?



- c. How did your group work together as a team?
 - d. What method did you use to decide on a story? To assign roles?
 - e. How did you feel while playing your role?
2. Relate the activity to human rights by asking question such as these:
- a. Have you ever experienced or observed situations like those in the presentation?
 - b. What is the link between these situations and human rights? Were any rights violated? Were any rights defended or enjoyed?
 - c. Was the rights violation(s) in the presentation solved? How? Were there other possible ways of solving the problems?
 - d. What could you do in real life to address a problem like this?

Suggestions for follow-up

- The stories, and especially 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 support it.

Ideas for action

Perform the plays for other children, parents or other members of the community. Ask the children to explain to the audience the human rights context of their plays and the violation it represents.

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, gender discrimination, 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 to help in deciding which to choose. Help them weigh up the advantages of each and possibly play through several different endings.
- If the children choose a long work such as a novel or film, help them select a single scene to present.
- This activity could easily be run over two or three days.
- If you do not have a puppet theatre, use a large blanket, behind which the children can sit to perform their puppet play.
- Puppets can be made in a variety of ways: use existing puppets, dolls or action figures; decorate socks; make paper cut-outs mounted on a stick; decorate paper tissue tubes or paper cups. Don't spend too much time on the puppets. The presentation is what matters.
- 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: 'DEAR DIARY', p. 99; 'MODERN FAIRYTALE', p. 113; 'ONCE UPON A TIME...', p. 125; 'ZABDERFILIO', p. 209.



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 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...', P. 125).

Further information

This activity could also be done with families at home.

