

## Vocal Exercises

Developed by Kathleen Lynam

*Let Your Voices Be Heard: Using Puppets to Bring Stories to Life*

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### Objective/Goal:

This is an experience designed for the classroom teacher, to prepare the voice for effective puppetry work with children.

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### Educational Impact:

- ✓ Prosody
  - ✓ Inflection
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### Materials Needed:

- ✓ A tube sock
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### Procedure and Process:

#### Exploring Pitch: Highs and Lows

You should do this exercise with a partner. Decide who will be 1 and who will be 2. Partner 1 will recite the lines in a very high voice, while Partner 2 will recite in a very low voice, then switch.

**Partner 1**

*Humpty Dumpty*

*Humpty Dumpty*

*All the king's horses*

*Couldn't put Humpty*

**Partner 2**

*Sat on a wall*

*Had a great fall*

*And all the king's men*

*Together again.*

Nursery Rhymes provide a wonderful opportunity to invent new prequels or sequels to timeless stories. Here is a prequel I wrote for Humpty Dumpty:

### **Humpty Dumpty (Before the Fall)**

*Well earlier that day,  
Before Humpty Dumpty went out to play,  
Humpty's mama told him to,  
"Stay right in the backyard,  
don't go near that new wall!"  
But Humpty didn't listen,  
Didn't listen at all.  
"I'll do what I want!  
I'm the boss around here,  
I'm big and I'm strong,  
I've got nothing to fear-  
Especially that wall.  
Why it's not so high,  
Bet I can climb it-  
Easy as pie."  
Well you all know what happened,  
Humpty wasn't very smart,  
So you'd better listen to your mama's  
So you don't fall apart.*

### **Vocal exercise: Speed**

How slowly can you say this poem? How quickly? What about starting at one extreme and ending up at the other?

*Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater,  
Had a wife and couldn't keep her.  
He put her in a pumpkin shell,  
And there he kept her very well.*

### Vocal Exercise: Dynamics

Dynamics dictate whether a character's voice is loud or soft. Traditionally, the aggressive antagonist has a loud voice while a meek character had a soft, quiet voice.

Practice reciting this familiar poem with a partner. Partner 1 will speak quietly and Partner 2 will speak loudly. How does the volume of your voice change the feeling or meaning of the text?

**Partner 1**

*One, two,*

*Three, four,*

*Five, six,*

*Seven, eight,*

*Nine, ten,*

**Partner 2**

*Buckle my shoe;*

*Knock on the door;*

*Pick up sticks;*

*Lay them straight;*

*A big, fat hen.*

### Vocal Exercise: Tone

Breathing only through your mouth produces a nasal voice. Your tongue will naturally be pushed towards the roof and back of your mouth. This voice can seem silly or sinister depending on the direction of the story line. A nasal voice would be natural to use for a puppet that has a cold or allergies, which could be connected to the curriculum in the areas of science, nature and hygiene. Try playing all three characters in the following mini-drama, creating distinct voices using nasal, high, and low sounds as indicated:

Villain (Nasal): *I've come to collect the rent.*

Damsel (High): *I can't pay the rent.*

Villain (Nasal): *You must pay the rent!*

Damsel (High): *I can't pay the rent!*

Hero (Low): *I'll pay the rent.*

Villain (Nasal): *Curses—foiled again!*

Damsel (High): *My hero!*

## Vocal Exercise: Emotion

The emotion within your voice incorporates the elements of pitch, speed, dynamics, and tone, as well as rhythm and inflection. These components of voice, when combined, represent one character voice. It's a little tricky at times, but with some practice and a little concentration, everyone can do it! Use these components to create voices for the little pumpkins in the following verse.

### ***Five Little Pumpkins***

*Five little pumpkins sitting on a gate –*  
*The first one said, "Oh, my, it's getting late!"* [Anxious]  
*The second one said, "There's goblins in the air."* [Spooky]  
*The third one said, "I don't care!"* [Bold]  
*The fourth one said, "Let's run! Let's run!"* [Scared]  
*The fifth one said, "Isn't Halloween fun?"* [Happy]  
*Then ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo*  
*Went the wind*  
*And out went the lights*  
*And five little pumpkins*  
*Rolled out of sight.*

## Can You Guess That Character?

This experience involves the use of one of the simplest of all puppets: a sock! It allows you to practice vocal expression based on personality types, develop an awareness of the puppet, and channel your energy through the puppet.

You will need to find a partner. Each of you should take a turn choosing a personality for your puppet and a rhyme to say in that puppet's voice. When creating the puppet's voice, remember to use the components of pitch, speed, dynamics, tone, and emotion (including accent, inflection, and rhythm).

The excitement begins! The objective is for you to guess your partner's personality based on the vocal expression used in the rhyme. Don't forget that you can also try your hand at writing your own version of a nursery rhyme.

## Making a Sock Puppet

A basic sock can be transformed into an amazing puppet with a moveable mouth. These engaging puppets have a range of abilities to help your children; for example, as a morning greeter or helping with the transition to meals, clean up, or rest periods. They can also be used to interact with a child to help identify, understand, and verbalize the child's inner thoughts and feelings. Often a child will find it difficult to talk directly to an adult, yet will feel unafraid to express themselves through or to a puppet. The magic of puppetry allows for a suspension of disbelief as the characters come alive!

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Tube socks (socks without heels) make the best puppets. Soccer socks usually have no heel and come in a great range of colors. Vibrant colors will make this puppet more visually appealing.

Included here are directions for sewing a rubber band to the end of the sock. This rubber band is placed around your wrist and the sock is then turned inside-out and pushed down until the toe area meets your finger tips. The rubber band allows for the mouth to be held in place so the puppeteer does not have to constantly adjust it.

Once you have your puppet on your hand, the correct positioning of your hand inside the puppet should be as follows: your thumb will work the bottom half of the puppet's mouth, while the other four fingers should be placed tightly next to each other (fairly rigid) and will form the top of the puppet's mouth.

So, what can this puppet do? It can help you articulate sounds and words. It can sing, talk, whisper, or cry; anything you can verbalize. It can also playfully eat small objects like letters or numbers since it has a moveable mouth.

I have also modified this puppet by gluing small metal washers onto the outside of the puppet. By using a variety of letters, numbers, coins, words, or other small objects that have a magnet attached to them, this puppet becomes an enjoyable, low stress, accurate assessment tool.

### **Adaptations for Special Needs**

Prepare the children by telling them that this puppet represents a snake. You might show a picture of a real snake in contrast with the puppet. Explain that this puppet has no teeth, just a big smile.

You can put different textures on the sock to provide for an enhanced sensory experience.

After modeling and demonstrating the use of this puppet, some children may be able to successfully manipulate this puppet.

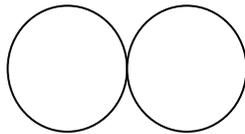
When using a magnet and washer adaptation, removing an object from the puppet can enhance fine motor manipulation skills. This puppet has many uses, such as assessing a child's knowledge of shapes, colors, vocabulary, spelling, or math.

### ***Sock Puppet Supply List***

- 1 large adult tube sock (a bright color works best)
- Plastic balls (two balls for eyes)
- Strong glue
- A rubber band
- Sewing needle and thread
- 2x5" piece of felt for the snake's tongue
- Two pony beads (plastic) for eyes (pupils)
- Optional: metal washers

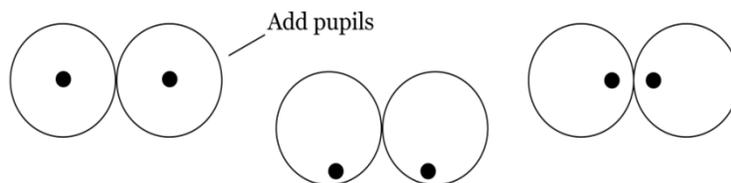
### ***Sock Puppet Directions***

We will begin with the eyes. Glue the two balls together, using enough glue to make a strong bond. Set aside.



Sew a rubber band to the end of the sock (see next page for illustration). Do not pierce the rubber band, but rather loop the thread around it as you sew it to the sock.

When the glue on the eye balls is dry, use a toothpick to glue the plastic beads on to the balls for the pupils. The placement of the pupils is up to you. Let the glue set up for five minutes.



Wrap the rubber band around your wrist, then take the other end of the sock—the one with the opening—and start to turn this inside out, eventually pushing with your hand. Keep pushing until your hand reaches the end of the sock. The rubber band will keep the inside of the mouth pulled back for easier manipulation.

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Now it's time to add the eyes to the puppet. (It might be easiest to work with a partner.) Place glue on the bottom area of the eyes and then place them where you'd like them on the top of the sock. Push down firmly to adhere.

Now you can add the tongue. Place a dab of glue on the end of the tongue. Open the snake's mouth and place on the bottom half of the mouth. Press down to adhere.

Wait a few minutes, and then gently remove the sock so the glue can set.

If you want to add metal washers (to use with magnets), I usually wait until the eyes are completely set and then I space them out along the body of the sock snake.

