

Puppets and Picture Books

When puppets speak, children listen. When children speak through puppets, the audience's attention is directed at the puppet, giving shy students an effective tool to use as they gradually become more proficient and comfortable with public speaking. Consider letting students use puppets in conversations that talk about picture books and easy nonfiction books. Students can share what they learned by speaking through the puppet, or they can create a dialogue between characters from two different books.

In *Martha Speaks* by Susan Meddaugh, the dog speaks too much and is often thoughtless in what she says. When Martha makes inappropriate comments about people in the book, it's funny, but when similar comments are made in real life, they can be hurtful. Martha's mistakes help children learn important lessons about being empathetic when talking to others.

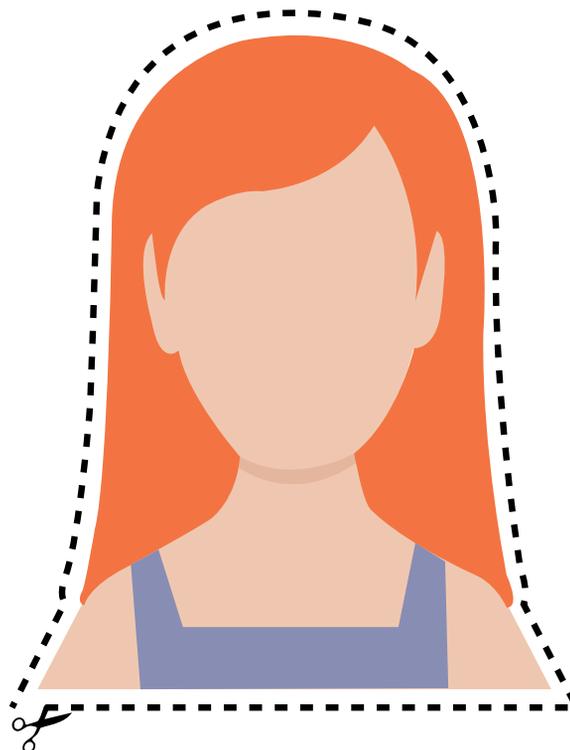
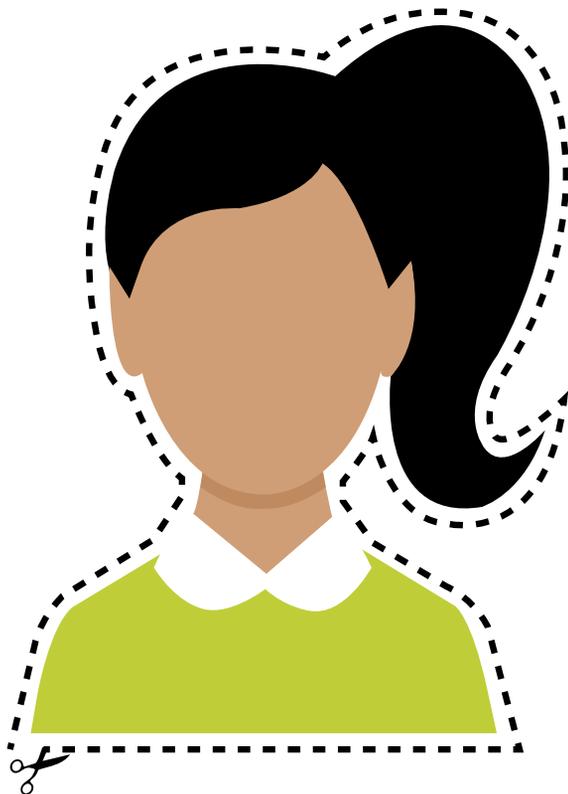
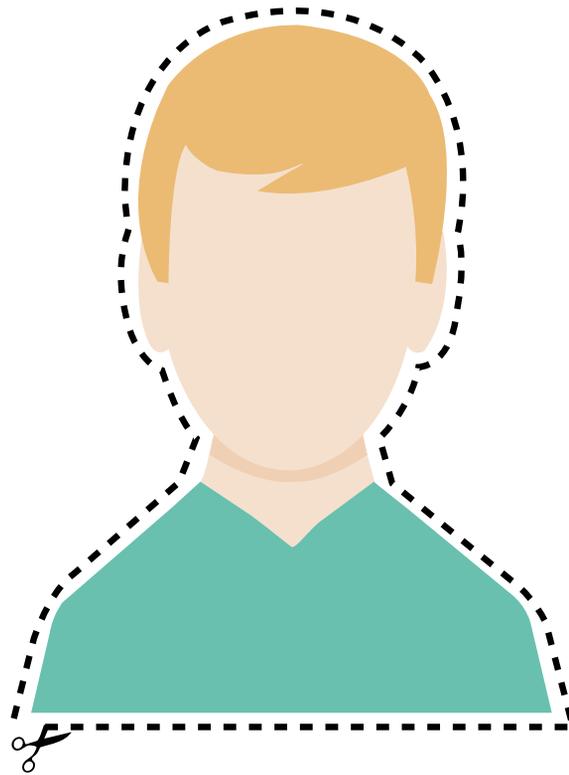
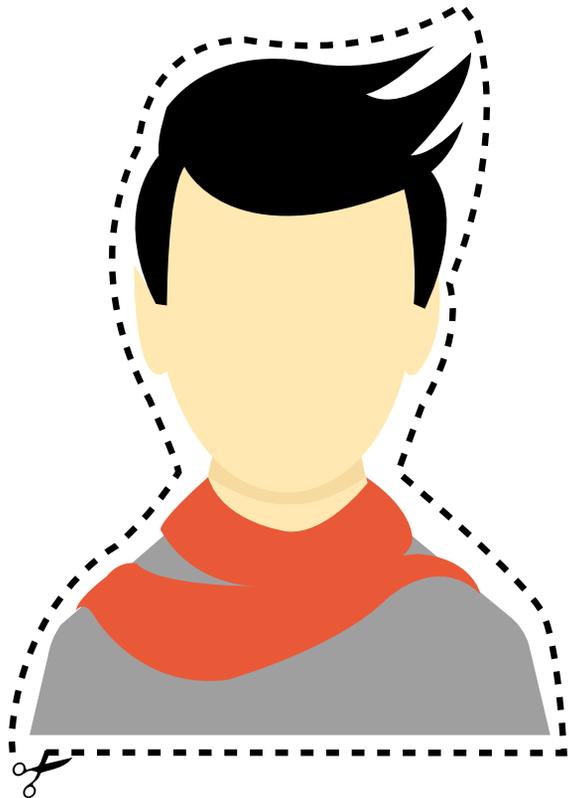
Use puppets to practice kind language in conversations. Pair students and provide a puppet for each group (use commercial puppets or make stick puppets using the template below). Give students scenarios to act out (see Conversation Suggestions below). Students take turns with the puppets to show the right way to speak in each situation.

● Conversation Suggestions ●

1. A very nice friend of your grandmother sits down next to you to chat. The problem is that she has very bad breath.
2. You are talking to your father's boss, and you notice she has a piece of green spinach between her teeth.
3. A person in your class wiped his nose, but he didn't get everything wiped away.
4. You are eating dinner at your friend's house, and her mother fixed a meal she heard you liked very much. The problem is that it tastes awful.

Stick Puppet Templates

Cut out and decorate the faces below; then glue them to craft sticks.



Storytelling

Telling folktales helps students prepare for many types of public speaking. Let students choose a familiar folktale. Prepare a simple story map and plan mini lessons to guide students through Storytelling Speaking Techniques (below). Tell the tale multiple times and include a practice video recording so that students can critique their own performances. Have students present their folktales to small groups of younger students in a festival atmosphere where the audience moves between storytelling stations in the library. Position three storytellers at each station and have the audience move to the next station after eight to ten minutes. This format allows the presenters to gain confidence and finesse with each presentation. See also "Storytelling Magic" (*LibrarySparks* March 2009 Web Resources; <http://tinyurl.com/p6o3u8z>) for individual mini lessons on each speaking technique.

● *Storytelling Speaking Techniques* ●

- **Use facial expressions and simple, suitable gestures.**
- **Put excitement in your voice by using inflection, varied pace, appropriate pausing, and smooth phrasing.**
- **Know the story or topic very well.**
- **Use eye contact to connect to the audience.**
- **Practice voice projection.**
- **Memorize the beginning and ending sentences so you know how to start and finish.**
- **Use visual aids and props when necessary to clarify information.**
- **Practice, practice, practice.**





Reciting poetry gains popularity with the use of school video broadcasting. Collect a number of poetry anthologies (see suggestions below) for students to use in selecting poems to recite from memory. Students can work individually or in groups of two to four. Review speaking techniques, if necessary. Video record polished pieces and post them on the school website, broadcast them during daily announcements, or set up a video loop on a monitor in a public space for visitor viewing. English-language learners can contribute poems in their native languages.

● *General Anthologies* ●

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems by Langston Hughes. Knopf, 1994.

The Golden Treasury of Poetry by Louis Untermeyer. Golden Press, 1959.

I'm Still Here in the Bathtub by Alan Katz. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003.

One at a Time: Poems by David McCord. Little, Brown, and Company, 1986.

Pictures and Poetry by Janis Bunchman and Stephanie Briggs. Davis Publications, 1994.

Poetry by Heart by Liz Attenborough. Scholastic, 2001.

The Random House Book of Poetry for Children by Jack Prelutsky. Random House, 1983.

Sing a Song of Popcorn by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers. Scholastic, 1988.

Talking Like the Rain by X.J. Kennedy and Dorothy Kennedy. Little, Brown, and Company, 1992.

20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury by Jack Prelutsky. Knopf, 1999.

Whisper and Shout: Poems to Memorize by Patric Vecchione. Cricket Books, 2002.

● *Theme-Related Anthologies* ●

Hand in Hand: An American History through Poetry by Lee Bennett Hopkins. Simon & Schuster, 1994.

If You Should Meet a Crocodile: Poems about Wild Animals. Puffin, 2001.

I Want Another Little Brother: Poems about Families. Puffin, 2001.

Lives: Poems about Famous Americans by Lee Bennett Hopkins. HarperCollins, 1999.

A Snowflake Fell: Poems about Winter by Laura Whipple. Barefoot Books, 2003.

Weather: Poems for All Seasons by Lee Bennett Hopkins. HarperCollins, 1995.





Get Personal: Mini Memories

Memories of special moments can be easy fodder for speaking practice and can evolve into writing projects. Duplicate the Memory Phrases handout (below) to spark personal memories. Give students five to ten minutes to jot notes about a personal memory next to each phrase. Students choose one event to share with a partner. Then have students change partners and retell the same story, adding sensory details. Retell the story again with another partner, adding the setting. Regroup with the original partner and retell the modified story. Discuss the changes that occurred and how the changes improved the story. If time permits, let students write the stories.

● Memory Phrases ●

Use this list of phrases to help you remember an event in your life. Write brief notes or phrases that will assist you in recalling the story.

1. Favorite toy got lost: _____

2. A happy time with a pet: _____

3. Special occasion with a grandparent or other relative: _____

4. A special blanket: _____

5. A new pair of shoes: _____

6. A big weather event: _____

7. A picnic: _____

8. Ice cream: _____

9. An accident (big or little): _____

10. Playing games: _____
