



## TECHNICAL SHEET

### SHADOWS // SHADOW THEATRE

#### WHAT IS IT?

The use of shadows is perhaps one of the most ancient and suggestive storytelling techniques. Shadows, in fact, have the power to fascinate and enchant. All you need is a source of light, a white wall and the silhouettes of the characters of the story. This technique is particularly appreciated by children, both as spectators and especially when the roles are reversed. Perhaps more than other narrative methods, this one is experienced as a game that stimulates children emotionally and sensorially.

#### HOW TO USE IT

Before moving on to storytelling there are some important steps that the teacher needs to consider in order to master this technique.

There are two different methods of using shadows.

The first one is by direct projection. The teacher will use specially prepared silhouettes to project the characters and events of the story onto the wall.

The second method is inspired by the Chinese shadow theatre. It involves the use of a small theatrical structure: a small theatre made of wood or cardboard that is easy to make. Here, the “proscenium” (the part of the stage in front of where the curtain would be in a theatre) is closed by a sheet of parchment paper and this constitutes the “screen” on which to project the shadows and narrate the story.

In both cases, in addition to the “opaque” silhouettes that do not allow light to pass through and therefore always make the shadows dark, it is possible to add objects and



details made of coloured transparent plastic materials. By allowing light to filter through, these objects will project not only the shape but also the colour.

The teacher should practice, in order to try out the effects and to make the movements of the characters/shadows coincide with the storytelling.

The classroom where the storytelling will take place should be set in semi-darkness, darkened as much as possible to allow the narration to take place, but at the same time it is necessary for the teacher to take into account any fear of the dark, especially in younger children. The children should be positioned in a way that allows them to appreciate the projection at its best, especially if it is done with a shadow theatre, as it will certainly not be of large dimensions.

A torch or fixed lamp with direct or halogen light is needed. The ideal method is to get a light source with a base/support as this will allow the use of both hands.

After the storytelling, the teacher can invite children to experiment.

They can do this individually or in small groups.

This is not only a game, but also a way for children to overcome their difficulties, including character difficulties, while having fun. Shyness, for example, is easily overcome thanks to the shadows and the magic created by the shadows.

## THE SILHOUETTES OF THE CHARACTERS

Depending on the story, the teacher will draw the various characters on a black card of at least 300g to ensure the rigidity of the “silhouettes” and prevent them from bending or deforming with movement during the storytelling.

After cutting them out, the teacher can use a die-cutter to create the eyes or other details, then glue wooden sticks to the silhouettes to make them easier to use.

The characters can also be made jointed if you want them to make movements that can be useful for underlining the narrative passages. Details made of transparent and coloured plastic materials can also be applied to these silhouettes, for example a hat, an umbrella, feathers, etc.



The silhouettes drawn by the teacher can be used as models for the children to create their own. The children can then draw the characters and elements necessary for their storytelling.

For the children, the weight of the paper should be lighter in order to facilitate cutting (max. 200 g).

## SHADOW THEATRE

A shadow theatre can be made either of wood or of paper/wood (cardboard of about 5 mm thickness, easily cut with a box cutter).

You have to create a frame, the minimum size is an A3 sheet of paper, with the smaller size than that you risk not having enough space for the narration.

The frame must be at least 5 cm wide in order to give consistency and create a sufficiently large space in which to hide the supporting elements.

Before applying them, the sheet of parchment paper or alternatively glossy paper must be glued on.

It is also possible to create sceneries: a landscape, a castle, the inside of a house, which can remain fixed and then applied to the inside of the theatre on the side facing the teacher, so that the children can always perceive its shadow.

If the teacher wants the children to make their own theatre, using an A4 card can be suitable to make it easier to handle.

## TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SHADOWS

The silhouettes should be small, especially if they have to be used with the shadow theatre, while in the case of projecting on a wall they can be a little bigger.

The size of the shadows obviously depends on whether they are closer or not to the light source.

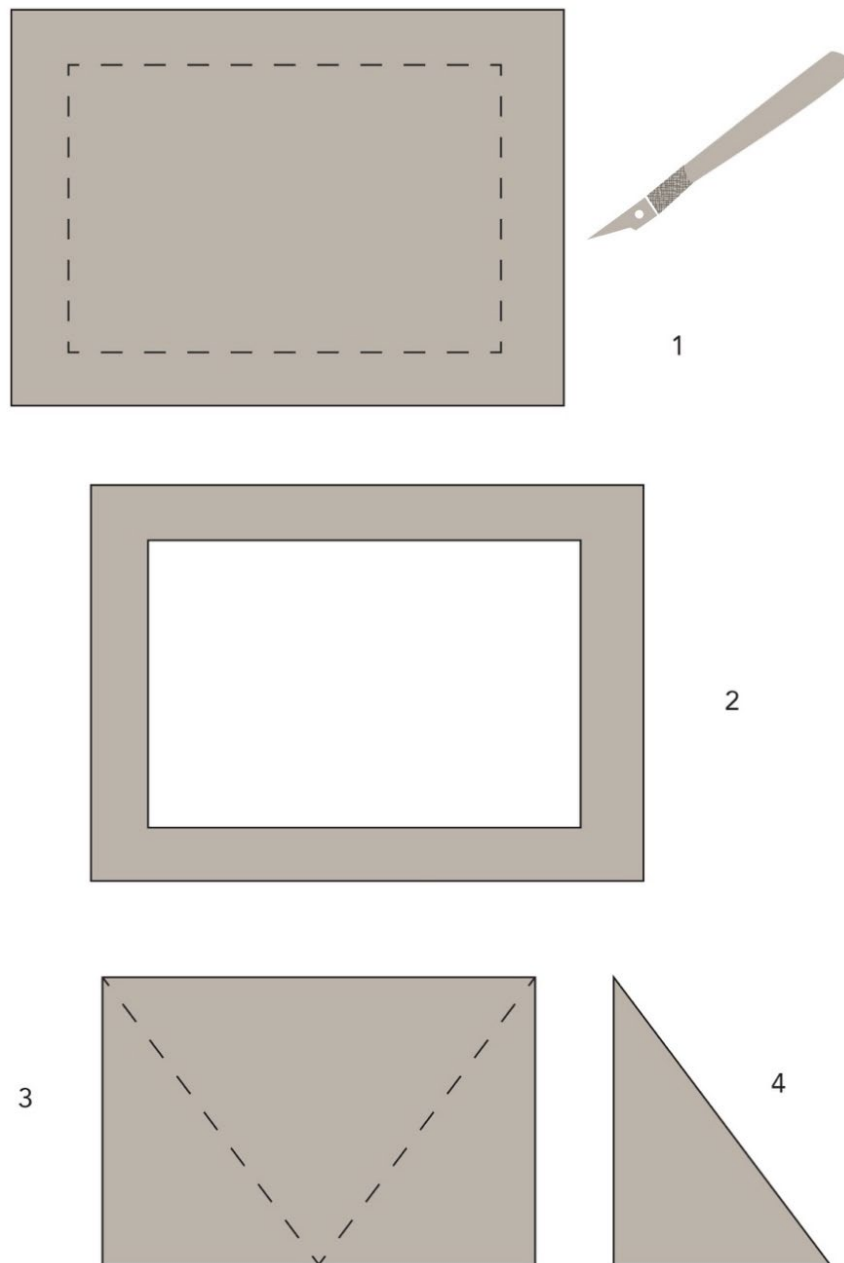
The closer you get to the source, the larger the character will be, almost to the point of creating a moment of “blackness” to allow other characters to enter.

## Some photos of Shadows “The Fern Flower”

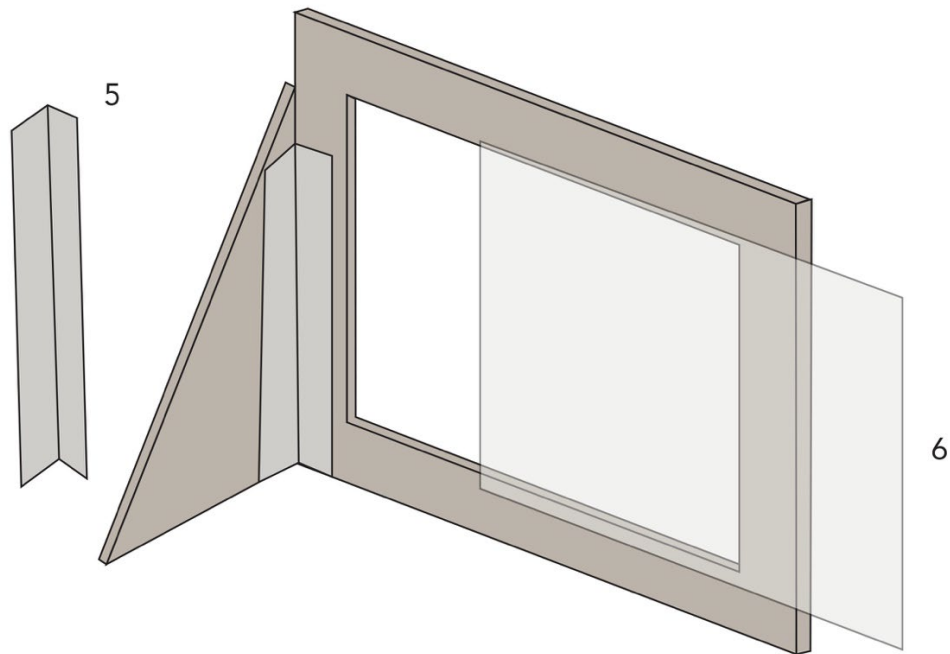




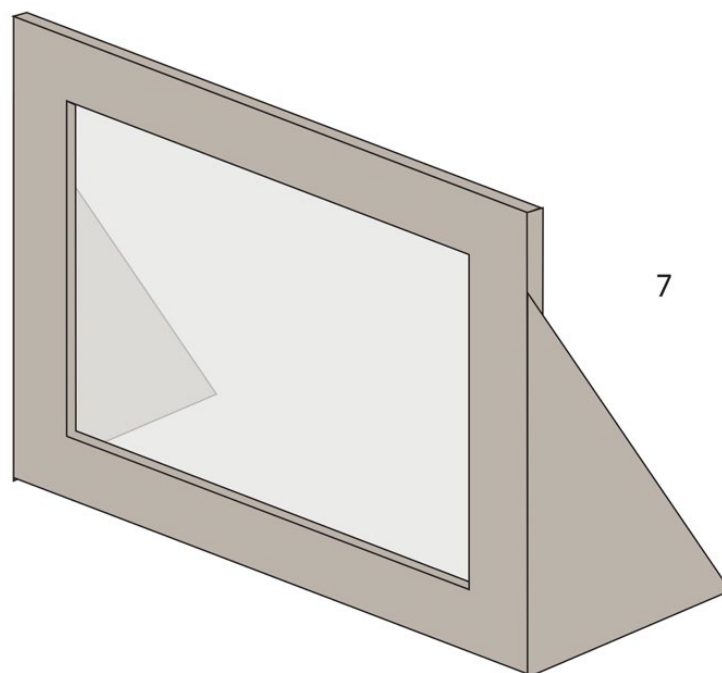
- **INSTRUCTIONS FOR A SHADOW THEATRE CONSTRUCTION**



1. Use a 2/5 mm thick sheet of paperboard. Draw a frame of approximately 5 cm and use a cutter to cut out along the dotted line.
2. The frame.
3. From the obtained rectangle, cut out two triangles to build the support elements.
4. Side support element.

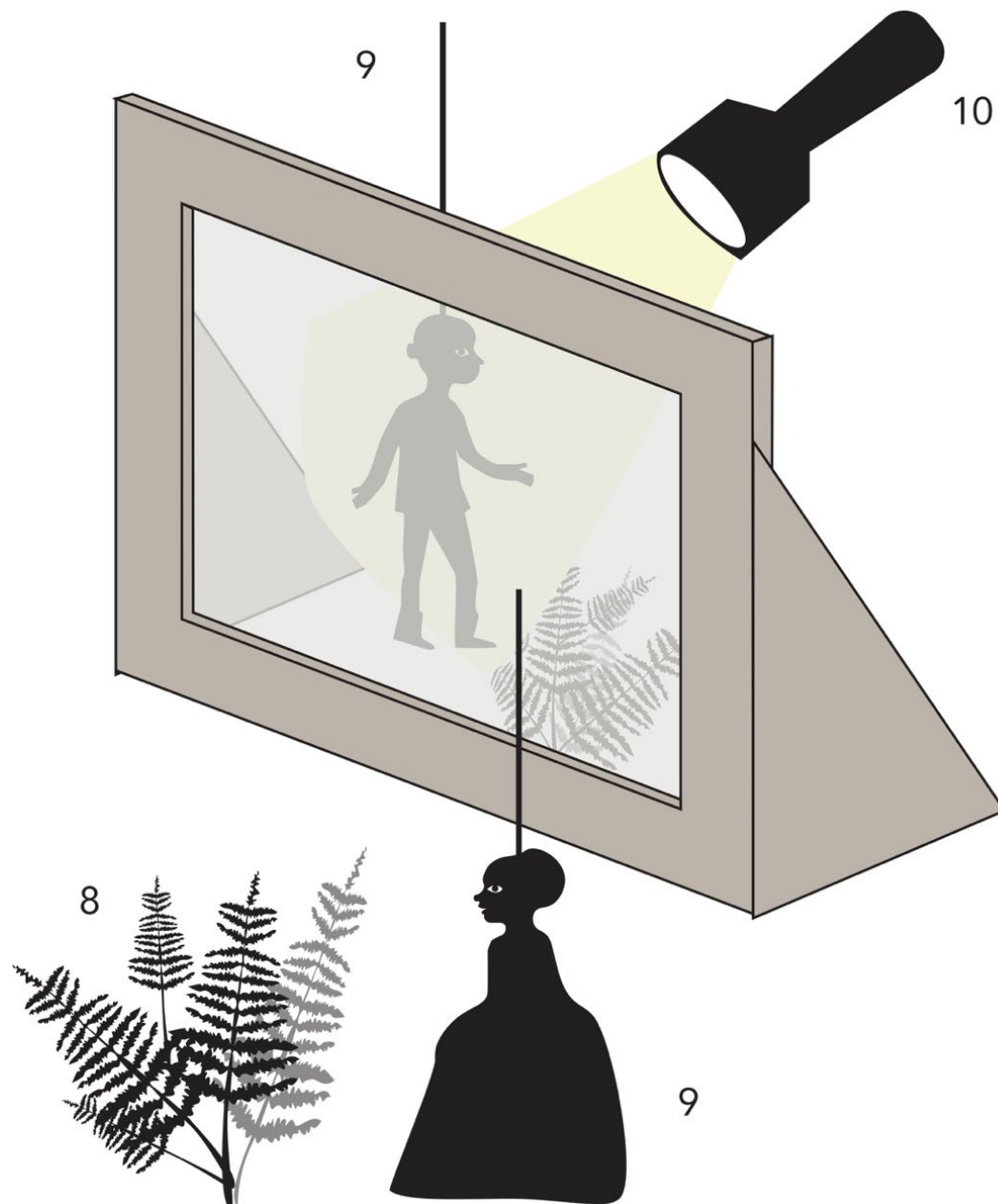


5. From a piece of cardboard (200 g paper) cut out two 4 cm wide strips and fold them in half. They will serve as a connecting element between the frame and the side panels.
6. Apply the cut-out sheet of parchment paper from the inside (it must be at least 2 cm wider than the opening of the theatre)





7. The little theatre is completed. You could also decide to colour it in order to make it more homogeneous or cover it with paper, perhaps making a collage with various drawings and characters or attach decorations such as origami etc.



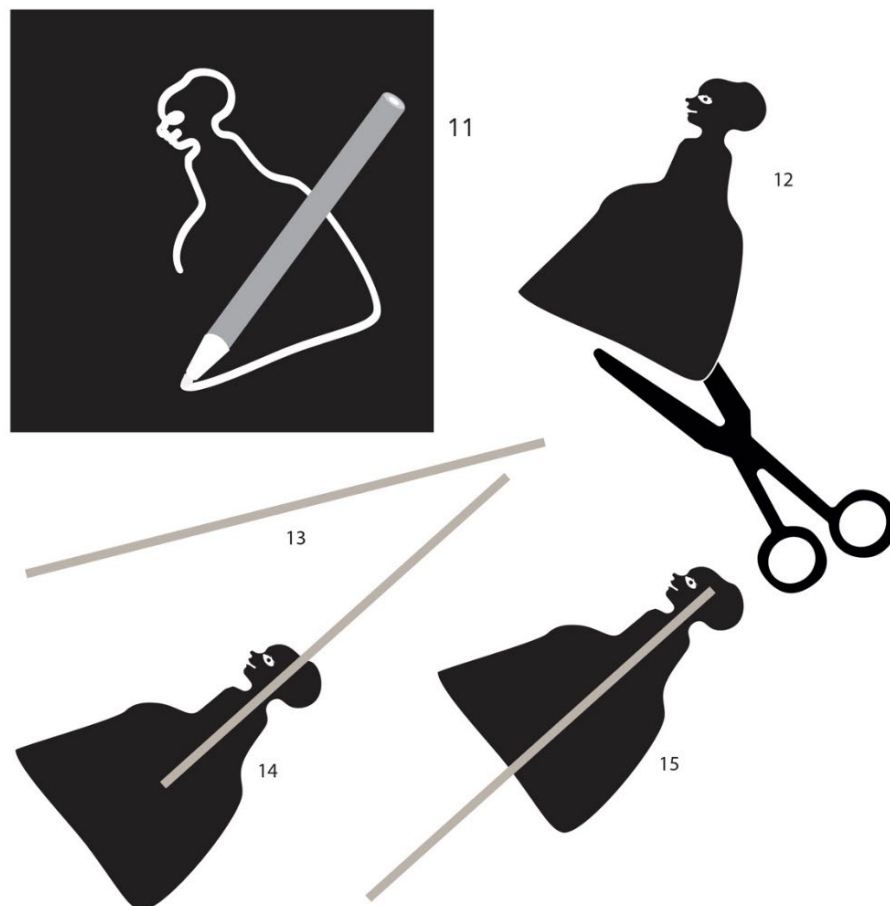
8. Silhouettes for the scenography creation to be applied directly onto the parchment using adhesive tape.
9. Characters for the story telling.
10. Torch with direct or halogen light. The mobile phone “torch” is also fine.



- **INSTRUCTIONS FOR SILHOUETTES CONSTRUCTION**

The silhouettes can be used either for wall projection or with the shadow theatre.

However, the position of the stick changes. In the case of the theatre, we glue it from above (fig. 14). For projection on the wall, it is more useful and appropriate to glue the stick from below (fig. 15).



11. Draw the silhouette of the character on the black card (200 g).

12. Cut out the figure.

13. Wooden stick (can also be coloured black).

14. Glue the wooden stick with hot glue.

P.S. You can take inspiration from our examples! There are some examples for the silhouettes creation in the folder “examples of silhouettes”.





## BENEFITS OF SHADOWS / SHADOW THEATRE FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDERS

The shadow theatre silhouettes can be used to create conditions for both non-verbal, and verbal communication as they provide a hook to anchor meaning to verbal expression, which is particularly useful for learners with fluency disorders and speech delays. The silhouettes and the interactions between them can demonstrate or dramatise feelings, model vocabulary or act out parts of the story to enhance understanding. In addition, when handling the silhouettes, a “positive filter” is established between the children and the listeners. Children that experience difficulties when expressing themselves (either due to learning difficulties or simple shyness) can be more emboldened to participate as they are able to “hide” behind this instrument.

Besides being helpful in improving speaking skills, research shows that shadow theatre is a beneficial outlet for children that struggle with expressing emotions and relating to storytelling content.

Research has also found that shadow theatre can be instrumental in memory retention: pupils are able to remember more events and facts about a story when it is presented in dramatic form. We can conclude that using this method can, therefore, tackle the difficulties with memory that children with SLD experience.

Engagement of learners with special needs is maintained during this activity as the shadow theatre is a form of multisensory narrative, activating various points of view: auditory, visual and emotional. This engagement is a key ingredient to also supporting ‘active learning’ as children are not passively listening to the story, but are in the driver’s seat of the learning process.



As with the origami, story box and silent book theatre tools, this activity can help to develop fine motor skills in children, i.e. the ability to control the small movements of hands, fingers, face, mouth and feet, leading to improved hand-eye coordination.

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