

## **Learn Puppet Techniques to Enhance and Represent!**

Description: Learn how puppets can add to your programs and even become well known mascot(s) for your library. All ages respond to puppets, even adults!

### **Introduction**

Bob and Sally are mascot puppets for our storytimes and school visits... (now also visiting nursing homes on their days off!)

They are so well known, they are still asked about by older students, ie. Junior High. Adult patrons with no children have even begun saying, "How's Bob?" after observing him as they pass storytime.

Bob/Sally go beyond talking about topics. They help with issues in the group such as expressing concern when someone is chattering or not sitting down. It gives me an opening to say, "Please quiet down now so that everyone can hear." "Please sit criss cross applesauce so that the people behind you can see. Thank you."

### **Problems sometimes encountered with children when puppets are a new experience**

When child says: That's just a puppet, it's not real! Bob tends to get offended. He's a very real puppet. He sometimes says, "Miss Alice is the voice but I'm the brains."

When children strike the puppet: My puppets usually pull back and tell me, "He's hitting me! I don't like that!" Which allows me to say that hitting is never okay. If it continues, the puppet asks to be put away somewhere safe. (Other kids may object but it's necessary to enforce that the puppet does not like to be hit.) In most cases the adult with that child will intervene. If it is a real problem, I don't hesitate to say. Where is your adult? I think you need to go sit with them.

### **Selecting a puppet**

-Does it fit your hand comfortably? Can you move it freely?

-If there are more than five holes, which will you use? Ie. spider or octopus

-Can you move the mouth open and shut? Or will the puppet whisper to you? What expressions can your puppet make? Can they hide their face in shyness or embarrassment? Can they look surprised?

-Where will puppet be when not in use? Bob and Sally sit on small chairs in front for storytime or on their travel bag for visits.

**\*\*\*\*\*Get to know your puppet!** Does it have a name? What's its personality?

\*Bob is a combination of my brothers and a good friend named Bob who used to give me all kinds of grief. He loves to test the limits. He's often in motion.

\*Sally is a combination of my sisters and a good friend who taught me how to "get over myself" and be silly. Sally was my imaginary friend as a toddler.

### **Introducing the puppet - when and how**

If the puppet is a mascot, they can open the storytime or be a part of transition. At our storytime, Bob and Sally watch movement/songs/bubble time to get the wiggles out then come onto my lap to talk to the kids about today's books/topic. After 3 minutes or so, they leave with a staff member or volunteer to go back to my office while we start reading the books.

\*\*\*On school visits, they say hello, say something about the books/topic and rest on the gig bag while I read. After the books, they come back to make comments about the stories and say good-bye. This is where Bob usually gets silly. "Good-bye, Bob!" or singing good-bye and holding the note, saying he doesn't want to leave yet.....

If the puppet is part of the books/topic, they usually come out with Bob and Sally before we read. If they are part of a story, they usually stay hidden behind me until it's time.

### **Manipulating your puppet**

Always treat your puppet as if it is alive. Treat it the way you would treat a living being. Make sure that you make eye contact with the puppet when you speak to it. If the puppet is speaking to you, it should look at you. If it is speaking in general, it should look at various people in the audience. Once in a while, Bob or Sally will look at a couple of kids directly, but not usually.