



TEACHING IDEAS

USING A CLASS PUPPET WITH VERY YOUNG LEARNERS

A class puppet can be anything from a soft glove puppet of e.g. a rabbit, a teddy bear, a puppy or a monkey, to a homemade sock puppet or even an oven glove in the shape of a crocodile or fish. A class puppet helps to create a positive affective climate for learning and playing in English. An important regular use of a class puppet is in marking the beginning and ends of lessons with greetings and goodbyes. In addition to this, a class puppet is a flexible resource which can be used as part of learning routines to promote participation and manage the class in a positive way. Here are 20 ideas to try!

1 Repeat what the puppet says

Use the puppet to say vocabulary or short sentences which the children are familiar with, varying the pitch, volume and pace. Children listen and repeat what the puppet says.

2 Echo

Use the puppet to say a word the children know e.g. *Flower*. Children repeat it three times reducing the volume each time and making it sound like an echo.

3 Pass the puppet

Children sit in a circle. Play music and children pass the puppet round the circle. Whenever you pause the music, the child who has the puppet holds it up and says *Hello ...!* naming the puppet. If appropriate, the child can also tell the puppet something about themselves e.g. *I like biscuits*.

4 Follow the puppet's instructions

Use the puppet to give the children instructions e.g. *Stand up / Sit down / Jump / Run / Stop* etc. and the children respond. You can also use the puppet to give instructions using flashcards laid out on the carpet or stuck on different walls e.g. *Touch the apple, Maria and Daniel / Touch the banana, Eva and Isabel* etc.. Children listen and do what the puppet says.

5 Guess what the puppet's thinking about

Put 3-6 flashcards on the carpet or board. Use mime to convey that the puppet's thinking about one of them. Encourage children to guess which one. Make the puppet shake its head or nod and say *No* or *Yes* as children guess. When a child guesses correctly, get the puppet to give them a kiss or hug.

6 Hide the puppet

Choose two children to close their eyes or to go out of the classroom for a moment. Hide the puppet somewhere where it is visible without having to move things. Get the children to open their eyes or call them back into the classroom. Ask *Where's ...?*, naming the puppet. As the two children look, get the rest of the class to help by saying

no, no, no softly if they are far away and *yes, yes, YES!* loudly as they get close to finding the puppet.

7 Choosing children

Use the puppet when you need to choose children either to come and stand by you at the front or to form groups. Make the puppet say a familiar rhyme e.g. *Red, yellow, blue, I love you!* and point to the children rhythmically in turn. Whenever the puppet pauses, the child he is pointing to is chosen.

8 Musical conductor

Children sing a song they know and the puppet conducts them holding a pencil or ruler. Children sing louder when you hold the puppet up to conduct and softer when you hold it down.

9 The puppet's choice

Every time children learn a song or rhyme, draw a picture to illustrate it on a piece of card. Keep the cards in a box. Get the puppet to say to the children e.g. *Please say a rhyme or sing a song!* and take a card randomly from the box. Children say the rhyme or sing the song that is illustrated on the card chosen by the puppet. Alternatively, the puppet can offer the box to individual children and invite them to choose a card randomly. The class then says the rhyme or sings the song in the same way.

10 The puppet's sleepy

Use the puppet if you need to quieten the class down. Lay him on the floor and cover him with a cloth. Name the puppet and say e.g. *Ssh. ...'s very sleepy. Let's be very quiet so he doesn't wake up!* whispering and using mime and gesture to convey meaning. Alternatively, you can say e.g. *... isn't feeling very well* or *... is frightened. He doesn't like a lot of noise* using mime and gesture to convey meaning in the same way.

11 Making a line or circle

Use the puppet when you need to get the children to stand in a line or circle. Stand in the place where you want children to make the line or circle. Hold up the puppet and use it to say e.g. *Come here, please, Alex.* Children take turns to come and join the line or circle and hold hands if you want them to do this.

12 Well done!

Use the puppet to look at and praise the children's work. Make him comment and talk to the children about their work e.g. *Very good! / What a lovely ...! / I like the It's beautiful / fantastic / great!* etc..

13 Cheer up!

If appropriate when a child is feeling a bit low, give them the puppet to cuddle in order to cheer them up.

14 Correcting the puppet

Ask the puppet questions and get him to give the wrong answers or get him to complete sentences with the wrong information e.g. *The ball is blue!* Children listen and correct the puppet in chorus e.g. *No, ...!* (naming the puppet) *Green!*

15 Taking the puppet home

If appropriate (and you are sure that the puppet will be returned!), you may like to let children take turns to take the puppet home between lessons to 'meet' their families. It may be worth writing a note to parents/carers explaining the role of the puppet in

English lessons before you do this. When children return the puppet, you may like to spend a few minutes getting the child to tell the class about the visit home in their own language e.g. where the puppet slept, what he had for breakfast and what he specially enjoyed.

16 New friends

Ask children to bring to class a favourite soft toy or puppet that they have at home. Get children to sit in a circle on the carpet and say the names of their toys in turn. Use the puppet to respond by saying *Hello ...*, naming the toys and get the rest of the class to join in. The child whose toy is named each time then holds it up and says *Hello ...!* naming the puppet. If appropriate, children can also get their toys to tell the class puppet something about themselves e.g. *(I'm) brown. / (I'm a) teddy bear. / I like apples.*

17 Follow my leader

Get the children to make a line behind you. Hold up the puppet as the 'leader'. Give instructions e.g. *Jump! One ... two ... three!* and do the actions with the puppet. Children follow copying everything you and the puppet do.

18 Keeping the puppet to hand

When you are not using the puppet, put it somewhere in the classroom where he can be seen by all the children. Involve the puppet in activities from time to time by saying e.g. *Let's sing the song again for ...!* / *Let's show ... we know the colours!* / *Let's count again so ... can check we're right!* etc.. You can also use the presence of the puppet to manage the class e.g. *Ssh! ... can't hear the story!* and to praise the children e.g. by pretending he's whispering to you and then telling the children what the puppet says e.g. *... thinks that's very good!*

19 Demonstrating what to do

Use the puppet from time to time to demonstrate instructions e.g. *Colour / Draw / Point to / Find this page* etc..

20 Guess what's in the puppet's bag

Put several different toys or flashcards in a bag. Make the puppet hold up the bag in front of the children. Children take turns to guess what's in the bag and the puppet nods or shakes his head and says *Yes* or *No*. Whenever the puppet says *Yes* he takes the relevant toy or flashcard out of the bag and shows it to the children.

Note: The above ideas are compiled and adapted from Read C. & Soberón A. *Hello Robby Rabbit 1 & 2* Teachers' Books, Macmillan Education.