



Deborah Meader Papers

Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.

Submitted by
Deborah Meader
748 Goodrich Avenue
St. Paul, Minn.

PUPPETS SOLVE PATTY'S PROBLEM
By Deborah Meader

Mrs. Wentworth was worried about her daughter Patricia, aged ten, who was unhappy and lacked interest in school and her playmates. She spent too much time alone, reading. The doctor could find nothing wrong with her physically excepting that she was a little overweight. She was not pretty but had a good mind. Her personality seemed submerged when she was in a group. No preferements came her way. She accepted stoically the fact that she was never selected for parts in plays in programs. She was too shy to take the initiative.

The situation was aggravated by the fact that her next door neighbor, Lucille Graham, was of the opposite type. Lucille always managed to be chosen to speak pieces and play parts, whereas Patty received no special attention from the teacher, either of praise or blame.

Tomorrow Patty would go reluctantly to Sunday School. Mrs. Wentworth sighed. What could she do to help her shy little daughter. If only she could be placed in a situation which would arouse such interest that she would forget her self-consciousness long enough to demonstrate her native ability, her success might give her the self confidence she so sadly lacked.

Patty returned from Sunday School. She couldn't tell her mother the good news fast enough. "We had a wonderful time today, mother. What do you think? We are going to give Bible Stories with puppets. We all put them on our hands and they are so easy to manage. I can make them talk just as well as any one in the class. I did just as the teacher told me and she said I held my puppet just right. They look like real little people when they are in the theatre. The theatre has footlights and velvet curtains and everything. We are going to give 'Moses in the Bulrushes' and mother, the teacher said I could be the Princess. When I held her in the theatre, I wasn't at all scared because I was behind the backdrop.

"Lucille kept poking her head in front of the backdrop all the time or out around the side when the teacher told her to keep her eyes on the puppet and make it talk. She wanted to be the Princess but the teacher gave the part to me. The teacher said I made her talk just like a Princess and, mother, I felt like one, even if I am fat. Besides they can't see me. O! it is such fun! We will go Saturday mornings to make the properties and paint the backdrops but we'll practice on Sunday mornings. Here is my part. I know half of it already."

Mrs. Wentworth felt an ineffable relief. Perhaps here was the solution. Yet--puppets in the Sunday School! Puppets brought up visions of the rascally Mr. Punch and his shrewish wife, Judy. Surely they had no part in a church. She decided to talk it over with the minister.

Patty returned from Sunday School. She couldn't tell her mother the good news fast enough. "We had a wonderful time today, mother. What do you think? We are going to give Bible Stories with puppets. We all put them on our hands and they are so easy to manage. I can make them talk just as well as any one in the class. I did just as the teacher told me and she said I held my puppet just right. They look like real little people when they are in the theatre. The theatre has footlights and velvet curtains and everything. We are going to give 'Moses in the Bulrushes' and mother, the teacher said I could be the Princess. When I held her in the theatre, I wasn't at all scared because I was behind the backdrop.

"Lucille kept poking her head in front of the backdrop all the time or out around the side when the teacher told her to keep her eyes on the puppet and make it talk. She wanted to be the Princess but the teacher gave the part to me. The teacher said I made her talk just like a Princess and, mother, I felt like one, even if I am fat. Besides they can't see me. O! it is such fun! We will go Saturday mornings to make the properties and paint the backdrops but we'll practice on Sunday mornings. Here is my part. I know half of it already."

Mrs. Wentworth felt an ineffable relief. Perhaps here was the solution. Yet--puppets in the Sunday School! Puppets brought up visions of the rascally Mr. Punch and his shrewish wife, Judy. Surely they had no part in a church. She decided to talk it over with the minister.

From him she learned that the use of puppets in connection with religious teaching has a long history behind it. The recent decision of her church to make puppetry an integral part of its program of religious education was no haphazard experiment but a deliberate and carefully planned effort to take advantage of a method, long neglected by churches but of permanent and demonstrable value.

Puppets were used originally for religious teaching. They were found in the ancient temples of Egypt, India, China and Japan. Many of the huge gold plated statues of the gods of Greece and Rome were in reality huge puppets. Their chests contained mechanisms which were operated secretly by the priests so that they could nod, shake their heads or raise their arms as the occasion demanded. For centuries grotesque shadow puppets have been used in the religious ceremonies of the people of Java.

When the early Christians were forced to find shelter in the catacombs near Rome, they preserved the incidents of the life of Christ with puppets. Later in medieval Europe, the little figures of the Christmas Crib became animated, telling the Christmas Story at first in pantomime and then with words. A certain type of puppet, those operated with strings, took the name from the beloved central figure, Mary, and are still called "marionettes" or little Marys. Later other Bible stories were given in this way.

When the Bible had not yet been translated into the language of the people few could have read it as most of the people were illiterate. It is easy to understand how much more

real the Bible stories became to the people when they were acted out by the puppet actors. They became so popular and elaborate that they were taken out to the porches of the churches so that a larger audience could be accommodated. The tendency arose to introduce slapstick comedy more and more. Judas became a comedy character, said by some to be the forerunner of that same rascal, Mr. Punch. Joan, the wife of Noah, was a shrew who objected to entering the ark. She may have become Judy, Punch's wife. At any rate the puppet plays were driven out into the highways, and market squares because they became too secular. They still clung to Biblical subjects, however, giving the miracle plays.

*** **

The following account is the personal experience of the writer who has been for the past six years guiding a puppet project with a new class every eight weeks. The school year is divided into four terms of eight weeks each. In this time the classes assigned write the play, paint the backdrops, make and dress the puppets, make the properties and give the performance to the assembled Sunday School at the close of a term on a Sunday morning during the class period of the Sunday School.

Hand puppets rather than string marionettes are used because they are so much easier to make and manipulate. By hand puppets we do not mean those of the Punch and Judy variety, grotesque and operated above the head which led to confining their activities to slapstick comedy. The writer had devised

a new method of operating them directly before the face in view of the puppeteer through a semi-transparent backdrop. This widened their scope to include Bible plays produced reverently and seriously. The scene may be set with the required furniture or properties, firmly held in position by means of a stage slot into which extensions may be slipped. Previously stage settings had been considered possible only in a marionette theatre. Greater control of the puppet is gained by providing it with a pad attached to the neck which may be grasped by the second and third fingers. When the puppets are made in approximate proportion to the size of the puppeteer's hand, so that its head is not out of proportion to its arms - the fingers of puppeteer - subtle motions of the head and arms give a true illusion of life.

The children come voluntarily on Saturday mornings to go on with work they have started, becoming so interested that both boys and girls are willing to forego their usual Saturday morning activities at home to come to the puppet room during this period. The main part of the work, however, is done in the class period on Sunday morning. No difference has been discovered in the interest shown between boys' and girls' classes or in the age level of the groups. They are all universally interested. If the most enthusiastic group was selected, so far, it would be that of sixteen Junior High School boys.

The classes have varied in size from six to sixteen. The project must be planned according to the number in the class. Much time is saved if there is an assistant so that there can be

a new method of operating them directly before the face in view of the puppeteer through a semi-transparent backdrop. This widened their scope to include Bible plays produced reverently and seriously. The scene may be set with the required furniture or properties, firmly held in position by means of a stage slot into which extensions may be slipped. Previously stage settings had been considered possible only in a marionette theatre. Greater control of the puppet is gained by providing it with a pad attached to the neck which may be grasped by the second and third fingers. When the puppets are made in approximate proportion to the size of the puppeteer's hand, so that its head is not out of proportion to its arms - the fingers of puppeteer - subtle motions of the head and arms give a true illusion of life.

The children come voluntarily on Saturday mornings to go on with work they have started, becoming so interested that both boys and girls are willing to forego their usual Saturday morning activities at home to come to the puppet room during this period. The main part of the work, however, is done in the class period on Sunday morning. No difference has been discovered in the interest shown between boys' and girls' classes or in the age level of the groups. They are all universally interested. If the most enthusiastic group was selected, so far, it would be that of sixteen Junior High School boys.

The classes have varied in size from six to sixteen. The project must be planned according to the number in the class. Much time is saved if there is an assistant so that there can be

a division of the group at times. Larger groups can be taken care of with an additional assistant, extra space and careful organization. High School students with artistic or dramatic training are helpful, also boys who are adept with tools.

The children first write the play. To do this they must reread the selected Bible Story from a new view-point. They must learn the theme, the characters, where the action takes place, what the people do, and the ethical teaching. Each class is wholly attentive because they are interested. There is never a cause for discipline to be considered. Because they are interested, they learn readily and retain what they learn.

Next the work on the puppets, the backdrops and the properties is divided among the members of the class according to their inclination and ability. Because of the variety of activities, there is always one fitted to the interest of each child. When a class is working happily on a joint task, which they really enjoy, each is completely off his guard and the teacher comes to know them as individuals, their strength and their weaknesses. Then if skillful, she can do real character building.

It is important to get the puppets ready for rehearsal as soon as possible. We have used both commercial heads and those made from cloth. For a first project, it is important to have the puppets ready to show, especially if hand puppets are unfamiliar. It is unusual to find children able to make a head that is satisfactory to themselves. We try to avoid the

grotesque and this is hardly possible when heads are made by children. If a child labors unsuccessfully at the beginning, his enthusiasm ebbs and the whole project is handicapped. We let them paint the features.

We try to begin rehearsing the third or fourth Sunday, even though we begin without the puppets, properties, or backdrops. This demonstrates our need of them and stimulates those working on them to hurry them to completion. The parts can be taken by the children themselves without the puppets at first. In this way they become familiar with the lines and action. It is thrilling when at last puppets and all are ready for use.

The semi-transparent drop has an important function, besides that of acting as scenery. By protecting the children from the sight of the audience, it frees them from self consciousness. Their attention and that of the audience is on the puppet. This lack of self-consciousness heightens their enjoyment and allows them to give their best effort to production. It also puts the child seeking the spotlight in the shadow.

One interesting difference between a puppet play and a drama is in the casting of the characters. Personal appearance has nothing to do with the assignment of the parts. The only qualifications are: that the pitch of the voice be appropriate to the part played; that the enunciation be clear; that the lines be spoken with understanding; that the time and attention necessary be given to the manipulation of the puppet; that there be a willingness to take suggestion. All this may be

achieved through personal effort. Patty can play the part of Pharaoh's Daughter. For once, she need not be tall, dark and stately. All that is necessary is that she project the spirit of Pharaoh's Daughter into the little figure on her hand and make it live. This gives an unusual opportunity to children who are excessively shy or handicapped. It is very gratifying to watch the growing self-confidence of the members of a class. Here they find a situation that they can master. Perhaps they, like Patty, are taking part in a dramatic production for the first time. There is no telling how far reaching the results of this new self confidence may be.

Little puppet characters are more real to the child audience (and to some adults) than if real people took the parts. Puppets are so impersonal that fertile imaginations can fill in all the details, using the puppets only as pegs on which to hang their own conception of what the characters are really like.

Surely learning and speaking great passages of literature has value. In such a puppet project, the teacher and children adventure together in literature, art, handicraft, and teamwork, portraying spiritual teaching. When the pupils are privileged to exhibit the result of their work, they are happy in the general approval. They always rise nobly to the occasion, taking the utmost responsibility for their own part in it, as well as for the production as a whole. They give a better performance in public than ever at rehearsal. They seem to absorb whatever of religious import the teacher has been wise enough to impart. This is religious education.

*** **

omit while he is completely hidden from the audience. This position for the hands is ~~easy and comfortable~~ and allows small and subtle gestures to be used, so that there is no suggestion of the grotesque and a serious religious atmosphere can be maintained. *omit*

The semi-transparent drop has ^{an} another important function. ~~besides that of acting as scenery.~~ By protecting the children from the sight of the audience, it frees them from self consciousness. Their attention and that of the audience is on the puppet. This lack of self-consciousness heightens their enjoyment and allows them to give their best effort to production. It also puts the child seeking the spotlight in the shadow.

One interesting difference between a puppet play and a drama is in the casting of the characters. Personal appearance has nothing to do with the assignment of the parts. The only qualifications are: that the pitch of the voice be appropriate to the part played; that the enunciation be clear; that the lines be spoken with understanding; that the time and attention necessary be given to the manipulation of the puppet; that there be a willingness to take suggestion. All this may be achieved through personal effort. Patty can play the part of Pharaoh's Daughter. For once, she need not be tall, dark and stately. All that is necessary is that she project the spirit of Pharaoh's Daughter into the little figure on her hand and make it live. This gives an unusual opportunity to children who are excessively shy or handicapped. It is very gratifying to watch the growing self-confidence of the members

of a class. Here they find a situation that they can master. Perhaps they, like Patty, are taking part in a dramatic production for the first time. There is no telling how far reaching the results of this new self confidence may be.

Little puppet characters are more real to the child audience (and to some adults) than if real people took the parts. Puppets are so impersonal that fertile imaginations can fill in all the details, using the puppets only as pegs on which to hang their own conception of what the characters are really like.

Surely learning and speaking great passages of literature has value. In such a puppet project, the teacher and children adventure together in literature, art, handicraft, and teamwork, portraying spiritual teaching. When the pupils are privileged to exhibit the result of their work, they are happy in the general approval. They always rise nobly to the occasion, taking the utmost responsibility for their own part in it, as well as for the production as a whole. They give a better performance in public than ever at rehearsal. They seem to absorb whatever of religious import the teacher has been wise enough to impart. This is religious education.

Moses in the Bulrushes

A puppet play in one scene, given by sixth grade girls.

Characters: Mother of Moses
Miriam
Pharaoh's Daughter
Attendant
Slave

Mrs. Wentworth and Patricia had just returned from the Child Guidance Clinic. Patty was tired and more sullen than usual. Her mother was tired, discouraged and mentally dangling in mid-air. The physiatrist had prescribed new interests, through which to build up Patty's self-confidence, the lack of which caused her to be unhappy and sullen. "But how, Doctor? What shall I do?" He had then become vague and the interview was soon ended.

Mrs. Wentworth's own judgment confirmed the doctor's diagnosis. But how was she to effect the remedy? Patty's experiences at school all seemed to contribute to the trouble. She was not pretty, although she was plump and sturdy and her features would come out all right, but in a large class she was submerged. No preferments came her way. She was too shy to take the initiative and was never selected for parts in plays and programs. The situation was aggravated by the fact that her special friend, Lucille Graham was of the opposite type. Lucille was always chosen to speak pieces and take parts. Would there be any gain in talking the situation over with the teacher, or would the teacher think her over-anxious. She would do this only as a last resort.

Dancing classes had been tried. Patty was too heavy on her feet to achieve distinction but just good enough to get no individual attention from the teacher, either of praise or blame.

Tomorrow would be Sunday. She would have one day's respite.

4. *double* *209 subway* ①
Mrs Wentworth and Patricia had just returned from the Child Guidance Clinic. Patty was tired and more sullen than usual. Her mother was tired, discouraged and mentally dangling in mid-air. The physician had prescribed new interests, through which to build up Patty's self-confidence, the lack of which caused her to be unhappy and sullen. "But how, Doctor? What shall I do?" He had then become vague and the interview was soon ended.

Mrs. Wentworth's own judgement confirmed the doctor's diagnosis. But how was she to effect the remedy? Patty's experiences at school all seemed to contribute to the trouble. She was not pretty, although she was plump and sturdy and her features would come out all right, but in a large class she was submerged. No preferments came her way. She was too shy to take the initiative and was never selected for parts in plays and programs. The situation was aggravated by the fact that her special friend, Lucille Graham was of the opposite type. Lucille was always chosen to speak pieces and take parts. Would there be any gain in talking the situation over with the teacher or would the teacher think her over-anxious. She would do this only as a last resort.

Dancing classes had been tried. Patty was too heavy on her feet to achieve distinction but just good enough to get no individual attention from the teacher, either of praise or blame.

Tomorrow would be Sunday. She would have one day's respite.

Patty went to Sunday School as usual. She returned radiant. She couldn't tell her mother fast enough the good news. "We are going to give Bible Stories with Puppets, mother. We all put them on our hands and they are so easy to manage. I can make them talk just as well as any one in the class. ~~She~~ I did just as the teacher told me and she said I held it just right. The puppets look just like real little people when they are in the theatre, ~~and~~ *the teacher* has footlights and velvet curtains and everything. We are going to give "Moses in the Bulrushes" and mother, the teacher said I could be the Princess. When I held her in the theatre, I wasn't at all scared because I was behind the backdrop.

"How lovely, dear."

"Lucille kept poking her head in front of the backdrop all the time or out around the side when the teacher told her to keep her eyes on the puppet and make it talk. She wanted to be the Princess but the teacher gave her part to me. The teacher said I made her talk just like a Princess and, mother, I felt like one, even if I am fat. Besides they can't see me. O! it is such fun! We go on Saturday mornings to make the properties and paint the back-drops but we'll practice on Sunday mornings. Here is my part. I know half of it already."

Patty went to Sunday School as usual. She returned radiant. She couldn't tell her mother fast enough the good news. "We are going to give Bible Stories with puppets, mother. We all put them on our hands and they are so easy to manage. I can make them talk just as well as any one in the class. I did just as the teacher told me and she said I held it just right. The puppets look just like real little people when they are in the theatre. The theatre has footlights and velvet curtains and everything. We are going to give "Moses in the Bulrushes" and mother, the teacher said I could be the Princess. When I held her in the theatre, I wasn't at all scared because I was behind the backdrop.

"Lucille kept poking her head in front of the backdrop all the time or out around the side when the teacher told her to keep her eyes on the puppet and make it talk. She wanted to be the Princess but the teacher gave her part to me. The teacher said I made her talk just like a Princess and, mother, I felt like one, even if I am fat. Besides they can't see me. O! it is such fun! We go on Saturday mornings to make the properties and paint the backdrops but we'll practice on Sunday mornings. Here is my part. I know half of it already."

Mrs. Wentworth felt an ineffable relief. Perhaps here was the solution. Yet--puppets in the Sunday School! Puppets brought up visions of the rascally Mr. Punch and his shrewish wife, Judy. Surely they had no part in a church. She decided to talk it over with the minister.

From him she learned that the use of puppets in connection with religious teaching has a long history behind it as well as a sound psychological basis. The recent decision of her church to make puppetry an integral part of its program of religious education was no haphazard experiment but a deliberate and carefully planned effort to take advantage of a method, long neglected by churches but of permanent and demonstrable value.

Puppets were used originally for religious teaching. They were found in the ancient temples of Egypt, India, China and Japan. The huge gold plated statues of the gods of Greece and Rome were in reality huge puppets. Their chests contained mechanisms which were operated secretly by the priests so that they could nod, shake their heads or raise their arms as the occasion demanded. For centuries grotesque shadow puppets have been used in the religious ceremonies of the people of Java.

When the early Christians were forced to find shelter in the catacombs near Rome, they preserved the incidents of the life of Christ with puppets. Later in medieval Europe, the little figures of the Christmas Crib became animated, telling the Christmas Story at first in pantomime and then with words. A certain type of puppet, those operated with strings, took the name from the beloved central figure, Mary, and are still called "marionettes" or little Marys. Later other Bible stories were given in this way.

The Bible had not yet been translated into the language of the people but had it been, few could have read it as most of the people were illiterate. It is easy to understand how much more real the Bible stories became to the people when they were acted out by the puppet actors. They became so popular and elaborate that they were taken out to the porches of the churches so that a larger audience could be accommodated. The tendency was to introduce, more and more, slapstick comedy. Pontius Pilate was always a comedy character, said by some to be the forerunner of that same rascal, Mr. Punch. Joan, the wife of Noah, was a shrew who objected to entering the ark. She may have become Judy, Punch's wife. At any rate the puppet plays were driven out into the highways, and market squares because they became too secular. They still clung to Biblical subjects, however, giving the miracle plays.

The following account is the personal experience of the writer who has been for the past three years guiding a puppet project with a new class every eight weeks. In this time the classes assigned write the play, paint and dress the puppets, make the properties and give the performance to the assembled Sunday School on a Sunday morning during the class period of the Sunday School.

Hand puppets are used entirely rather than marionettes because they are so much easier to operate; they are easier to make and dress; they are more lifelike than marionettes

operated by strings, when manipulated in line with the face of the operator, instead of above his head; the miniature theatre is easier to construct and occupies less space in use and in storage.

The children come voluntarily on Saturday mornings to go on with work they have started, becoming so interested that both boys and girls are willing to forego the usual Saturday morning activities at home to come to the puppet room during this period. The main part of the work, however, is done in the class period on Sunday morning. No difference has been discovered in the interest shown between boys' and girls' classes or in the age level of the groups. They are all universally interested. If the most enthusiastic group was selected, so far, it would be that of sixteen Junior High School boys.

To understand the method we have used, a detailed account will be given of a number of the plays we have used, not because they are perfect examples of dramatic composition, but because they have actually been used and many of them have been written by the children. Subsequent articles will describe in sufficient detail to enable one wishing to take advantage of our experience, how we write the play, the costuming, the properties, the backdrops, the materials needed, the cost, and a method for making the heads.

These classes have varied in size from six to sixteen. The project must be planned according to the number in the class. Much time is saved if there is an assistant so that

there can be a division of the group at times. Larger groups can be taken care of with an additional assistant, extra space and careful organization. High School students with artistic or dramatic training are helpful, also boys who are adept with tools.

The children first write the play. To do this they must reread the selected Bible Story from a new view-point. They must learn the theme, the characters, where the action takes place, what the people do, and the ethical teaching. Each class is wholly attentive because they are interested. There is never a cause for discipline to be considered. Because they are interested, they learn readily and retain what they learn.

Next the work on the puppets, the backdrops and the properties is divided among the members of the class according to their inclination and ability. Because of the variety of activities, there is always one fitted to the interest of each child. When a class is working happily on a joint task which they really enjoy, each is completely off his guard and the teacher comes to know them as individuals, their strength and their weaknesses. Then if skillful, she can do real character building.

It is important to get the puppets ready for rehearsal as soon as possible. We have not attempted to make the heads but have used commercial ones that have proved satisfactory. If the heads are made of cloth or paper-mache', they should be made outside the regular class period by the

teacher. For a first project, it is important to have the puppets ready to show, especially if hand puppets are unfamiliar. It is unusual to find children able to make a head that is satisfactory to themselves. We try to avoid the grotesque and this is hardly possible when heads are made by children. If a child labors unsuccessfully at the beginning, his enthusiasm ebbs and the whole project is handicapped. I do however, let them paint the complexion, hair, the eyes, and mouth, if they can.

We try to begin rehearsing the third or fourth Sunday, even though we begin without the puppets, properties, or backdrops. This demonstrates our need of them and stimulates those working on them to hurry them to completion. The parts can be taken by the children themselves without the puppets at first. In this way they become familiar with the lines and action. It is thrilling when at last puppets and all are ready for use.

The old method of operating hand puppets above the head to reach up to the theatre opening is most uncomfortable. Our belief is, that this position accounts for the almost universal leaning to slapstick type of comedy for handpuppets. This was the only type of play that could be given well in this manner. The dainty, whimsical or serious plays were done by marionettes. We operate hand puppets directly in front of the puppeteer's face, hidden behind the semi-transparent backdrop. When the footlights are on, or the theatre is placed facing windows, the puppets in action can be seen by the operator

while he is completely hidden from the audience. This position for the hands is easy and comfortable and allows small and subtle gestures to be used, so that there is no suggestion of the grotesque and a serious religious atmosphere can be maintained.

The semi-transparent drop has another important function. By protecting the children from the sight of the audience, it frees them from self consciousness. Their attention and that of the audience is on the puppet. This lack of self-consciousness heightens their enjoyment and allows them to give their best effort to production. It also puts the child seeking the spotlight in the shadow.

One interesting difference between a puppet play and a drama is in the casting of the characters. Personal appearance has nothing to do with the assignment of the parts. The only qualifications are: that the pitch of the voice be appropriate to the part played; that the enunciation be clear; that the lines be spoken with understanding; that the time and attention necessary be given to the manipulation of the puppet; that there be a willingness to take suggestion. All this may be achieved through personal effort. Patty can play the part of Pharaoh's Daughter. For once, she need not be tall, dark and stately. All that is necessary is that she project the spirit of Pharaoh's Daughter into the little figure on her hand and make it live. This gives an unusual opportunity to children who are excessively shy or handicapped. It is very gratifying to watch the growing self-confidence of the members

of a class. Here they find a situation that they can master. Perhaps they, like Patty, are taking part in a dramatic production for the first time. There is no telling how far reaching the results of this new self confidence may be.

Little puppet characters are more real to the child audience (and to some adults) than if real people took the parts. Puppets are so impersonal that fertile imaginations can fill in all the details, using the puppets only as pegs on which to hang their own conception of what the characters are really like.

Surely learning and speaking great passages of literature has value. In such a puppet project, the teacher and children adventure together in literature, art, handicraft, and teamwork, portraying spiritual teaching. When the pupils are privileged to exhibit the result of their work, they are happy in the general approval. They always rise nobly to the occasion, taking the utmost responsibility for their own part in it, as well as for the production as a whole. They give a better performance in public than ever at rehearsal. They seem to absorb whatever of religious import the teacher has been wise enough to impart. This is religious education.

Moses in the Bulrushes

A puppet play in one scene, given by sixth grade girls.

Characters: Mother of Moses
Miriam
Pharaoh's Daughter
Attendant
Slave

Place: By a Pool near Pharaoh's Palace

When the curtain is drawn Miriam, carrying a wicker basket, smeared with clay, enters followed by her mother, carrying Moses.

Miriam: (looking at the baby) Oh Mother! How can we give him up?

Mother: We could not, little daughter, were it not to save his life.

Miriam: Couldn't we even keep him a month longer?

Mother: You know we cannot. Only yesterday he cried so loudly that an Egyptian, passing by looked at the house with suspicion.

Miriam: I know, and our neighbor, Sarah, told me she heard something like a baby's cry coming from our house.

Mother: Isn't he beautiful? (looks at baby)

Miriam: How could anyone be so cruel as to want to kill a baby?

Mother: Pharaoh is afraid of the Hebrews. He thinks that if he kills the boy babies, they can never grow up to fight him. He forgets Joseph and how he saved all the land of Egypt from famine.

Miriam: I wonder what his daughter, the Princess thinks, thinks of his law. How would he feel, if someone killed her?

Mother: He loves her above everything else I have heard, and no wonder. I hear she is very beautiful and very kind. All her maids love her. If only she would find our baby!

Miriam: Mother, you don't mean, that is why you came so near

to Pharoah's palace!

Mother: Yes, that is why. I feel as though Jehovah is guiding me. This is where the Princess comes to bathe. What if she should find him!

Miriam: She couldn't help but love him.

Mother: She alone could protect him from Pharoah. But we must leave him now or someone will hear us. Bring the basket here.

Miriam: (Pulls basket to the center of the stage) Do you think it will really keep out the water?

Mother: I think so. We smeared the clay on very thickly.
(Lays Moses in the basket very carefully)

Miriam: (Bending over the baby) He loves it. (To the baby) Do you like your fine new bed?

Mother: Little darling! (rises and turns away) How fortunate he does not understand!

Miriam: (Rises and looks off left) Mother I think I hear someone coming.

Mother: We must hide the basket here in the bulrushes.
(pushes the basket behind the curtain at right)

Miriam: (looking off-stage) It is the Princess and her Maid.

Mother: Hide nearby and see what happens.

Miriam: Quick. They must not see us.

Exit both at right

Enter Princess, attendant and slave at left.

Princess: How hot it is today!

Attendant: The water will be cool here.

Princess: Yes, that is why I like this spot. It is shady and the pool is deep.

Attendant: (Stooping to feel the water) It is cool. (baby cries) (attendant starts up) What is that?

Princess: It sounded like a baby's cry. Where could it have come from?

Attendant: I think it came from the rushes. (Goes to the left) There is a basket here.

Princess: Bring the basket here.

Attendant: (pulls basket to center of stage) It is a baby.

Princess: It is and what a beautiful one! (Baby continues crying. Princess bends over the basket and pats the baby) There, there, pretty one. Don't cry. (turns to attendant) See he grasps my finger!

Attendant: Why! He is smiling at you.

Princess: (rises) How could it happen that a baby should be here?

Attendant: It is probably one of the Hebrew children. You know, Pharoah has ordered all the Hebrew boy babies killed.

Princess: (thoughtfully) Yes I know. His mother could keep him at home no longer; but no one shall kill this beautiful baby.

Attendant: What will you do?

Princess: Am I not Pharoah's Daughter! I will keep him. I will adopt him.

Attendant: What if Pharoah finds out?

Princess: He can refuse me nothing. (leans over baby) How old do you think he is?

Attendant: About four months old, I should think. (bends over baby)

Princess: I know nothing about babies, do you? Have you ever cared for one?

Attendant: No, I never have.

Princess: We must have a nurse.

(Miriam enters timidly and falls on her knees before the Princess)

Who are you, my child?

Miriam: I am Miriam, the daughter of Amram, the Hebrew. I heard you say that you needed a nurse. Shall I call a Hebrew woman for you?

Princess: Yes, do. Bring her to us quickly. (Miriam runs out) It will be wonderful to have a baby to watch and love.

Attendant: What shall you name him?

Princess: Let me think. I will call him Moses, because we drew him out of the water.

(enter Miriam and the Mother of Moses, who falls on knees before the Princess. Miriam stands behind)

Is this the woman?

Miriam: It is, Princess.

Princess: (To mother) Will you care for this child for me?

Mother: I will, Princess. You cannot imagine how happy it will make me.

Princess: Take him then and nurse him and I will pay you your wages. Follow me to the palace. (To attendant) Come we will not bathe today.

Exit Princess, attendant and slave.

Miriam: (runs to baby) He is safe.

Mother: Yes, Jehovah has saved him. Go tell your father that all is well.

Curtain

Suggestions

Mother of Moses---See Fig. 1. Her garment is very simple, consisting of basic dress of blue satine with a drape of flowered chiffon in a small figure. The same was used for a head dress. The mother is held on the left hand of the operator, standing at the left. As she must enter at the right, the body of the operator must be turned at right angles to the theatre, facing left. Her voice is rather deep. Her manner and gestures are slow and sad but full of sweetness and resignation.

She is holding Moses when she enters. If Moses is held in her left arm, or by the little finger, helped by the third finger that would be usually grasping the pad, it leaves her right hand, being the thumb of the operator, free to gesture.

Miriam---see Fig. 2. The basic dress is of white with a rose silk drape and head dress. She has a high pitched voice. Her motions are quick and impulsive. She is most loving and solicitous for her little brother. She is held on the right hand of the operator.

Moses---see Fig. 3. He is represented by a small doll wrapped in swaddling clothes of twilled tape.

Princess---see Fig. 4. Basic dress of silver cloth. Head dress of the same, ornamented with green jewel buttons. The drape is of green chiffon. She has a deep voice and speaks slowly and haughtily, but graciously. She is held on the left hand of the operator.

Attendant---see Fig. 5. She wears a lavender basic dress with a drape of small figured chiffon and a head dress of the same and brass ear rings made of small curtain rings. Held on the right hand of operator.

Slave---see Fig. 6. Wears a white basic dress with a tunic (sleeveless) of a gaudy yellow and black print. She is held on the left hand and keeps her position behind the Princess, toward the backdrop and slowly waves fan over the Princess.

Basket---see Fig. 7. Small reed basket, covered with modeling clay. It contains a little pad and blanket for Moses to lie upon. (The little girls in this class took especial interest in wrapping Moses in his swaddling clothes and in fitting up his basket)

Fan---see Fig. 8. One of the children brought a small perforated celluloid fan into which we stuck the quills of small white chicken feathers. We wired the fan to a skewer and the other end of the skewer to the hand of the slave, first making a small groove in the stick to hold the wire.

Backdrop---see Fig. 9. We found a picture showing Moses in the Bulrushes that had a background simple enough to be copied. It contained a pool and rushes at the right. We painted it on tan cambric with show card colors. We painted on the glazed side.

General Suggestions. It is well to keep the puppets toward the center of the stage. After the Mother and Miriam enter they should have a position as in Fig. 10. They exit at right. When the Princess and her Attendant and slave enter they come in at the left. The attendant should enter behind the Princess but nearer to the backdrop. The slave is directly behind the Princess. When the Attendant tests the pool, she goes to the right of the Princess and then is in position to get the basket. See Fig. 11. When Miriam and her Mother enter at the last, the Mother may be changed to the operator's right hand. Miriam is also on the right hand. At the end they take the positions shown in Fig. 12 and Fig. 13.