

# The Elves and the Shoemaker Study Guide

## Objectives

*The Elves and the Shoemaker* is based on the classic Grimm's Fairy Tale. It's a great story for children of many ages. By using this study guide as either a **parent or a teacher**, your students or children will read or listen to the original story of *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, discuss important themes and ideas in the story, solve math problems that relate to the story, as well as learn about the puppets used in the production and make their own. This show is best suited for children in Kindergarten and up.

## Arizona Common Core Curriculum

### Speaking and Listening, and Reading Literature, Standards:

#### *All from Discussion Topics for After the Show*

K.SL.2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

1.SL.2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

2.SL.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

K.RL.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

1.RL.1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

K.RL.3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

### Operations and Algebraic Thinking – Math in the Story

K.OA.A.2. Solve addition and subtraction word problems, and add and subtract within 10, e.g., by using objects or drawings to represent the problem.

K.MP.1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

1.OA.A.1. Use addition and subtraction within 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problems.

2.OA.A.1. Use addition and subtraction within 100 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problems.

### Beginning Theatre Arts Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 2

3.2.PO 101. Demonstrate respectful **audience** behavior. (*Attending the puppet show.*)

3.2.PO 103. Identify and describe the **characters, environment**, and story elements in a variety or written and performed **events**. (*Discussion Topics for after the show.*)

3.2.PO 104. Justify the perception of a performance and critique its production elements. (*Discussion Topics for after the show.*)

1.4.PO 102. Retell a story including its **theme, setting**, storyline, **plot**, and physical descriptions of the **characters**. (*Make a rod puppet and retell the story.*)

## Tell the Story

**Objectives:** Before or after seeing the puppet show, consider telling the original story of The Elves and the Shoemaker to your students. Below you will find the original short story by the Grimm's Brothers. After the story you will also find discussion questions for afterward.

### The Elves

A shoemaker, by no fault of his own had become so poor that at last he had nothing left but enough leather for one pair of shoes. At evening he cut out the shoes which he intended to begin upon the next morning, and since he had a good conscience, he lay down quietly, said his prayers, and fell asleep.

In the morning when he had said his prayers, and was preparing to sit down to work, he found the pair of shoes standing finished on his table. He was amazed, and could not understand it in the least.

He took the shoes in his hand to examine them more closely. They were so neatly sewn that not a stitch was out of place, and were as good as the work of a master-hand.

Soon after a purchaser came in, and as he was much pleased with the shoes, he paid more than the ordinary price for them, so that the Shoemaker was able to buy leather for two pairs of shoes with the money.

He cut them out in the evening, and next day, with fresh courage, was about to go to work; but he had no need to, for when he got up, the shoes were finished, and buyers were not lacking. These gave him so much money that he was able to buy leather for four pairs of shoes.



Early next morning he found the four pairs finished, and so it went on; what he cut out at evening was finished in the morning, so that he was soon again in comfortable circumstances, and became a well-to-do man.

Now it happened one evening, not long before Christmas, when he had cut out some shoes as usual, that he said to his Wife, "How would it be if we were to sit up tonight to see who it is that lends us such a helping hand?"

The Wife agreed, lighted a candle, and they hid themselves in the corner of the room behind the clothes which were hanging there.

At midnight came two little naked men who sat down at the Shoemaker's table, took up the cut-outwork, and began with their tiny fingers to stitch, sew, and hammer so neatly and quickly, that the Shoemaker could not believe his eyes. They did not stop till everything was quite finished, and stood complete on the table; then they ran swiftly away.

The next day the Wife said, "The little men have made us rich, and we ought to show our gratitude. They were running about with nothing on, and must freeze with cold. Now I will make them little shirts, coats, waistcoats, and hose, and will even knit them a pair of stockings, and you shall make them each a pair of shoes."

The Husband agreed, and at evening, when they had everything ready, they laid out presents on the table, and hid themselves to see how the little men would behave.

At midnight they came skipping in, and were about to set to work; but, instead of the leather ready cut out, they found the charming little clothes.

At first they were surprised, then excessively delighted. With the greatest speed they put on and smoothed down the pretty clothes, singing:

Now we're boys so fine and neat,  
Why cobble more for other's feet?

Then they hopped and danced about, and leapt over chairs and tables and out the door. Henceforward, they came back no more, but the Shoemaker fared well as long as he lived, and had good luck in all his undertakings.

## Vocabulary

**Objective:** The following words and expressions come up in the puppet show as well as the story above. Go over them with your students before and/or after seeing the show and reading the story.

Cobbler	Sew
Stitches	Britches
In stock	Shoemaker
Leather	Elf/Elves
Charity/Charitable	Purchaser
Pair	Gratitude
Henceforward	Fared well

## Discussion Topics for After the Show

**Objectives:** By asking questions about *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, the themes, plot line, and knowledge of the characters will be reinforced for the students. Consider asking some or all of the following questions after seeing the puppet show:

- In drama and in storytelling, we often speak of there being a main character in the story, someone that the story focuses on. Who was the main character in this story? What problem did he have? How was it solved?

- What characters were in the show? Did any of them remind you of anyone you know? Who and in what ways?
- How is a puppet play different from a play performed with human actors?
- How do you think the puppets performed the following actions: open the door, knock on the door, make shoes, change their clothes, carry things?
- The passage of time is important to this story. How did you know if it was day or night in the show? How do you think that was done? What are some other ways to show the passage of time?
- The Shoemaker and his Wife sing of the "spirit of charity." What is charity? Discuss giving of time, money and things that will make someone's life better.
- Who was charitable in the story?
- Why is charity a good thing?
- Have you ever helped someone or given something to someone who needed help? How did it make you feel?

*If you read the story to your students before the show, consider also asking:*

- How was the puppet show similar to the way you have heard this story before? How was it different?
- Did you like the changes made to the original story? Why or why not? Why do you think they were made?
- What did you think of the songs that they added to the story? Did they help tell the story?

## Math in the Story

**Objectives:** Asking the following questions and working with your students is a great way to make math relatable and fun, while also reinforcing curriculum and core standards. Work with your students or put them into groups to solve the following math word problems.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were the brothers who first wrote down the story about the elves and the shoemaker. Jacob Grimm was born in 1785 in Frankfurt, Germany. His brother, Wilhelm, was born in 1786. Their first volume of collected tales, titled *Nursery and Household Tales* was issued in 1812. The second volume followed in 1814.



- How old was Jacob when the first book came out?
- How old was Wilhelm when the second volume was published?
- Who was older, Jacob or Wilhelm?
- How old would Jacob be if he was alive today?
- Is that older or younger than your teacher?
- How many shoes did the elves make the first night in the puppet show?
- How many shoes did they make the next night?
- How many shoes did they make all together?

## Learn About Rod Puppets

**Objectives:** Teach students about the rod puppets used in the show as well as how the puppeteers created the “magic” in the puppet show. This is a great follow up to the discussion questions as many of the questions are answered here. Students can think about what they answered and whether they guessed right or wrong about how things were done in the show.

### Rod puppets:

Rod puppets are operated below with rods (sticks or poles). The puppets used in this show are quite old - the shoemaker’s wife, Ingrid, and the Lady in Pink were originally built for *Little Red Riding Hood* in 1976. The puppets were modeled in clay and covered with a material called celastic. The technique is similar to using papier mache. After it was dry, the head was cut in half, the clay removed, and then the head was put back together. A thin layer of wood putty was applied to the head. When it was dry, it was sanded until smooth and then painted.

The larger rod puppets have a rod for the body and a separate rod for the head. The smaller elves have one rod that goes through the body up to the head. The jaws are separate from the heads and are held in place with a stiff wire. The mouth is held closed by a piece of elastic that stretches to allow the mouth to open. The mouth string runs from the base of the head control rod through the body and up through a wire loop at the top of the head. When the string is pulled, the back of the jaw is pulled up and the mouth opens. When the puppeteer releases the string, the elastic pulls the mouth shut again. (See sketch below).

Rods on one or both arms allow the puppeteers to control the arms of the puppets. Most of the time one puppeteer operates one puppet at a time. The puppeteers stand and are hidden behind a wall during the show. A small shelf at the front of the stage, called a playboard is used for setting props (such as the shoes) in the story. The puppeteers speak and sing for their puppets as they are operating them. The puppeteers also open and close the curtain and control the light and sound cues from backstage.

## Make Your Own Rod Puppet

**Objectives:** This is a great project for students to be creative, have fun, and use their knowledge of the story. Students can make puppets just for fun, or once they’re done, they can get into groups and tell their own version of the story of *The Elves and the Shoemaker*. You can keep these puppets in your classroom to tell different stories throughout the year, or students can take them home as a special project.

### Materials:

Wooden or plastic spoon  
Paint or construction paper/markers/crayons  
Yarn or cut-up construction paper  
Glue  
Small pieces of fabric  
Scissors

**Directions:** (See the last page’s illustration of the puppet for an example.) Take a wooden or plastic spoon and paint or glue a face onto it. Glue hair (using cut-up paper or yarn) to the back of the top of the spoon. Then make your costume. The costume can be as simple as a piece or two of fabric. Cut two holes in the costume for your fingers to fit through and then decorate your costume as desired. You can use lace as trim or add shapes with glue to make your puppet unique.

# Resources

Arizona Department of Education – Core Curriculum and English Language Learners:

<http://www.azed.gov/english-language-learners/>

<http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/>

<http://www.azed.gov/azccrs/mathstandards/>

Great Arizona Puppet Theater:

<http://azpuppets.org/>

Please send any thoughts or appreciation letters to the Great Arizona Puppet Theater at:

302 W Latham St

Phoenix, AZ 85003

*We love hearing from you and your students!*

# Rod Puppet



