

Flora & Ulysses

Teacher & Family Resource Guide

About the Show

After an unexpected accident occurs, a squirrel gets sucked into a vacuum, but Flora saves the squirrel's life. Flora quickly realizes that the squirrel has changed into a... superhero because of this accident. Flora names the squirrel Ulysses, and together, they go on a wild journey, communicating in ways that are unheard of for a squirrel. Ulysses abilities allow him to become the hero that Flora did not know she needed.

About the Book Author

Kate DiCamillo, the author of the original book [Flora & Ulysses](#), was born in Philadelphia, PA, but raised in Clermont, FL. In addition to [Flora & Ulysses](#), she has written over 25 novels, including [Because of Winn Dixie](#) and [The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane](#), which were both also adapted into plays for young audiences. She views herself as a storyteller and writes for children and adults alike– “I think of myself as an enormously lucky person: I get to tell stories for a living.”

About the Playwright

John Glore, the playwright of [Flora & Ulysses](#), is an award-winning playwright who writes adaptations and original works for both young audiences and adults, such as [Wind of a Thousand Tales](#) and [On The Jump](#). For 31 years, he served as the associate artistic director at the Tony Award-winning South Coast Repertory in southern California.



Kate DiCamillo



John Glore

Big Ideas

- Follow your heart and take risks.
- Rocky relationships and repairing them.
- Keeping promises.
- Being your own hero.



Discussion Questions Before the Show

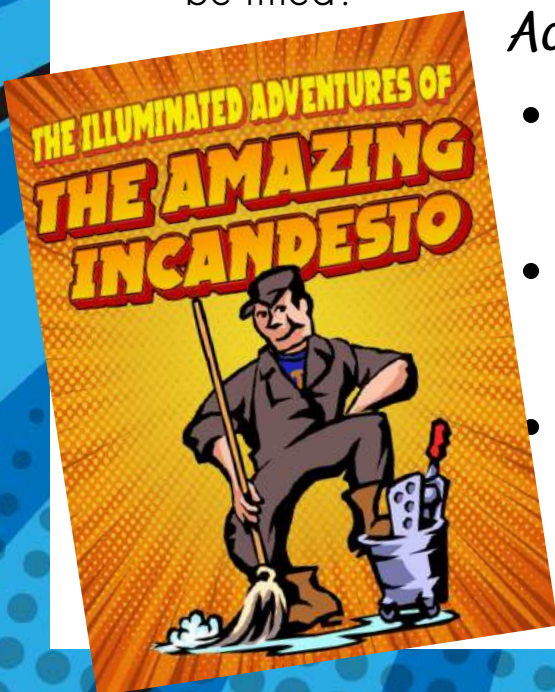
- If you could choose any superpower, what would it be? Why?
- Describe a time when you saw something unbelievable. What was it like?
- Is keeping a promise important. How would you feel if a friend broke your promise?
- If there was a comic book about your life what would happen in it? What would the comic book be titled?

Discussion Questions After the Show

- Have you ever felt like you had an archnemesis? What could/did you do to fix this?
- What superhero qualities did Ulysses have? Do you think he was the hero in this story? Why or why not?
- What risks did Flora take throughout this story? How do you think she felt before and after?

Activity Prompts

- Write a poem about your favorite things! Think back to how Ulysses uses brief words to communicate.
- Conduct a family interview! Pick a family member and interview them about a time they wished they had superpowers.
- Create your own superhero, drawing them, giving them a name, and describing their powers and who/what they are fighting against!



The Superpower within Me!

We all have things we care about that leave us unsatisfied in our lives. It could be very, very frustrating when we want to protect the people we love or make things better for ourselves. Ugh! If only I had some superpower! With superpowers, Ulysses can write poetry, express his feelings to humans, fight back the villains, and protect Flora and the people around her. By creating a comic strip, you can tell a story of how you become a superhero and use your superpowers to make this world better.

Why use comics as the form?

A way to express ourselves: Comics are an excellent way for you to talk about subjects and issues that are important to you. You can write about your favorite characters, school experiences, and family. Draw a comic about subjects you are passionate about – if you love unicorns, drones, monsters, or superheroes, you can add them into your comic!

Build confidence in storytelling: While essays can be daunting, comics are lighthearted and encourage you to create your characters and stories. Comics are a good way to build confidence in storytelling and improve your writing skills!

Learn timing and pacing: Comics break down stories into several moments. This medium asks you to think about what is happening at each moment and decide which actions are crucial to tell the story. You also have to think about the transition from one panel to the next – by creating seamless storytelling throughout the panels, you ensure readers understand what is happening.

Use it as a Reference: So many superheroes are created in comics! If you are ever short of ideas, [here](#) are some comic book recommendations for you! Make sure to ask your guardians and teachers or visit the local libraries for access. These stories might inspire you, from how a superhero is born to how you can compose your scenes.





Elements of Comics

Before starting your epic journey as a superhero, you must learn how to draw comics! Although some of you might have read a lot of comics, you might not know the elements that create a comic book.

PANELS

THE SPACES THAT CONTAIN A SINGLE SCENE, USUALLY IN THE SHAPE OF A SQUARE OR RECTANGLE.

CAPTIONS

THESE SET THE STAGE FOR READERS AND GIVES INFORMATION ABOUT CHARACTERS OR SCENES.

GUTTERS

THE SPACES BETWEEN PANELS THAT CONTAIN LITTLE GAPS IN TIME. READERS CAN IMAGINE WHAT MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN THESE "PAUSES".

SPEECH BUBBLES

THESE SHOW READERS WHAT THE CHARACTERS ARE SAYING ALOUD.

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

THE MOMENT IN STORIES OR COMICS WHEN READERS TEMPORARILY BELIEVE THAT THE IMPOSSIBLE CAN HAPPEN. WE THINK IT'S WHAT MAKES STORIES MAGIC.

THOUGHT BUBBLES

THESE SHOW READERS WHAT THE CHARACTERS ARE THINKING.

COMPOSITION

HOW PEOPLE AND OBJECTS APPEAR IN A PANEL. IT MAY ALSO REFER TO HOW PANELS ARE ARRANGED ON A PAGE.

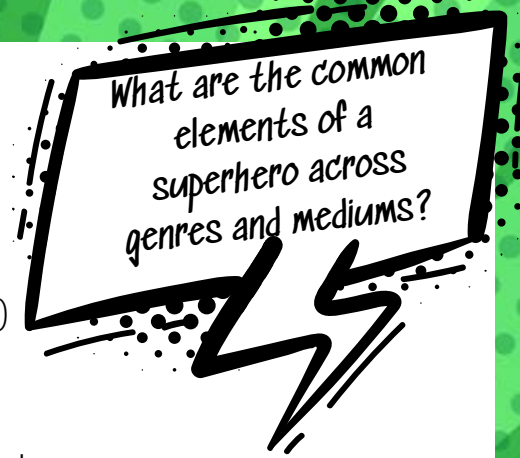
SOUND EFFECTS (SFX)

THESE USE ONOMATOPOEIA — A WORD THAT PHONETICALLY IMITATES, RESEMBLES OR SUGGESTS THE SOUND THAT IT DESCRIBES. SFX ARE USUALLY DEPICTED WITH INTERESTING FONTS.

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Email: readcomics@differenceengine.sg
f @ @differenceengine.sg

Materials

- Pencils
- Notebooks
- Printed Comics Panels (reproducible on page 18)
- Art Supplies (color pens/pencils, crayons, markers, etc.)



Step 1: Brainstorm Your Superhero Image

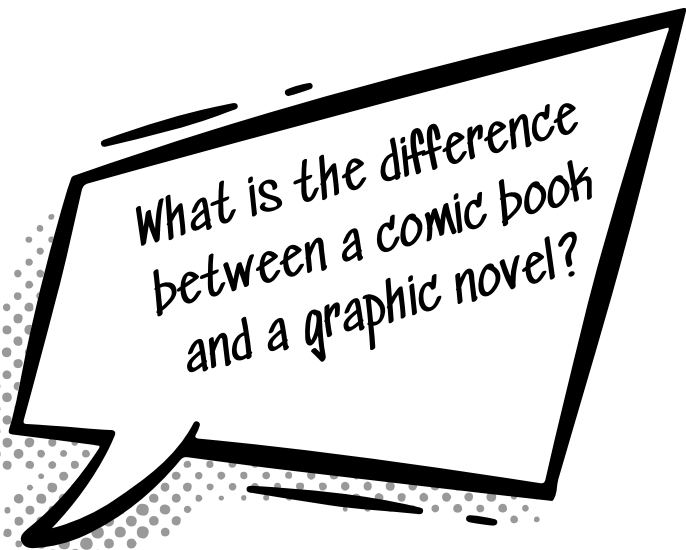
- Think about a few things you want to change but cannot.
- Then, among all your ideas, pick one thing you feel the most eager to change!
- Make a list of your favorite superpowers. Which superpower will give you the most incredible support to make this change come true?
- Design your superhero image! Do you have a special outfit? Do you have a different hairstyle? Do you have any superpowered equipment or pets? Do you have a mask to cover your face so people don't recognize you? Be as flashy as you like, and don't forget to think about how these designs could help you use your superpower or achieve your goal.

Step 2: Outline Your Superhero Story!

- **WHO:** Who are your characters, and why is it essential to include them in your story? Who is the antagonist that is pushing the conflict onto our protagonist (your superhero)? Is the antagonist an evil person, or do they have a different point of view?
- **WHERE:** Where is the story happening? Will there be a change in space in your story?
- **WHEN:** When is the story happening? Will there be a change in time in your story?
- **WHAT:** What happens before you gain your superpower? What makes you gain this new power? What do you do with this power to make you a superhero?
- **WHY:** Why does the conflict exist? What/who directly causes this conflict? What/who indirectly causes this conflict?
- **HOW:** How do you eventually make change? What steps do you need to take to make the change? [Pulled from your list in Step 1.]
- **YOUR ONE-LINER:** Create one line you want your readers to remember as an inspirational quote or a big idea. For example, Flora learned from The Criminal Element that "The human heart is like a deep, dark river. If we are not careful, the river can carry us along in its hidden currents of want and anger and need, and transform each of us into the very criminal we fear."
- Now that you have all the elements of your story, start planning out the content for each panel of your comics! Which part is the most important and will take more panels than other parts when telling this story?
- Use your pencil to write down simple ideas or draw rough images in each panel.

Step 3: Create Your Superhero Comics


- It is finally time to draw your comics! Be as creative as possible, as this is your world, and you are the superhero.
- Feel free to use all the elements of comics, and don't be afraid to create some elements of your own as long as the readers can understand your intentions.
- Be fancy or thoughtful with the colors, fonts, art styles, and compositions, as they help set the tone of the world and express your ideas!
- You can create a flashy cover page for your comics if you wish!
- Make sure to put down a page number on each page. You will staple all your pages with your teachers' or caregivers' help to make it a comic book!



What is the difference between a comic book and a graphic novel?

Step 4: Share Your Superhero Work

- The classroom will be rearranged and become a comics gallery where everyone will display their comics all over the room.
- Take notes while you take a trip around the room. What do you see from other people's work? How are they similar/different from yours? If someone shares the same superpower with your character, how is their story different from yours in the aspects of story development and art styles? If applicable, how do the comics make you understand its author better?



How do comics communicate their message?

Blackout Poetry

Blackout poetry, also known as erasure poetry, is a form of found poetry wherein a poet takes an existing text and erases, blacks out, or otherwise obscures a large portion of the text, creating a wholly new work from what remains.

Materials

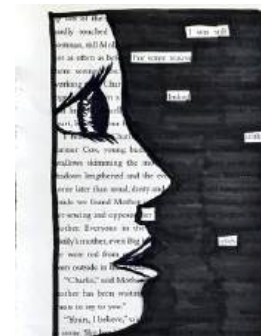
- Black or Color Markers
- Any Body of Text (newspaper, copy of pages from a book, etc.)

Steps

- Find old or used books, a newspaper, a magazine, or any found text you don't mind drawing or blurring words on. Look for words you are drawn to when choosing the text!
- Start by finding a word that pops off the page to you. From there, start looking for other words that go along with it to form not just a sentence but a thought or an idea. Try to evoke an emotion with your poem!
- Once you find the words, grab your markers and create a small and precise border around the words. Then, enlarge the size of the border to make them pop out! After making sure that your words are safe within those borders, go ahead and fill up the rest of the space with your marker. You can make the rest of the page all black or add patterns or drawings to give your blackout poem some extra meaning.



[Try Blackout Poetry Online](#)



Calligram

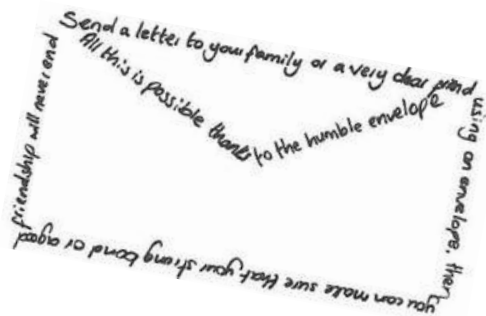
A calligram poem is a unique form of poetry where words are arranged to create shapes that reflect the poem's meaning. This artistic approach blends writing with design, making the text itself a visual representation of the subject.

Materials

- Paper
- Pencils
- An Eraser
- Black or Color Markers

Steps

- Choose a shape that is interesting for you to draw: an everyday object, animal, etc.
- Lightly draw the outline of the shape without the details in pencil.
- Write down some text related to the object or animal on another piece of paper. It could be the lyrics of a song, a quote from a book, or some characteristics of the object you chose.
- Copy the text along the pencil path using black or color markers.
- Erase the track and add any additional drawing on the paper.



[Make a Calligram Online](#)

Collage Poetry

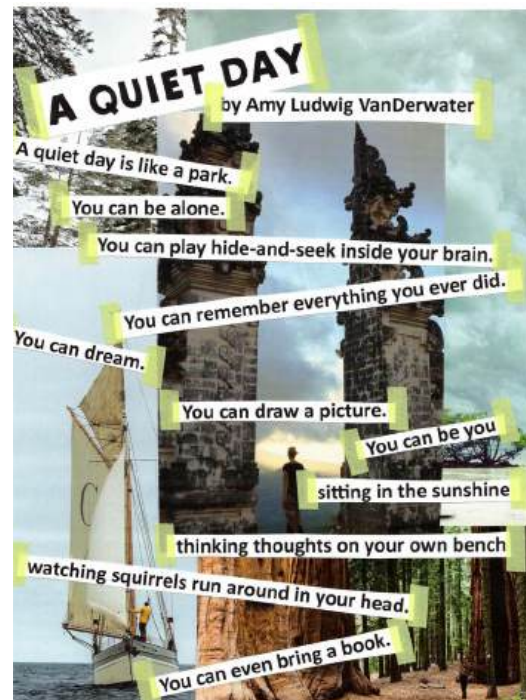
Collage poetry is a poem that incorporates words, phrases, or sections from other sources to create new meaning. Imagine flipping through old magazines, newspapers, or even personal photos, seeking out images and words that resonate with your emotions or convey a specific message. It's also known as a cento, which is a Latin word that means "patchwork".

Materials

- Paper: Cardstock, Old Cardboard, or a Notepad
- Black or Color Markers
- Scissors
- Glue: Glue stick, Pritt stick, or Other Glue
- Text: Old Magazines, Newspapers, Books with Text, or Poems that you can Cut up and Rearrange

Steps

- Flip through your materials and cut out individual words or phrases that catch your eye. Try to look for interesting fonts, textures, and colors!
- Play around with different arrangements of these words or phrases to see which resonates most with you! Try to also consider the visual impact of these words and how their colors, positions, and sizes interact with each other.
- Once you are happy with the arrangement, carefully glue the words on the paper.



Intergenerational Conversations

What is "True" Literature?



Flora and Phyllis discussed what is "true" literature in the play. Phyllis does not want Flora to read comics, as Phyllis considers comics to be why Flora is becoming strange and lonely. On the other hand, Flora does not like the romance novels Phyllis is writing but loves comics, something she bonded over with her Pop (named George). Similar conversations happen between caregivers/teachers and young people in real life! What is "true" literature? And why does this conversation always exist between generations?

Discussion Prompts Lead by Youth

- What are some forms of literature that you are interested in?
- What do you consider "true" literature to be?
- How does it feel when caregivers/teachers discourage you from reading that form of literature? Why do you feel like that?
- How can you help your teachers/family understand the benefits of the form of the literature you read?
- What are some ways to communicate with each other when there is a difference of opinion between adults and young people?

Discussion Prompts Lead by Caregivers, Teachers, or other Adults

- Share a book or a form of literature you were once captivated by as a young person. What aspect of it attracted you?
- What is one thing you learned from this form of literature or this book that is still beneficial in your life?
- Do you consider this form of literature or this book as "true" literature as an adult? Why/why not?
- What are some ways to communicate with each other when there is a misunderstanding between adults and young people?



*The human heart
is like a deep,
dark river."*

Be Your Own Hero

Standards Alignment

Grade Level: 4th–6th

Length: 60 mins

National Theatre Standards:

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Create and articulate sensory details of imagined worlds and improvised stories. (3–4.T.Cr.01)
- Articulate how characters might move, speak, and react to support a theatrical work. (5–6.T.Cr.03.a)
- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. Distinguish one’s own preferences in theatre from those of others (e.g., friends or family). (3–4.T.Co.10)

Materials

- Recipe Cards/Recipe Paper (reproducible on page 19)
- Pencils

Space Needs

- Open Space for Gallery Walk

Teacher Tip

For their recipe, encourage students to stray away from simpler words like mad or happy. This will allow them to dig deeper into their character.

Step 1: Recipe for My Hero

- Ask students to describe the parts of a recipe, the elements, structure, and language that they can recall. If a group has not seen a written recipe it would be important to share an example of a basic recipe.
- Then, invite your students to take a few minutes to create a list of words that describe superheroes. This could include personality traits, identity descriptors, strengths and weaknesses.
- Next, encourage students to create a recipe for their very own hero using the words they chose to describe them. Ask students to use the elements of a real recipe to create their own. Each recipe for my hero should include a list of ingredients and measurements, cooking directions, and serving directions, along with their own title for their recipe. Provide examples as needed, and emphasize ways to use cooking and recipes as a metaphor. Students will need up to 20 mins to complete this activity.
- Finally, when recipes are complete, students will share their complete recipe with a partner.
- Then in the whole group, each student will pick a line from their recipe. The full group will say “A recipe for our heroes are...” followed by each student sharing that line they chose, ending with everyone stating “and that is a recipe for our heroes.”
- **REFLECT:** What did you notice about your hero’s recipe? How might your hero’s recipe change? Could there be a recipe for their nemesis? What parts of your recipe will stay the same throughout your hero’s journey? Why? What are some ingredients that you think would be in Ulysses recipe? How might his recipe change throughout the play?

Step 2: Sculptor / Clay

- Using the recipes your students just made for their hero, give each student three sheets of paper and ask them to write one of the traits from their recipe on each sheet of paper.
- Next, put the students into pairs and ask them to find their own space in the room, where the students will share their hero traits with their partner.
- To begin the sculptor/clay exercise, lead students in a boundary and consent check, because this exercise could include touch.
- Next, the students will decide who will be the sculptor and which will be the clay for round one.
- Once decided, the student who is the clay will lay down their hero traits in front of them like a plaque and stand still.
- Once both are ready, the sculptor will mold the clay into a pose/statue of the hero, that displays the traits that were written. To mold the clay, the sculptor can either physically move their partner into different poses if they are comfortable with that, or they can do the "puppet method," where the sculptor can act as if strings are attached to their partner and move them without physical touch.
- Once the statue is complete, the student who is the statue will hold their pose while all of the sculptors go around for a gallery walk viewing the statues created.
- All of these steps will then be repeated in round two where the students will switch roles.
- **Reflect:** How did it feel to embody someone else's hero? How did it feel to sculpt your superhero? What traits did we see? Were there any similar statues or similarities between two or more statues? What body choices did we see? Could any of the heroes we made conflict with each other?

[Character Trait List](#)

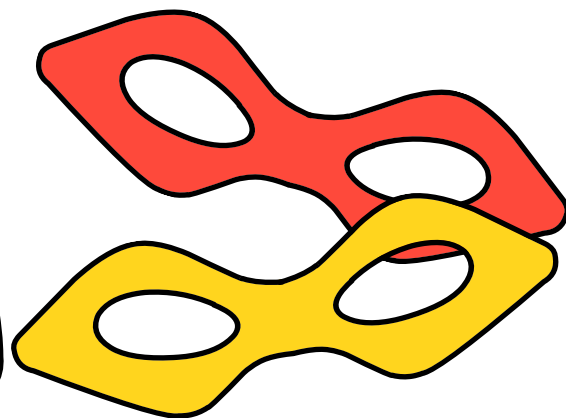
[Sculptor / Clay Video](#)

Teacher Tip
In sculptor/clay, remind the students that they will hold their pose, less strenuous poses are encouraged for this activity.

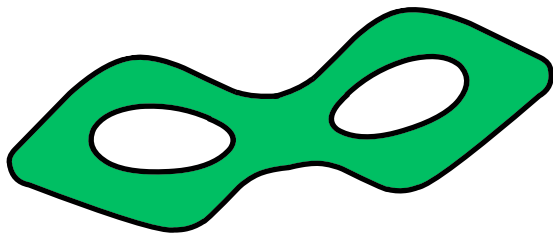
Step 3: Writing in Role

- Using the recipes and reflecting on the traits and sculptures that were made, students will participate in a writing activity as their hero.
- Ask students to find a space in the room and sit however they feel comfortable. Hand out sheets of paper and pencils to each student.
- Next, explain that someone in town needs the hero's help! The students will write a diary entry as either their hero or the person being saved, explaining details of what happened and how the problem got solved. Consider how the three character traits from the previous activity are woven into the writing.
- Once students have written their diary entry, have each student select their favorite line. As a whole group, everyone sits in a circle and each person reads out their underlined sentence.
- **Reflect:** What did you discover about your character through this activity? Were you more comfortable writing as the hero or the one being saved? How might your diary entry change if you switched characters? What do you think happens next for your characters?

Teacher Tip
It can be helpful to explain that students will be writing from the perspective of their character, if "writing in role" is a new term to them.



Teacher Tip
Students will need to use their imagination to create a scenario. You can use the strategy guided imagery before writing in role to scaffold instruction.



The World of Puppetry



Community Connection

Puppet Showplace Theatre (Brookline, MA)

Play Connection

In the play, Ulysses and Mr. Klaus comes to life through puppetry! Puppetry is a theatrical performance involving manipulating puppets, which are inanimate objects made to appear to move and communicate. Puppetry is a large part of many plays for young people. In this activity, you can visit the [Puppet Showplace Theatre](#), which is dedicated to puppetry and hosts a variety of performances, including puppet shows for young people and adults in the Boston area. If you are highly interested in puppetry, you can join their workshops, which guide you in making your own puppet and prepare you to become a puppeteer!

Getting to Puppet Showplace Theatre

Puppet Showplace Theatre is located directly across the street from the Brookline Village T stop, on the Green Line "D" Train. They are also close to stops for the 39, 65, and 66 buses. You can view various T stops or plan your trip by going to www.mbta.com. Or, if driving there is plenty of parking Brookline Village.

Step 1: Learn about Puppetry

- Gather with your friends/family members/classmates and learn about puppetry together!
- Talk about what you already know about puppetry: What is puppetry? What are some types of puppetry? Where have you seen puppetry being used (theater/movies/TV shows/street performances)? What is the purpose of using puppetry?
- In your discussion, find out what you don't know or what you want to know more about puppetry, and do some research!



Types of Puppetry

- **Hand Puppetry:** In hand puppetry, the puppeteer places their hand inside the puppet, typically a cloth or foam figure, to control its movements. The puppet's head, arms, and sometimes legs are moved by the puppeteer's hand or fingers.
- **Marionettes:** These are puppets controlled by strings or wires. The puppeteer uses their hands to manipulate the strings, making the puppet move. Marionettes are often more intricate and can create a lifelike or elaborate performance.
- **Shadow Puppetry:** This form involves creating silhouettes of puppets behind a screen with a light source. The puppets' movements create shadows that tell a story. This is often used in traditional theater and has roots in many cultures.
- **Rod Puppetry:** These puppets are controlled by rods attached to various parts of the puppet's body. The puppeteer holds and moves the rods to animate the puppet.
- **Object Puppetry:** In object puppetry, everyday objects are used to create characters or scenes, where the object itself becomes a puppet. The puppeteer uses their creativity to transform the object into something that tells a story.
- **Ventriloquism:** While slightly different, ventriloquism involves a puppeteer (often called a ventriloquist) manipulating a puppet's mouth to make it appear like the puppet is speaking, often without moving their lips.

Step 2: Watch A Puppetry Performance or Join a Workshop

- Puppet Showplace Theater is New England's center for puppetry arts. Each year, it presents over 300 performances by professional puppet companies to audiences of all ages at the intimate Brookline Village Theater. It offers workshops, classes, summer programs, and training opportunities to both children and adults, and it partners with local and emerging artists to develop new and innovative puppetry productions.
- If you are interested in watching more puppetry performances, you are welcome to [check out their website](#) and find out the information of their upcoming mainstage shows! They also offer [Pay-What-You-Can performances](#), [Puppets at Night for Adults and Teens](#), [Summer Outdoor Series](#), and many more! They also offer [Kids Puppetry Classes & Workshops](#) and [Adult Puppetry Classes & Workshops](#).

Check out [The Center for Puppetry Arts](#) in Atlanta that has been offering education programs, workshops, performances for both young people and adults since 1978!

Puppetry in Theatre for Young Audiences

Learn about the use of puppetry as a storytelling mechanism in three Theatre for Young Audience shows. Click on each link to learn more.



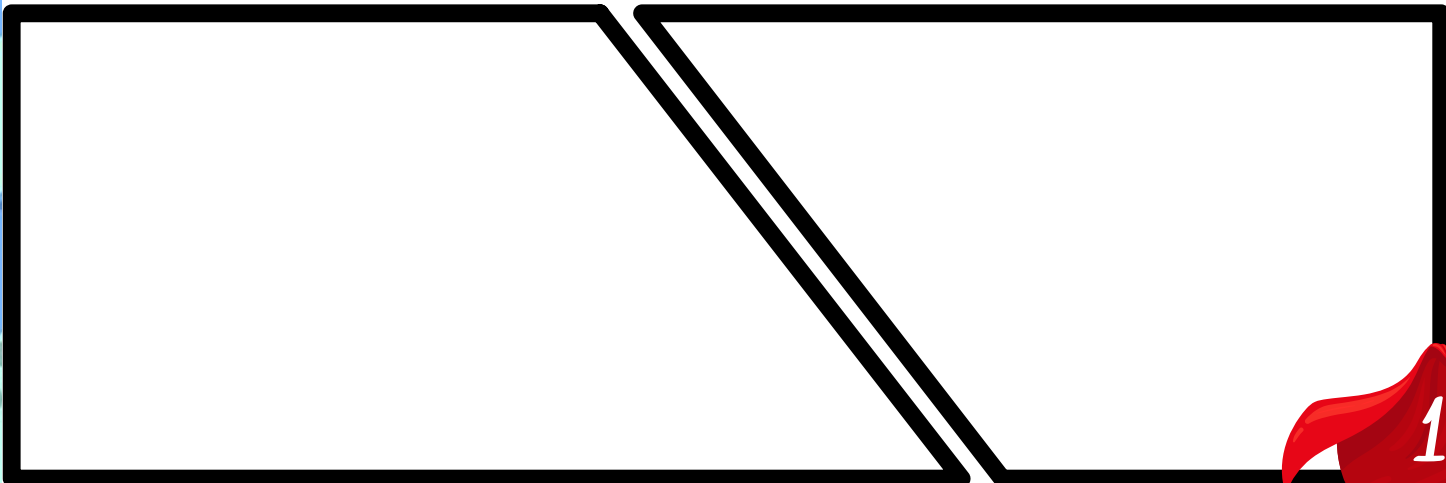
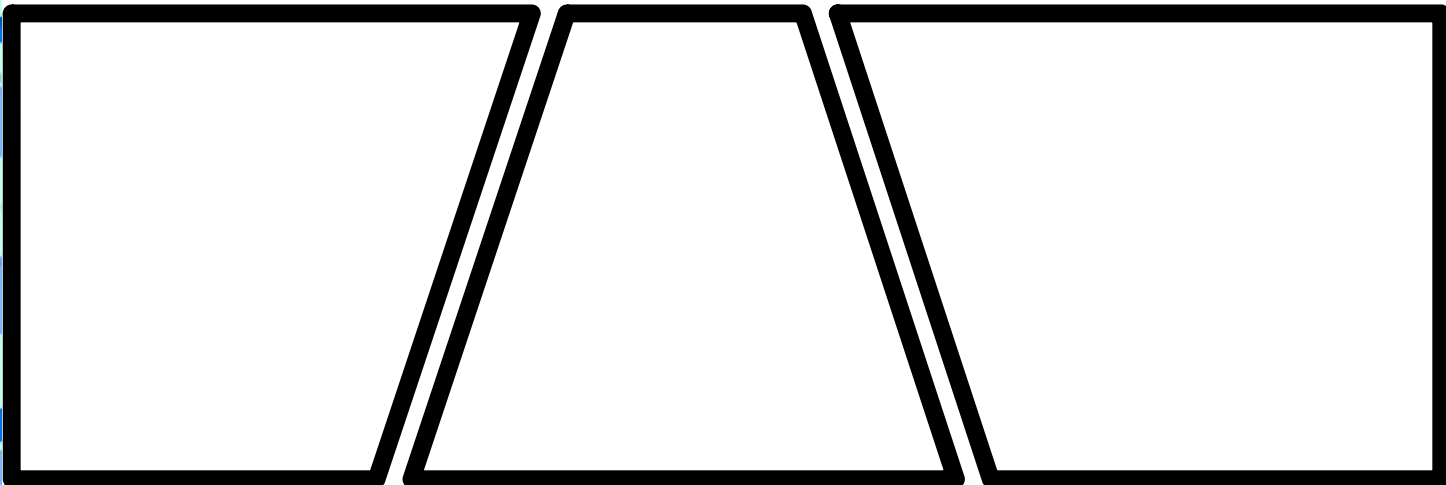
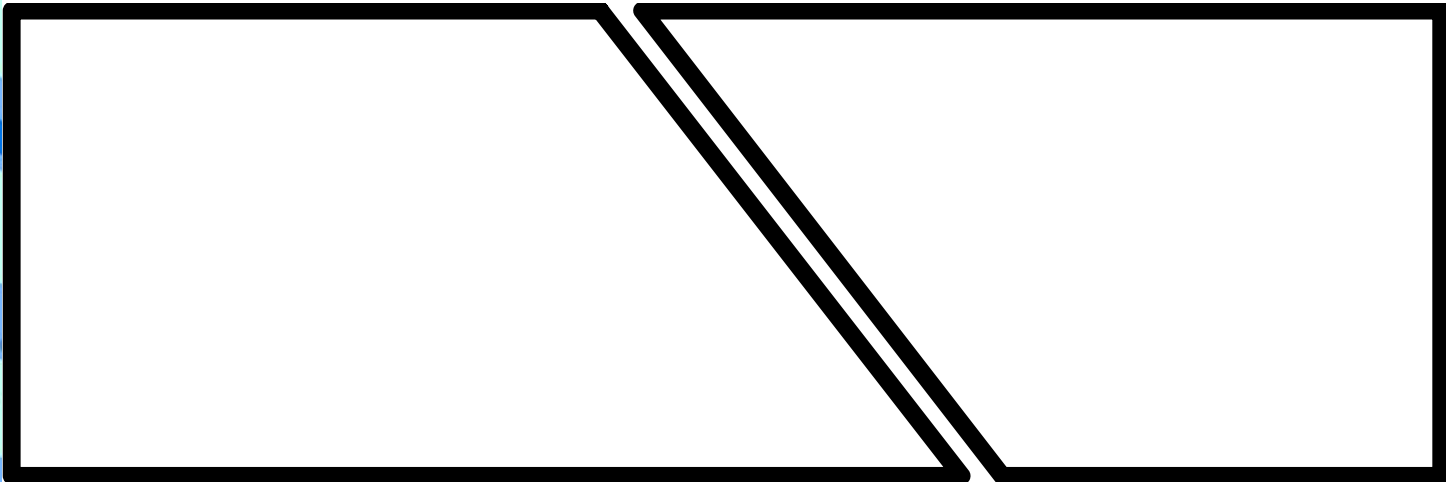
[Alvin Sputnik:
Deep Sea Explorer](#)

[War Horse](#)



[Once There
Were Six
Seasons](#)





Recipe for _____

by _____

Ingredients

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Directions

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Resources

Comics

Discover the power of comics by [reading this article](#) from the International Literacy Association.

Puppetry

Learn about the history of puppetry and several global puppetry styles by [reading this information](#) from Encyclopedia Britannica.

Kate Dicamillo

Find out more about children's book author [Kate Di Camillo's and her work](#).

John Glore

Keep up with playwright [John Glore's latest work](#).



Resource Guide Created By
Mingke Li and Autumn Pentecost

Flora & Ulysses

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