



Make Your Own Ice Age Shadow Puppet

In this activity, you can make your own shadow puppet, inspired by the animals we find at La Brea Tar Pits!

Materials:

- Puppets
 - [Black cardstock](#) (or any cardstock if you already have it)
 - White colored pencil or crayon (if using black cardstock)
 - Pencil or marker
 - [3/16" dowels](#) (or cut the sharp ends off BBQ skewers, or use sticks!)
 - [1/8" brads](#) (or string/yarn with the ends knotted on either side)
 - [1/8" Hole punch](#) (or poke a smaller hole and use string or yarn to join)
 - Tape
 - Scissors

- Stage
 - For a tabletop setup:
 - Cardboard or foam core (also try using a box.)
 - White butcher paper or parchment paper (or use 8.5x11 paper to make a small screen)
 - Table lamp
 - For a larger setup:
 - White sheet or shower curtain liner
 - Something to drape curtain over (i.e. curtain rod in doorway)
 - Standing lamp

Instructions:

1. Make a pattern.

Puppets can have joints, or not. If you make a jointed puppet, consider where the joints will need to go for the most effective illustration of your movement. Joints on limbs should overlap the body of the puppet.

Options for making a pattern:

- A.** Create your own by sketching a character directly onto cardstock and cutting out the parts. Assemble with brads and dowels.

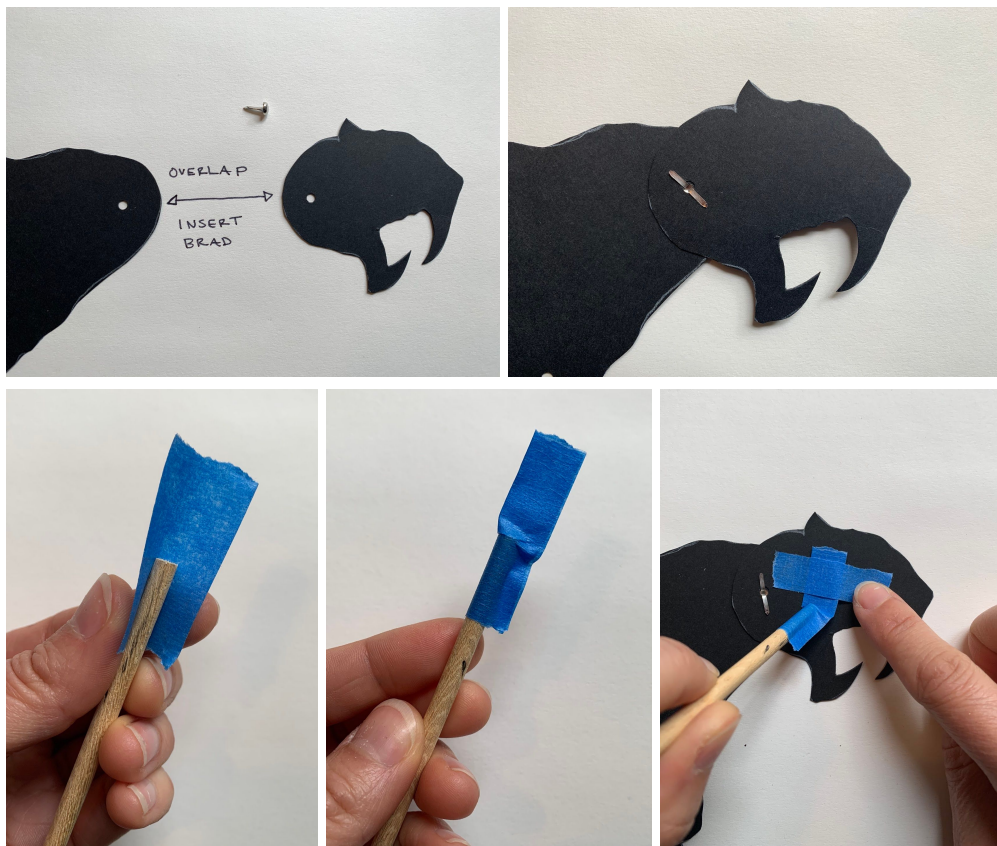
For more activities and offsite resources, visit TARPITS.org/educational-resources

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- B.** Print an image, cut it out and trace it onto card stock, creating limbs and moving parts if you wish. Assemble with brads and dowels and perform!
- C.** Print our “Cali” saber-toothed cat puppet pattern, trace it onto cardstock if available for a more durable puppet, cut out and assemble with brads and dowels.

2. Cut out and assemble your pattern.

Punch holes where the limbs/moving parts should attach and insert brads. Tape dowels to sections of the puppet you want to control. Fold a piece of tape over the end of the dowel/skewer so that the tape is half on the dowel and half off. Then tape the flexible folded tape to your puppet. Use two dowels, one for each hand and experiment with which limbs you want to control. Hint: some limbs work well on their own using the tabletop to create movement. For this cat puppet we put one dowel on the head, and one on the hindquarters. The front limbs crouched nicely on the table without any dowels. Place the puppet flat against your screen and control the limbs using a twisting motion.



3. Make some scenery elements.

Cut out shapes from cardstock or cardboard, or use existing items such as artificial plants. Try other objects out! Lots of things at home can make interesting shadows to set your Ice Age scene.

4. Make your shadow screen.

For a tabletop setup, cut a rectangle out of the center of a large piece of cardboard or foam core (should resemble a frame). Tape white butcher paper to one side of the frame, covering the entire opening. Cut two large triangles out of cardboard or foam core and

glue or tape these to the back of your frame to make it stand up. Alternately, cut the bottom out of a shallow box (Be sure to cut at least ½” inside the edges so the box will stand up) and tape paper over the opening. Position a table lamp behind and above the puppeteer.

5. Set up your screen, light your lamp, and perform!

Write a script! Improvise movements! Explore how the shadows change size and move through the space.



Example Scene:

Characters: scientist, artist, fossils, and animal (ex. saber-toothed cat)

Scenery: fossil dig site (rocks, crates, and tar pit); lab (shelves of fossils, skeletons, tools); Ice Age landscape (trees, plants, tar pits)

Story: Paleontologist excavates fossils from tar. In the lab, scientists clean fossils and technicians assemble bones. Artists work with scientists to create models of extinct creatures. That model is a creature that can come alive through puppetry!

Tips:

- Use facts and imagination to perform the movements of extinct animals (see below for fact sheet and pattern for a saber-toothed cat!)
- Puppets can interact with each other and their environment.
- Think about how your animal might have moved and try to copy that in your shadow puppet movements

SABER-TOOTHED CATS

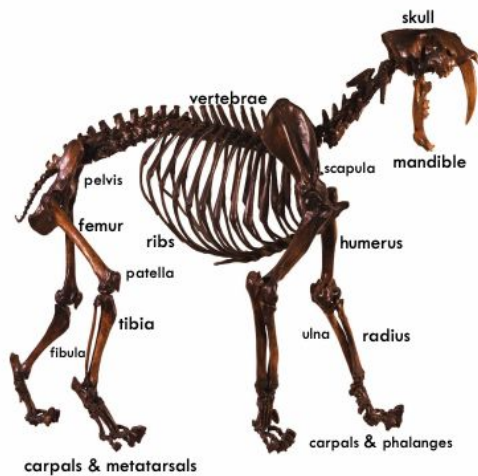
Smilodon fatalis, or saber-toothed cat, is our California state fossil. *Smilodon* is the second most common large mammal found at the La Brea Tar Pits - excavators have uncovered over 2,000 saber-toothed cats here!

Observe the skeleton and take note of distinguishing features such as long saber teeth, a hinged jaw that can open wide, and a short tail. Saber-toothed cats were ambush predators who crouched and pounced. Can you make your shadow puppet crouch and pounce?

Draw your own saber-toothed cat or print and cut out the template on the next page.
What other puppets could you create?

Sabertoothed Cat

Smilodon Fatalis



Gato de dientes de sable

Smilodon Fatalis

