

**Lesson by: Vera H. Flaig, B.Mus. B.Ed. Ph.D.**

**Description:** This lesson serves as an introduction to Javanese culture and ethics through an exploration of the character typology found in the shadow puppet theatre. First, students will make their own puppet characters using the templates included in this lesson. Second, in groups of four, they will construct their own scenes.

**Curricular Outcomes:** (Michigan) English Language Arts Content Standard 6: “All students will learn to communicate information accurately and effectively and demonstrate their expressive abilities by creating oral, written, and visual texts that enlighten and engage an audience.”

**Materials:** laptop computer and projector; a downloaded copy of the **Gamelan Outreach Puppetry Slides**; copies of **Puppet Templates (found in resources folder)**, construction paper, chopsticks, coffee stir-sticks, cardboard (Bristol board would be best), scissors and hole punches, wing-tacks, markers, glue, desk lamp, white bed-sheet.

### **Getting Ready: Introduction to Wayang Kulit and its main character types**

- Show power-point slides 1 through 9. Go through each of the seven character types on slide 9, and practice pronouncing the names. For each type, ask the students to predict what the character might look like based upon the characterization provided in the description.
- Show slide 11 and ask students: “What do you notice about the posture and body shape of these refined or *Halus* characters? What types of roles do imagine *halus* characters play in society?”
- Show slide 12 and ask students: “What are some of the major differences you see in these characters when you compare them with the *halus* characters? Can you guess which of the three is *gusen* or *kasar* (course), which is *gagah* (vigorous), and which is *danawa* (ogre)? What types of roles do imagine these course characters play in society?”
- Show slide 13 and ask students: “What are some of the features you see that distinguish the *dhagelan* (comic) characters from the others?”
- Show slide 14 and ask students: “Is this a typical type of fight scene you might witness in a movie? Why? Why not?” Predict: “Which of the two characters will win the battle? Why?”
- Ask: “Of all the characters you have just been introduced to, which ones are familiar character types you might have experienced from movies, television, video games and books? Which ones are unfamiliar? Why?”

### **Teaching Process:**

#### Step One: Wayang Characters - Javanese Culture and the Creation of a Puppetry Scene

- While viewing slide 16: Ask the students to read the description of each of the ranks in Javanese social order. Ask the class to compare these social positions with ones they are more familiar with (i.e./ king would be the equivalent to a modern day Senator or even a President). Note: It is possible to compare the *brahmânâ* with a powerful religious teacher/leader such as an Imam, Priest, or Rabbi; whereas, the *satryâ* could be compared to any individual involved in the military or defense.
- Go back to slides 11-13. Remind the class that you asked them to predict what types of social roles were carried out by each of the, *halus* (refined), *kasar*, *danawa*, *gagah* (course), and *dhagelan* (clown characters). Ask the students to do this again using the specific rankings of the Javanese Social Order listed on slide 16. Answers are shared within the large group.

- While viewing slide 12: **tell the students** that the character depicted on the far right and the far left is an ogre and a hero. His name is Radèn Kumba Kárnå, one of the largest puppets in Wayang Kulit. Although he is outwardly coarse, he is considered inwardly noble because he dies defending the king. The character in the center is Butå Tjakil, a demon that is one of the main antagonists to the primary hero Ardjunå.
- Divide the class into groups of five.
- Hand out copies of the “**Shadow Puppet Templates**” found in the **Resources Folder**. Give each student in the group, one character.
- First, instruct the groups to read each character description aloud to each other.
- Second, classify each character by its physical type and its social role.
- Third, invent an imaginary situation which revolves around a conflict, or causes a conflict among the five characters.
- Fourth: have each group create a scene using these characters.
- Fifth: each group will then write a rough outline to their scene.

#### Step Two: Making the Shadow Puppets

- Supply each student with the following materials: puppet template, construction paper, Bristol board, one chopstick, 2 coffee stir-sticks, and four wing-tacks.
- Supply each group with: scissors, a hole-punch, glue, and markers.
- First, have students color their template.
- Next, they will need to cut out the main body and the moveable arm pieces (these are the arms which do not cross the puppet’s body, but hang freely to the side. Some puppets have only one moveable arm, while others have two moveable arms. The arms will be cut at the shoulder joint and halfway down at the elbow.
- Then, all of these pieces will be glued onto to the Bristol board.
- **After the glue dries, the pieces will be cut out and assembled into puppets.**
- **To construct moveable arm(s)** simply overlap the upper arm piece at the shoulder and punch a hole through both pieces, then re-attach the arm piece to the shoulder using wing-tacks. Do the same for the forearm and elbow joint. Note: some puppets will only have one moveable arm.
- Finally, attach the chopstick to the main body of the puppet to act as the stem and coffee stir-sticks to the hands in order to manipulate the arm(s).

#### Step Three: Practicing Shadow Puppet Scenes

- Give each group time to practice manipulating their puppets.
- **Helpful suggestion to make the scene interesting:** Tell students that in order to make their scene interesting they need to include a mixture of dialogue and movement.
- **Important rule for the performance:** It is traditional to have only two characters interact at one time. This is due to the fact that *wayang* is performed by a single puppeteer, called the *dhalang*. Since the puppeteer has only two hands, he/she can only manipulate two puppets at a time.
- **Use of the Voice:** instruct students to create a voice for their puppet. This voice must reflect the physical type and social status of their character
- Give each group twenty minutes to work out their scene while the teacher sets up the lamp and white sheet for the performance.

Conclusion

- With the lamp shining out toward the audience, employ two students to hold up the sheet between the lamp and the audience. Change the “holders of the screen” for each new scene.
- Place the first performing group in front of the lamp and behind the sheet. Take some time to have this group experiment with the distance they need between themselves and the lamp for a clear image to appear on the sheet.
- Proceed with the performance of the first scene.
- Allow for the class to give each group positive feedback.
- Continue until all the scenes are performed.

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**Description:** This lesson serves as an introduction to the Javanese version of the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, and its connection to early court life in Java. Through an exploration of individual characters found in the Pandāwā and Kurāwā families at the center of this epic, students will come to a greater understanding about Javanese religious pluralism and cultural values, and the ways in which these have shaped political life.

**Curricular Outcomes:** Grade 7 Social Studies, State of Michigan. G4.1 Cultural Mosaic: 7 – G4.1.1 Identify and explain examples of cultural diffusion within the eastern hemisphere. G4.4 Forces of Cooperation and Conflict, 7 – G4.4.1 Identify and explain factors that contribute to conflict and cooperation between and among cultural groups (e.g., natural resources, power, culture, wealth). English Language Arts Content Standard 9: “All Students will demonstrate understanding of the complexity of enduring issues and recurring problems by making connections and generating themes within and across texts.

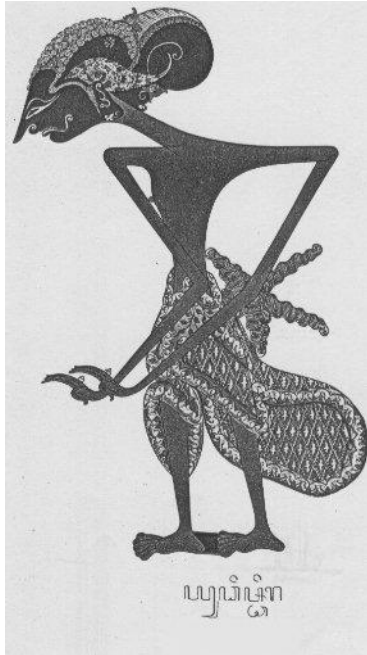
**Materials:** DVD player and projector; a downloaded copy of the 2005 University of Michigan Gamelan production, “Lyrical Tension: the Mahabharata”; construction paper, paper doilies, chopsticks, coffee stir-sticks, cardboard (Bristol board would be best), scissors and hole punches, *wing-tacks*, markers, glue, copies of puppet templates (found in the Resources Folder), desk lamp, white bed-sheet.

**Political and Cultural Background:** see “History of Javanese Gamelan” in the Resources Folder.

### Teaching Process

#### Step One: Introduction to the Feuding Bharata Family (“Lyrical Tension: the Mahabharata” video)

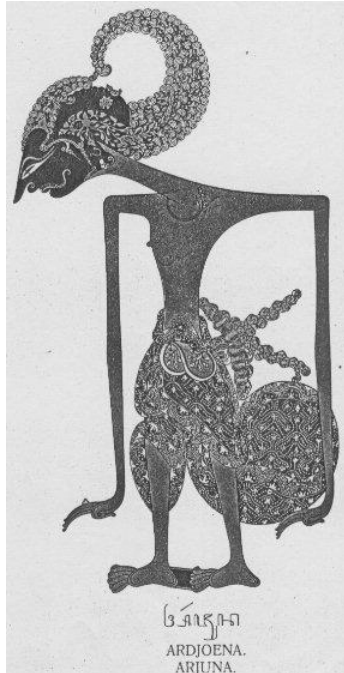
- **Hand out copies of puppets and their descriptions.** Have students examine each of the puppets for the five Pandāwā brothers and the two Kurāwā brothers who are their cousins. Ask: “What features stand out for each puppet? What can you predict about each character based upon the social guidelines defining refined versus coarse behaviors and postures in Javanese society?”
- Read the descriptions for each character and ask the students: “Do these descriptions match the features you noticed in each character?”
- **Hand out copies of the script to the “Lyrical Tension: the Mahabharata,” (found below).** Read or have the students read the story.
- **Show the “Lyrical Tension: the Mahabharata” video.** Tell students that this dance drama was performed by one hundred students from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.
- **Write the questions below on the board.** Instruct students to look for the answers to the questions as they watch the performance unfold. Discuss their answers after the video is shown.
- Ask students: “Who were the protagonists in this story? Who were the antagonists?”
- At the beginning of the performance the narrator asks a question, central to the plot: “Was it really a battle between good and evil, or were the young Kurāwās and Pandāwās manipulated, like puppets in a shadow play, by greedy mortals and capricious gods for their own purposes?”
- Ask students: Do you think the plot mirrored real historical events? Explain your answer.”
- Here the teacher can fill in some details about Javanese History (found in the document, “History of Javanese Gamelan” in the Resources Folder).
- Ask students: “Which family do you think was represented as the force for good? What role did supernatural characters, or gods play in the plot? Did they choose sides?”



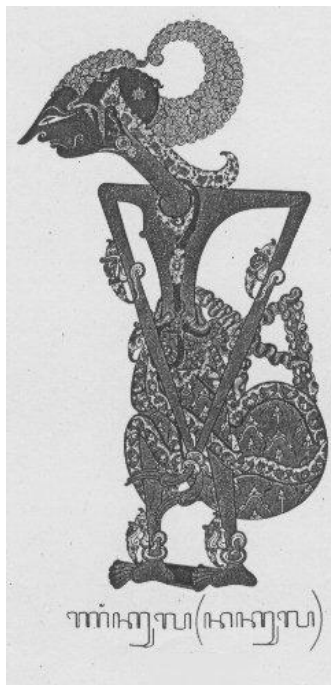
**Yudhistirā (first son):** eldest of the Pandāwā brothers, renowned for his even temper and unshakeable sense of justice. Peaceful and intensely spiritual, Yudhistirā tends not to get involved in any sort of violent conflict.



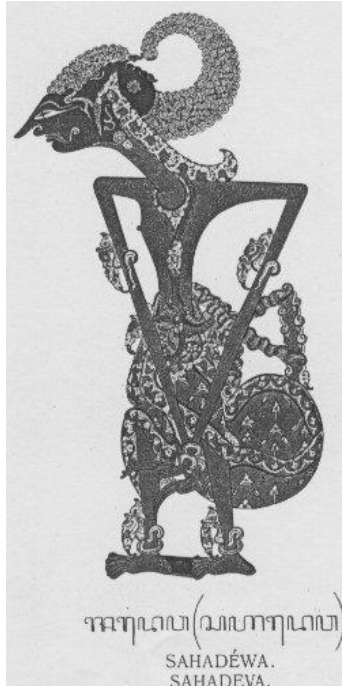
**Bimā (second son):** second eldest of the Pandāwā brothers, Bimā is one of the mightiest warriors in the world. When not armed with a club or the occasional uprooted tree, Bimā tears his enemies apart with his menacing fingernails. Ferocious in battle, he is nonetheless loving and loyal to his family.



**Ardjunā (third son):** is the middle child of the Pandāwā family. He blends blends the gentle refinement of Yudistirā with the warrior prowess of Bima. Skilled in the dual arts of love and war, the charming Ardjunā can be frequently found either romancing beautiful young ladies or slaying any number of wild beasts, demons, or Kurāwās.



**Nakulā (4th son):** one of the youngest of the Pandāwā brothers, Nakulā is a twin brother to Sadewā, the fifth brother. These two brothers are renowned for being absolutely identical twins. They are usually found loyally following in the footsteps of their more exciting older brothers.



**Sadewa (5th son):** one of the youngest of the Pandawa brothers, Sadewa is a twin brother to Nakula, the fourth brother. These two brothers are renowned for being absolutely identical twins. They are usually found loyally following in the footsteps of their more exciting older brothers.



**Dewi Kunthi (mother of the first 3 sons):** the wise and perceptive mother of the Pandawa brothers, Kunthi has attempted to guide her sons through the difficult struggle of succession for the throne of Hastina. In return, her sons are loving and unfailingly obedient.



**Duryodānā:** is the oldest of the ninety-nine Kurāwā brothers. While they are enemies, the Kurāwā's are actually cousins to the Pandāwās. Duryodānā (Sujudānā) is the king of Ngastinā, the most “powerful and glittering of the ancient mythological Javanese capitals. He is a great monarch, yet fated to destroy his own house. Though vain and easily swayed by his advisors, he is a worthy antagonist to the Pandāwā” (Anderson 2009:34)

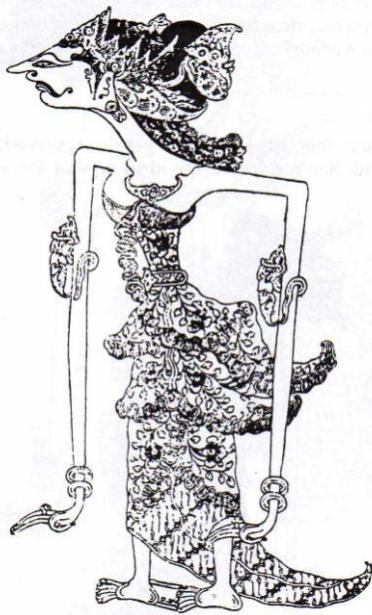


**Dursāsānā:** is the second oldest of the Kurāwā brothers. Next to Sangkuni, he is regarded as one of the most undesirable of the Kurāwā faction. He is “noisy, boastful, violent, and unscrupulous, he is nevertheless devoted to his elder brother, Sujudānā, and to the fortunes of the clan. In the field, he is a brave fighter, and only the invincible Wrekudārā can destroy him” (Anderson 2009:59).





**Resi Bhisma:** grandfather of both the Pandâwâs and the Kurâwâs. “As Ngastinâ’s elder statesman, he is loved and respected by Kurâwâ and Pandâwâ alike. Though strongly opposed to Sujudânâ’s policies, he sides with the Left faction and leads the Kurâwâ armies.” He eventually dies at the hands of Srikandi, Ardjunâ’s warrior-wife (Anderson 2009:53).



**Dewi Srikandi:** is the exact opposite of the refined, humble female who lives in the shadow of her husband. Srikandi is “talkative, strong willed, warm-hearted, fond of hunting an excellent archer, she is quite ready to debate with [her husband] Ardjunâ or take on a passing *satryâ* in battle. She enjoys travelling about Java, either in search of her periodically missing husband or seeking adventures of her own . . . For the Javanese, Srikandi is the honored type of the active, energetic, disputatious, generous, go-getting woman” (Anderson 2009: 36).



**Kresna:** “is part God, an incarnation of the mighty Wisnu (Vishnu). He is the consummate politician, diplomat, and strategist of war. By far the most intellectually brilliant of the Pendâwâ faction, it is Kresna who makes their final victory possible. On the other hand, he is a conscienceless liar and an unscrupulous schemer who never hesitates to break the rules when he feels it necessary. Though a *satryâ*, he repeatedly ignores the lesser values of the *satryâ* class. Only duty to carry out the will of the gods and his own destiny claim his allegiance” (Anderson 2009: 25).



**Patih Arjâ Sangkuni:** is the chief advisor to the Kurâwâ. He is usually regarded as the cunning, evil genius of the Kurâwâs. As Drestârâtâ’s brother-in-law and Sujundânâ’s uncle, he has the position of Chief Minister of Ngastinâ, a position of which he takes ample advantage.(Anderson 2009:58)

**Teaching Process (continued):**Step Two: working with the script (included below)

- Hand out copies of the narration script. Have students work in groups to break the script into scenes, remembering the scenes they witnessed in the video of the “Lyrical Tension: the Mahabharata,” dance drama.
- Groups report back and the class makes their decisions about what the scenes should be.
- Divide up the scenes among class groups.
- Each group will begin by deciding what characters they need to perform their scene. NOTE: all songs can be performed as soliloquy or spoken dialogue.
- Next, each group needs to develop appropriate dialogue and action for their scene. This should be written out as an outline at first and then fleshed out with dialogue and action. The scene needs to be developed among the students in the group as they each explore their character’s attitude, social role, motivation, beliefs, special powers, and physical skills.
- Finally, proceed to step three where groups will make their puppets.

Step Three: Making the Shadow Puppets

- Make copies of the puppet templates (download these from the resources section of the website).
- Have each student choose which type of character they would like to be.
- Supply each student with the following materials: puppet template, construction paper, Bristol board, one chopstick, 2 coffee stir-sticks, and four wing-tacks.
- Supply each group with: scissors, a hole-punch, glue, and markers.
- First, have students color their template.
- Next, they will need to cut out the main body and the moveable arm pieces (these are the arms which do not cross the puppet’s body, but hang freely to the side). Some puppets have only one moveable arm, while others have two moveable arms. The arms will be cut at the shoulder joint and halfway down at the elbow.
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- Finally, attach the chopstick to the main body of the puppet to act as the stem and coffee stir-sticks to the hands in order to manipulate the arms.

Step Four: Re-enacting the “Lyrical Tension” story

- Give each group time to practice manipulating their puppets.
- **Helpful suggestion to make the scene interesting:** Tell students that in order to make their scene interesting they need to include a mixture of dialogue and movement.
- **Important rule for the performance:** It is traditional to have only two characters interact at one time. This is due to the fact that *wayang* is performed by a single puppeteer, called the *dhalang*. Since the puppeteer has only two hands, he/she can only manipulate two puppets at a time.
- **Use of the Voice:** instruct students to create a voice for their puppet. This voice must reflect the physical type and social status of their character.

- Give each group twenty minutes to work out their scene while the teacher sets up the lamp and white sheet for the performance.

Conclusion

- With the lamp shining out toward the audience, employ two students to hold up the sheet between the lamp and the audience. Change the “holders of the screen” for each new scene.
- Place the first performing group in front of the lamp and behind the sheet. Take some time to have this group experiment with the distance they need between themselves and the lamp for a clear image to appear on the sheet.
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- Continue until all the scenes are performed

**SCRIPT BEGINS BELOW ON PAGE 10.**

**Script for “Lyrical Tension”the Mahabharata:**

The Mahabharata is the story of a tragic feud between two branches of the noble Bharata family – the Pandâwâs and the Kurâwâs. The Pandâwâs and their Kurâwâ cousins competed playfully as children, but their harmless childhood games grew into a bloody battle for control of their homeland when the Kurâwâ’s wicked uncle, Prime Minister Sangkuni fanned the flames of jealousy and greed in his nephews and plotted with them to cheat the unsuspecting Pandâwâs out of their lands.

Ancient teachings depict the war as a struggle between the forces of good, represented by the Pandâwâs, and the forces of evil, represented by the Kurâwâs. But was it really a battle between good and evil? Or were the young Kurâwâs and Pandâwâs manipulated, like puppets in a shadow play, by greedy mortals and by capricious gods for their own purposes? Was the war worth its terrible price? This is our story tonight.

Forced by the Kurâwâs into a twelve year exile, the Pandâwâs, bore their sufferings patiently under the guidance of their oldest brother, Yudhistirâ. He wisely guided his younger brothers Ardjunâ, Nakulâ and Sadewâ. He calmed his hot tempered brother Bimâ and taught the Pandâwâs the ways of goodness.

Meanwhile Kurâwas learned very different lessons. From the time they were children, the crafty Prime Minister Sangkuni taught the Kurâwâs evil ways: the Kurâwâs became their uncle’s puppets. He pulled their strings at will leading them down paths of greed, gluttony and, most of all, an insatiable thirst for power over their Pandâwâs cousins.

The gods saw all this: the Kurâwâs cruelty and the Pandâwâs pain. They sent Vishnu to earth, reincarnated as Kresnâ, a cousin of the Pandâwâ brothers, to help the Pandâwâs. Kunthi, mother of the Pandâwâs and Gendari, mother of the Kurâwâs also tried to counsel their children wisely. Sadly, Gendari’s good advice was undermined by the evil Sangkuni.

Songs of Kunthi and Gendari

Oh, my strong and courageous sons  
The first duty of a warrior  
Is to uphold the name of his ancestors  
Honor the Bharata family  
Protect our homeland  
We ask for your blessings  
And the blessing of our grandfather Bhisâm

And so, the Kurâwâs lived a life of self-indulgence, deceit and the pursuit of power, not caring for the cost to others. Meanwhile the Pandâwâs continued on in the ways of goodness and built a just and harmonious kingdom.

Song of Gendari and Sangkuni:

G: Oh my brother Sangkuni

S: My sister, Gendari

G: Lead my children, the Kurâwâs, to power and glory

May they become the true Rulers of our homeland

S: I will fight for the Kurâwâs, I ask your blessings

Sangkuni's song

My heart's desire is to create a mighty nation

To raise the Kurâwâs to power

Make *them* the rulers of our homeland

We will seize the Pandâwâ's lands

My own cunning will make this come to pass

The power belongs to me! (It is I who have the might)

The Pandâwâs must be exiled!

Song of Kunthi and Kresnâ

Kunthi: My nephew, Kresnâ

Kresnâ: Yes, dear Aunt Kunthi

Kunthi: Bring your Pandâwâ cousins out of darkness

Protect them from sin and evil.

Kresnâ: This I will do with all my strength.

Kunthi: Bless my children as you protect them.

And so Sangkuni guided the Kurâwâs, while Kresnâ gently led the Pandâwâs. But Kresnâ's fury knew no bounds when the Kurâwâs refused to restore the Pandâwâs lands to them. It was war.

Chorus (Gérong) Sings

The Darkness of sin descends

The curse has hit its mark

Virtue has vanished

Clear waters now murky

The grandeur of nature polluted

Holy teachings forgotten

All is destroyed

Rivers of blood will flow in this War

The Bharatayudā, the final terrible war, is now inevitable. No matter who wins, the blood shed will come from the same family. Is this fate – the will of the gods? Or have the Bharata family, themselves, brought about their destruction? The war has begun – hopes have become a Lyrical Tension. Kresnā and Sangkuni are moving all towards the final cataclysmic conflict.

Kresnā and Sangkuni matched wits on the battlefield. Before the war, the cunning Sangkuni had called the shots. Krishna now took the upper hand, leading the Pandāwās to victory, but at what cost? The Kurāwās fell, one by one, but the Pandāwās lost their dear ones too -- brothers, cousins, mothers, fathers and children lay dead and dying. The blood of all the Bharata family mingled on the battlefield.

Last conversation between Sangkuni and Kresnā

S: What is the truth Lord?

K: Good will always conquer evil.

S: No, power belongs not to the good, but to the cunning.

K: Why do you take what is *not* yours?

S: Why not? It belonged to no one else?

K: You are evil! You must be destroyed!

S: Must so much blood be shed for good to triumph?