

Learning Guide



Jim Henson

We hope you enjoyed learning all about the creative genius of legendary puppeteer Jim Henson. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.
Reflect on how your thinking about bears has changed after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Puppet Projects

TH:Re7, TH:Re8, TH:Cr1, TH:Cr2, TH:Pr4, TH:Re7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-12.1, SL.3-12.4, SL.3-12.6, W.3-12.3

Design a Muppet!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-12.1, SL.3-12.2, RH.6-12.7, SL.3-12.5, W.3-12.2, W.3-12.3, RL.3-8.3, RL.3-8.7, SL.3-12.4-6; TH:Cr1, VA:Cr1-3, TH:Cr1-2, TH:Pr4-6

Puppet Movement Lab

NGSS ETS1-2, ETS3, ETS1-4; ISTE Creative Communicator; TH:Cr1, TH:Cr2, TH:Pr5, TH:Pr6

Character Comparison

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-8.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-8.3

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2026 The Children's Hour radio show podcast
<https://www.childrenshour.org/jim-henson/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Write down your response to the question below. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

- **What do you already know about Jim Henson and his Muppets? What do you think made his work special?**

2. After listening!

Write down your response to the following question. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

- **What surprised you most about Jim Henson or his creative process, and how did the episode change or add to what you thought you knew about him?**



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

puppeteer

A person who controls and performs with puppets.

puppetry

The art of performing with puppets.



Vocabulary

lip-syncing

Moving your mouth along with a recorded voice or song without making any sound.

animatronics

The use of mechanical or electronic devices to make characters move.

protagonist

The main character in a story.

CGI

Computer-generated imagery used to create or change images in movies and television.



Discussion Questions

1. What do you think made Kermit the Frog such a popular and memorable character?
2. Jim Henson believed that puppetry was “family entertainment,” not just entertainment for children. Why do you think adults and children can enjoy the same stories?
3. What does Jim Henson's creative process teach us about the importance of not always following the rules?
4. Which “How'd they do that?” moment from the episode did you find most interesting? Why?
5. Jim Henson worked with his children and valued their opinions. What does this tell us about the way he worked with other people?
6. What lesson about creativity, imagination, or problem-solving can we learn from Jim Henson's life?
7. If you could ask Jim Henson one question about his life or work, what would you ask him?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing Prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Write a story about your visit. Describe the puppets you see, the people you meet, and a surprising discovery you make behind the scenes.
2. Write a story from the point of view of a puppet being created for a new television show or movie.

Informational/Expository Prompts

1. Explain some of the techniques used to make Jim Henson's puppets move and appear realistic.
2. Explain the different skills and technologies that can be used to create and operate a Muppet.
3. How did Jim Henson use creativity and technology to change puppetry? Explain at least two ways Henson used new ideas or technology in his work. Use details from the episode to support your explanation.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. What do you think Jim Henson's most important contributions to puppetry were?
2. Which do you think is more interesting for creating movie characters: traditional puppetry or computer-generated imagery? Explain your choice.
3. Which Jim Henson character or production is the most memorable? Convince your reader that your choice is the best.
4. If Jim Henson were creating a new character today, what should that character be like? Persuade him or his creative team to use your idea.



Puppet Projects

Listen

- [Part 1: Who was Jim Henson? \(segment 9:48-15:55\)](#)
- [Part 2: How'd They Do That? The Magic and Innovations of Jim Henson's Puppetry \(segment 9:48-15:55\)](#)
- [Part 3: Advancing the Art of Puppetry for All \(segment 31:48-36:35\)](#)
- [Part 4: Jim Henson's Legacy \(segment 42:03-47:03\)](#)
- [Part 5: Jim Henson's Creature Shop \(segment 47:06-49:00\)](#)
- [Part 6: Producing the Dark Crystal \(segment 52:00-55:21\)](#)

Puppet Design Challenge

Turn ordinary household objects into playful puppets using your imagination. Cut out eyes from paper and glue them onto different objects to give them a personality. Get creative—anything can become a puppet when you add a little imagination!

Experiment with different voices, personalities, and emotions as you play. Explore your home and discover random treasures, forgotten objects, and interesting materials that could become characters.

Gather a variety of supplies, such as paper, fabric scraps, craft materials, and recycled items. Use them to create a simple puppet that can express at least three different emotions. Most importantly, have fun and let your imagination bring your puppet to life!

Puppet Story Studio

Use the Muppet you created in the “**Design a Muppet**” activity in this Learning Guide or choose an unusual puppet or creature, then create a story for it, including:

- A setting
- Main character
- Problem
- Three important events
- Solution

Puppet Performance

Work in pairs or groups to perform a 1–2 minute puppet scene. Make the puppets interact as if they are real characters, just as the humans on Sesame Street interacted with the Muppets.





Design a Muppet!

Listen

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- [Part 3: Advancing the Art of Puppetry for All \(segment 31:48-36:35\)](#)
- [Part 4: Jim Henson's Legacy \(segment 42:03-47:03\)](#)

Jim Henson's Muppets all had unique personalities and appearances. Create a Muppet character that represents your unique strengths, values, and positive traits.

Discuss

What makes a Muppet special?

- *What qualities do they have (bravery, kindness, creativity, honesty)?*

Plan

Complete the “Design a Muppet!” worksheet

Create

Draw your Muppet! Use the template or a blank sheet of paper. Add symbols or costumes that reflect their personalities.

Extension

Design a comic panel showing your character in action helping others. (See template)

Share

Introduce your Muppet to the world!

- *What makes your Muppet special?*
- *How do they make the world better?*





Design a Muppet!

Your Mission

Jim Henson's Muppets all had unique personalities and appearances. Create a Muppet character that represents your unique strengths, values, and positive traits.

My Muppet Profile

- Muppet's Name: _____
- What does it like? _____

- What does it dislike? _____

- What is it really good at? _____

- What is one funny thing about it? _____

Draw

What does your Muppet look like? Show us here!

Extend

Now that you have an idea of what your Muppet will look and act like, build it and use it in a short play!



Puppet Story Studio

Design a comic panel showing your puppet in action.

A comic panel layout consisting of seven rectangular frames. The first row has three frames: a large square on the left, a large square in the middle, and a tall vertical rectangle on the right. The second row has four frames: a large square on the left, a medium square in the middle-left, a medium square in the middle-right, and a tall vertical rectangle on the right. The third row has a single large frame that is split diagonally from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, creating two triangular panels. To the right of this large frame is a small, faint line drawing of a one-eyed monster with horns and a beard.



Puppet Movement Lab

Listen

- [Part 2: How'd They Do That? The Magic and Innovations of Jim Henson's Puppetry \(segment 9:48-15:55\)](#)
- [Part 3: Advancing the Art of Puppetry for All \(segment 31:48-36:35\)](#)

Learn

- [Puppetry for Beginners: Part 5: Tricks](#)
- [Best Magic Tricks for Puppets](#)

Design

Use these steps to help you solve the puppetry problems below:

- **Brainstorm:** Come up with several possible solutions.
- **Build:** Choose one idea and create a simple puppet mechanism.
- **Test:** Try it out.
- **Improve:** Identify what worked and what did not, then modify the design.
- **Share:** Demonstrate the final solution and explain how the group solved the problem



Puppetry Problem-Solving Challenges

1. Make a puppet wave without using your hands directly.
2. Make a puppet move using only one string.
3. Create a mechanism that makes your puppet bow to an audience.
4. Make your puppet move in at least three different ways without touching it directly.
5. Create a way for two puppets to shake hands, high-five, or hug.
6. Design a mechanism that makes a puppet jump off the ground and land safely.
7. Make your puppet rotate or turn around without moving it directly with your hands.
8. Create a mechanism that makes the puppet nod “yes” and shake its head “no.”
9. Design a puppet that can pull, push, or open a small door or flap.
10. Create a puppet mechanism that can grab and lift a lightweight object.
11. Make your puppet travel across a table or floor without carrying it with your hands.
12. Design movements that clearly show happiness, sadness, surprise, anger, or fear.
13. Create a puppet that can travel from Point A to Point B while following a specific path.

Extra Hard Puppetry Challenges

1. **Rescue the Puppet!** The puppet is “stuck” on the other side of an obstacle. Students must design a way to rescue it without reaching across the obstacle.
2. **Puppet Obstacle Course:** Make a puppet navigate around, over, or under three obstacles.
3. **Puppet Team Challenge:** Two people must control one puppet together, with each student controlling a different movement.



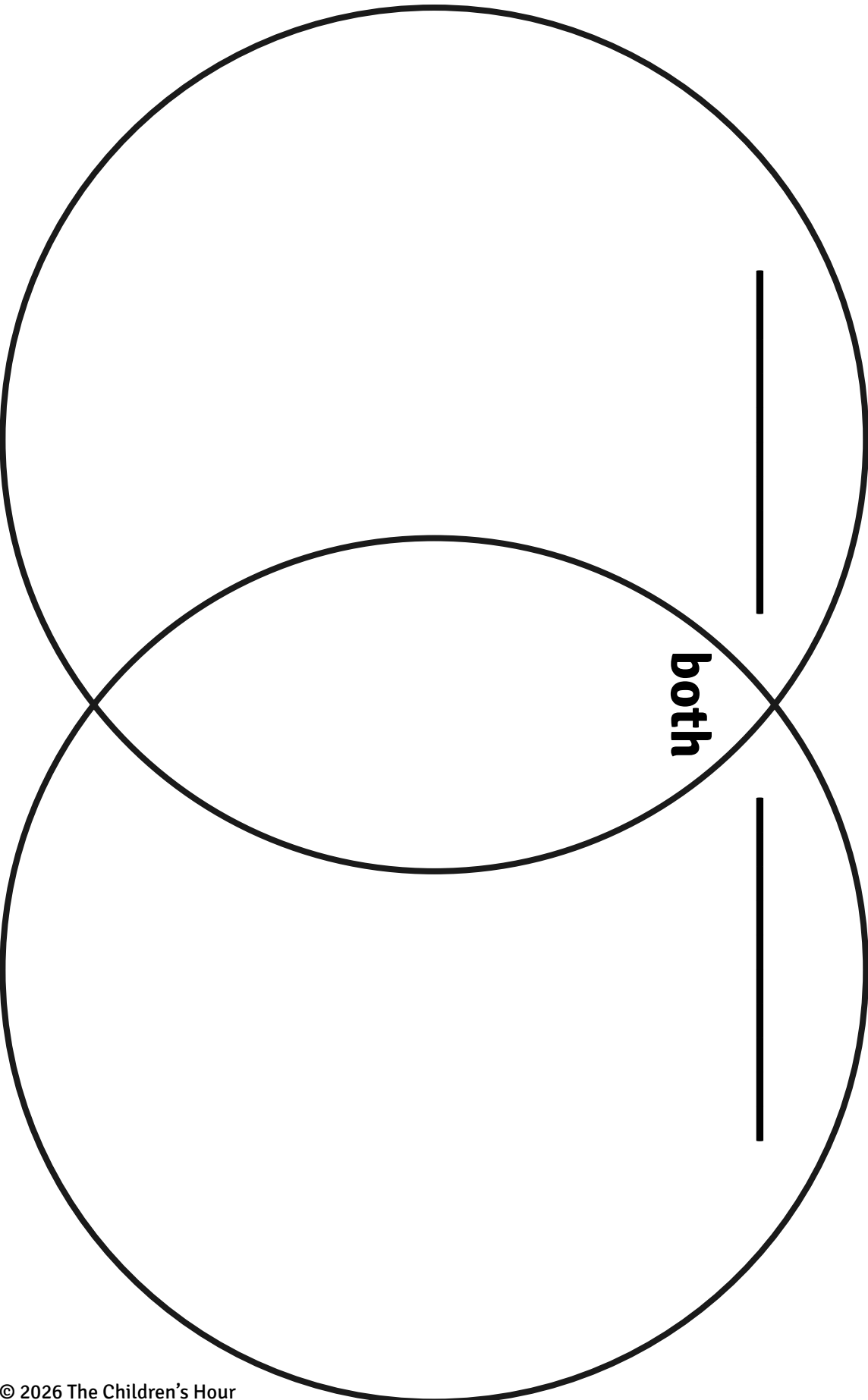
Character Comparison

Choose two Jim Henson characters, such as Kermit and Rowlf. Use this Venn diagram to compare their:

- Personalities
- Appearance
- Roles

Listen

- [Part 1: Who was Jim Henson? \(segment 9:48-15:55\).](#)
- [Part 4: Jim Henson's Legacy \(segment 42:03-47:03\).](#)





Additional Resources

[Stories to Tell with Puppets](#)

A list of preschool books that pair wonderfully with puppets, from the Vancouver Public Library.

[OffCenter Arts](#)

If you're local to Albuquerque, NM, this place is an amazing resource! They are a donation-based, free-to-the-public community arts center with a wide variety of materials, friendly and knowledgeable staff, and a puppet theater group that meets regularly.

Videos

[PBS Learning Media: What Are Puppets?](#)

In this short video for PreK-K, kids learn about puppets and how a child's imagination brings their puppet to life. Includes activities, handouts, and support materials for teachers.

[Jim Henson on Making Puppets 1969](#)

In this classic 15-minute video, Jim Henson shows kids how to make simple puppets out of things like socks, rubber bands, cardboard, and cloth.

[How to Make a Sock Puppet \(No Sewing\)](#)

A simple instructional video for slightly more advanced kids than the Jim Henson video.

[Basic Puppetry w/ Avery Jones](#)

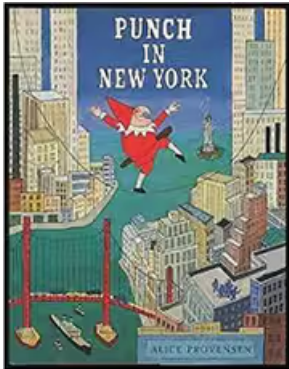
A 4-minute crash course.

[Tips from a Sesame Street Puppeteer!](#)

In this 37-minute video, Stacey Gordon ("Julia" on Sesame Street) gives Adam Savage a lesson in puppeteering.



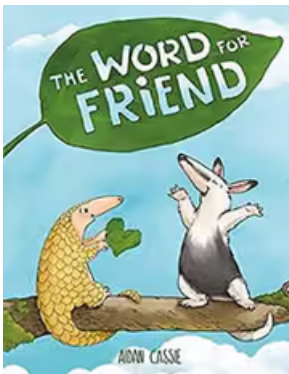
Book List



Punch in New York

by Alice Provensen, illustrated by Martin Provenson

The theatrical characters in this award-winning and detail-rich picture book go on an adventure in New York City.
ages 4-8



The Word Friend

by Aidan Cassie

An art project and puppet show help new student Kemala overcome communication problems caused by a language barrier in this heartwarming tale about the language of friendship.
ages 4-8



Hello, Neighbor! The Kind and Caring World of Mr. Rogers

by Matthew Cordell

This picture book biography tells the story of a shy boy with puppets and a piano who grows up to build TV's kindest neighborhood.
ages 4-9



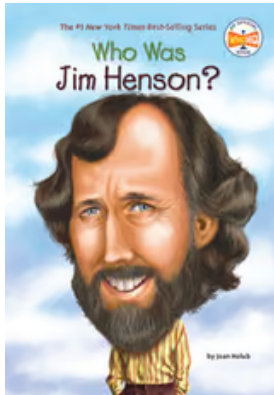
The Puppets of Spelhorst

by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Julie Morstad

Each puppet has a private ambition and must overcome separate dangers before a pair of sisters put them onstage together in this novella. The black-and-white illustrations make this a lovely bridge from picture books to a longer read-aloud early chapter book.
ages 7-9



Book List



Who Was Jim Henson?

by Joan Holub

This *Who Was?* biography has short chapters and plentiful illustrations that make this book ideal for middle-grade readers wanting to know more about Jim Henson's technical innovations in the world of puppetry. ages 8-11



Puppet

by David Almond, illustrated by Lizzy Stuart

A warm, modern Pinocchio story in which the creation gently nudges his maker back towards other people. A wonderful family read-aloud or independent book for ages 8 and up. ages 8-12



Splendors and Gloom

by Laura Amy Schlitz

Master puppeteer Gaspare Grisini's sinister past is exposed when Clara Wintermute mysteriously disappears, drawing orphaned assistants Lizzie Rose and Parsefall into a dangerous adventure involving crime, secrets, and a deadly witch. This heavy, dark Victorian tale is suitable for strong middle grade readers who enjoy Gothic novels. ages 10-14



50 Hand Puppet Techniques: Hidden Secrets & Tricks Revealed

by Chad Williams

This 96-page eBook is a master class in puppetry! ages 12+