



# CRAFT IN AMERICA

SCHROEDER CHERRY: CIVIL RIGHTS CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

### DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

1. *How much did you know about the Civil Rights Children's Crusade before seeing the puppet show? What surprised you?*

Responses may vary. This historic event is not as well known as many other aspects of the civil rights struggles in the mid 20th century. Another point of discussion: Do students think it should be better known? Would they like to tell others about it? And why or why not?

2. *What does DeAndre find out about his grandfather? Where does he find this information? Why is it surprising?*

DeAndre discovers his grandfather was arrested as a teenager when he sees a photograph in an old newspaper. DeAndre is shocked, in part because his grandfather is always correcting DeAndre, and instructing him to behave.

3. *Why did the students walk out of school and protest? What were they protesting for? What does DeAndre tell us was happening at that time?*

DeAndre describes a time when there were signs and laws instructing that Black people and white people should not intermingle. It was a disadvantage for Black people because many places, such as restaurants and even bathrooms and water fountains were closed to them. DeAndre asks the audience to imagine if they could not go to some of their favorite places today such as McDonald's and Target. The students protested these exclusionary laws.

4. *How did the students protest "non-violently"?*

They were instructed by community leaders to remain non-violent. They walked and "marched" in an orderly fashion, chanting or singing. When taunted, attacked by police dogs, or sprayed with hoses, they did not respond with violence. Discuss how that, paradoxically, could keep them safe-For example, giving no cause for anyone to shoot them.

5. *The Civil Rights Children's Crusade happened in 1963, 100 years after The Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery, was issued in 1863. Why was it still needed in the 1960s?*

While slavery was outlawed, Civil Rights activism continued to be necessary because of conditions remaining, such as the ones cited in the play, which disadvantaged Black citizens. Students may want to review and discuss Civil Rights news occurring in the present.

6. *John Lewis was a civil rights activist and a United States Representative representing Georgia's 5th congressional district. He died in 2020. He used the term "good trouble" for a situation when it was important to act, even though you might get into trouble. Do you think the students in this crusade were engaged in "good trouble?" DeAndre's*

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*grandfather went to jail. Do you think his grandfather went to jail for a good reason?*

DeAndre seems proud of his grandfather and admires the courage of the students who participated. Students may want to discuss examples of "good trouble", for example, standing up to a bully on behalf of another. How does non-violence help the argument of something being "good trouble"?

7. *Can you think of other student protests that have happened in the United States?*

During the Vietnam War, there were many student protests against the war on college campuses. More recently, students in high school have protested book bans, called for stricter gun control in the face of school shootings, and for the fair treatment of LGBTQ students.

8. *Many of the students that participated in the Civil Rights Children's Crusade are still alive. Some teenagers would be in their 60s and 70s now. In other words, this was not that long ago (May 2-10, 1963). Would you have wanted to participate in the Civil Rights Children's Crusade if you were there? Why or why not?*

Student responses may vary. Students who are not Black can consider whether they would march as an ally. Students may consider, as did many adults at the time, the danger involved. Some students were injured. Many participants were proud that their actions, and the news coverage around the world, caused the laws to be changed to make segregation illegal.

9. NOTE: If students have watched both videos, discuss the different ways the shows are presented with the following question:

*Describe the different ways Schroeder Cherry performs in the two shows.*

In the Underground Railroad play, he works behind a curtain so he can't be seen. He wears dark clothes and a head covering so that he is difficult to see, and the puppet DeAndre stands out. He uses scenery and backdrops that are painted. In both plays, he uses some painted signs. In both plays, he uses rod puppets. In *Children's Crusade*, there are additional figures, such as the group of students and the group of firemen that are stick puppets. In *Underground Railroad*, he works behind a curtain.

## EXTENDING THE DISCUSSION: PUPPET MAKING & PERFORMING

Puppet making is an engaging art practice for all ages. There is a playfulness in constructing puppets as they seem to "come to life" even before they are fully completed. Puppet performing, whether live performances or digitally recorded, is also playful in that the actors perform (and pretend) through "someone else;" that is, through the puppet.

Possible themes for pursuing puppet making and performance inspired by Dr. Schroeder Cherry's work could include reenactments, through puppets, of stories from the history of the Underground Railroad. Another theme may be representing further stories of the Civil Rights Children's Crusade (see resources above for access to more stories and individuals from the

event.) Students may want to focus on current events of the civil rights movement, with its ongoing issues.

Puppets can be simple or more detailed, as are Dr. Cherry's. Here are two methods suitable for beginners.

### Stick puppets

Suggested for younger students, yet effective for any age, stick puppets are a simple puppet form. Schroeder Cherry uses stick puppets in portions of his work. One example in *Underground Railroad, Not a Subway* is the North Star, which can move across the sky. It is a star shaped piece of card or wood, attached to a stick handle. Stick puppets are also visible in the Civil Rights Children's Crusade. For example, the crowd of students is a single cutout silhouette attached to a stick handle. The crowd turns to reveal a different design on the back of the cutouts, depicting the students inundated with water from the fire hoses.

Materials for stick puppets

- Cardboard (sturdy enough to hold its shape) a rectangle least 9 by 12 inches for each puppet
- Tempera paints and brushes Colorful papers for details
- Scissors
- Hot Glue gun and glue sticks; and/or white liquid glue
- For Sticks: paint stirrers or lightweight dowel rods make good support for a handle attached to the cardboard silhouette, or make a sturdy handle by layering and gluing two or more 1" wide strips of cardboard.
- Brass fasteners or paper clips for attaching extra parts
- Pliers

Building the stick puppet

Guide students to draw the character on the piece of cardboard, encouraging them to keep the drawing large so it can be seen from a distance when finished. When the drawing is satisfactory, have students carefully cut out the puppet shape. If a student wants to create a separate back piece for the puppet, they can now trace the shape they made on a second piece of cardboard and cut it out. Guide students in painting the puppet with tempera paints. When the paint is dry, demonstrate how to glue the handle to the base of the puppet shape. Students who made a back shape can glue it to the front shape with the stick handle encased between the layers. After painting and constructing, students can add details as desired. See the sock puppet materials list for inspiration in material choices.

### Sock Puppets

Schroeder Cherry makes rod puppets with lots of detail: wooden carved heads that can turn, hinged jaws, moving eyes, and hands controlled by attached rods so the puppets can gesture. Sock puppets are a much simpler form, but they can be surprisingly detailed and crafted with care. At the same time, they are easy enough to make and have an appealing look by the nature of the stretchy sock and the easy manipulation of facial expressions. Arms can be added and left loose and floppy or attached to rods for more controlled gesturing, as Schroeder Cherry does.

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## Materials for sock puppets

- Socks: Use inexpensive or gently used socks, one per puppet. These should at least fit over the hand and wrist. Crew socks and knee socks work well; longer is better as it covers more of the arm.
- Scissors
- Hot Glue gun and glue sticks; and/or white liquid glue
- Needles and thread
- Safety pins for marking feature placement and attaching items
- Chalk for marking features
- Permanent black marker for pupils in eyes and other details
- 9x12" felt pieces for features, clothes, hair, and details
- Lightweight cardboard for structure where needed (such as cereal boxes)
- Yarn and string (for hair)
- Fake fur scraps (for hair/wigs)
- Fabric scraps for clothes
- Pipe cleaners for optional arms and other details
- Assorted materials such as buttons, pompoms, artificial plants and flowers, old jewelry, doll shoes or accessories, wiggle eyes, trims, sequins, and small toys for props (such as tiny plastic tools, food, etc.) to add details to puppets.

## Build the sock puppet

Instruct and demonstrate for students: "Place your four fingers in the toe of the sock for fitting. Pull the toe of the sock away from your fingertips about 3 inches or more to create some slack, and tuck the toe in between your thumb and fingers to make an indented mouth. You should now be able to open and close the thumb and fingers to make the mouth move." With the puppet on the hand, students can mark the placement of features. Show students how to use safety pins (or chalk marks) to map out where they want the eyes, nose, and upper and lower lips to be placed. Students can remove the sock and proceed with making and attaching features.

## Mouth

Students can choose to use the mouth as is, adding felt lips for definition. Lips can be cut from felt and sewn or glued in place. This mouth will be easily manipulated (for example, curling the fingers and thumb inward can make an angry expression.) Or, students may refine a sturdier (but less malleable) mouth in the following way: Demonstrate how to cut an oval for a mouth (or you may want to make a pattern that students can trace.) Draw an oval about 3 inches wide by 5 inches long from paper and cut it out. Fold it in half to check the fit on the sock; that is, tuck it between the fingers and thumb to see if it will do for the size and shape of the mouth. Adjust the shape as needed. Students can use the paper pattern to trace and cut a mouth from lightweight cardboard and again from a piece of pink felt for the inside of the mouth. Students can glue the felt to the cardboard, and then glue the mouth in place on the sock.

Features: Eyes, noses, and other features can be cut from felt and applied with glue or sewn in place. Pompoms can be used with felt to make more 3-dimensional features such as round eyes or a more prominent nose. For example, demonstrate the following to students: Use a white pompom for an eyeball. Add a colorful felt circle for an iris and glue it to the pompom. Color a pupil on the iris with a marker. Cut an upper and a lower eyelid from felt and glue these above and below (and slightly covering) the eyeball. Add lashes if desired, and eyebrows made from felt.

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## Hair

Demonstrate several methods to students. 1. Felt: Felt pieces can be cut in hair shapes such as bangs, hair for each side of head from part to desired length, hair for back of head, ponytails, etc. These pieces may be glued or sewn to the puppet's head. 2. Fake Fur: Pieces of fake fur can be used the same way as felt, and the fur can then be combed and styled. (Note: When cutting fur, cut carefully through the backing fabric, with the fur side place against the table and pointing the scissors away from the fur to avoid cutting the fur itself.) 3. Yarn: Long or short hair can be made from one or more tassels of yarn, and then styled in braids, up-dos, brushed out, etc. Demonstrate to students how to make hanks of hair: Wind yarn around four fingers or around a book that equals the length of the desired hair. For example, a 6-inch book will yield 6-inch long strands. Wind about 20 rounds to start. (Adjust amounts later if needed.) Tie yarn around one end of the folded strands, threading it under and around the strands. Carefully cut through the other end of the strands to release the hank of hair. Attach the tied end with glue or by sewing to the head. Make as many hanks as desired and arrange them on the puppet. Trim hair and style as desired.

## Arms

Demonstrate making arms for students: Cut arm shapes from felt, two for each arm. Sew or glue a pair of arm shapes together with a pipe cleaner between the layers (fold the ends of pipe cleaner to fit inside arm shape.) Make a second arm. Attach securely to the puppet with glue or sewing. Bend arms as desired.

## Clothes

Clothes can be fashioned largely from fabric rectangles, cut to fit the puppet, and glued on or carefully stitched. (This is a good opportunity to practice some basic sewing.) Demonstrate some costume designing for students. For example, to create a shirt or top, cut a rectangle of fabric to fit around the puppet from the neck to the length desired. Create another rectangle to cover the base of shirt (at the waist) to look like pants or a skirt. (Caution students not to make clothes so snug that the puppet no longer can stretch over the hand.) Sleeves can be made from rectangles of fabric that wrap around the arms. A collar can be cut from felt: Cut a long thin rectangle. Wrap around the puppet's neck. Adjust length, trim, and attach to puppet's shirt.

When finished with the stick or sock puppet, refine and audition the puppet:

Encourage students to examine their puppets for secure attachments, and to add some sewing, or glue, if needed to improve puppet sturdiness. Have students work in small groups to audition their puppets: "Ask your partner if the puppet looks good or expresses the feeling you want it to. You may want to enlarge or exaggerate features so the puppet can be easily seen."

Demonstrate for students a technique for making puppets talk effectively: "Open the mouth of the puppet with each word and close the mouth at the end of the word. In other words, when saying "Hi!," the puppet's mouth opens when you say "Hi!" and closes at the end of the word. When talking fast, your puppet's mouth might barely close between words."