

Puppet Power!

When most people think about puppets, images from childhood come to mind: Kermit the Frog and Elmo from *Sesame Street*, perhaps. Today, however, puppets seem to be getting out of hand, popping up in TV commercials, and on Broadway and on the Japanese stage.

In New York City, puppets are singing opera. They are reciting Shakespeare. The stage production of *The Lion King* uses life-size elephant, giraffe, and hyena puppets. The Broadway show *Little Shop of Horrors* featured a life-size singing Venus's flytrap puppet. In Japan, **bunraku**, a serious form of puppet theater, is very popular.

Puppets come in all shapes, sizes, and materials. They can be simple cardboard cutouts or elaborate foam-rubber forms. They can be porcelain **marionettes**, puppets that dangle from strings. Simple puppets can be operated by a single finger. Other puppets require a highly skilled team of three or four people to work them. Puppets have been around for centuries.

"Sometimes we want things that **hark back**¹ to a more innocent time," said one puppeteer.

¹ **hark back**: to recall something earlier

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The author gives examples of puppets doing all of the following EXCEPT
 - A singing opera
 - B reciting Shakespeare
 - C starring in TV commercials
 - D giving political speeches

2. In this passage, what does the author try to convince the reader of?
 - A People should go see more puppet productions.
 - B All stage productions should feature puppets.
 - C The use of puppets is getting out of hand.
 - D Marionettes are the most interesting puppets.

3. After reading the passage, you can conclude that the author
 - A was once a puppeteer
 - B has never watched *Sesame Street*
 - C is a fan of Broadway shows
 - D has strong opinions about puppets

4. Read this sentence from the passage: "They can be simple cardboard cutouts or elaborate foam-rubber forms."

Based on the text, the word **elaborate** means

- A inexpensive
 - B complicated
 - C average
 - D important

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to
 - A describe the stage production of *The Lion King*
 - B convince the reader of the author's point of view
 - C persuade people to see more puppet theater shows
 - D compare and contrast different kinds of puppets

6. What is a marionette?

7. What might the puppeteer have meant by saying, "Sometimes we want things that hark back to a more innocent time"?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Some puppets are being featured in Broadway shows _____ New York City.

- A** and
- B** or
- C** on
- D** in

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Some puppeteers work as a team of three or four people to operate large puppets.

Who? _____

(do) What? work as a team of three or four people

Why? _____

10. Vocabulary Word: hark back: to recall something earlier.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 870

Featured Text Structure: Persuasive – the writer analyzes both sides of an argument and offers convincing proof of his/her point of view in order to influence the reader

Passage Summary: “Puppet Power!” describes the author’s point of view that the popularity of puppets is getting out of hand.

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6. What is a marionette?

Suggested answer: A marionette is a puppet that dangles from strings. [paragraph 3]

7. What might the puppeteer have meant by saying, "Sometimes we want things that hark back to a more innocent time"?

Suggested answer: The puppeteer might have meant that people want things that take them back to their childhood. [paragraph 4]

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Who? **some puppeteers**

(do) What? work as a team of three or four people

Why? **to operate large puppets**

10. Vocabulary Word: hark back: to recall something earlier.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.