

# Puppets

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I decided to make sure to be time effective, which in this context means activating as many students as possible from different years and ages.

The 3rd year started out with a lesson about creating characters based on facial expressions. I used simple materials to make sure the students were focusing only on the faces and not getting blocked by the value of the material. We were working fast and produced many "leaf faces" in a short amount of time to not get stuck in a creative mind block.







With year 5 we took the exercise a little further and created faces and bodies from little clay clods we found dry from last year. The challenge was to find a body shape in something already made.

This was very difficult. The students' imagination isn't as free as I expected or maybe my explanation to the idea wasn't clear enough. I will try the same idea later with a new group of students.





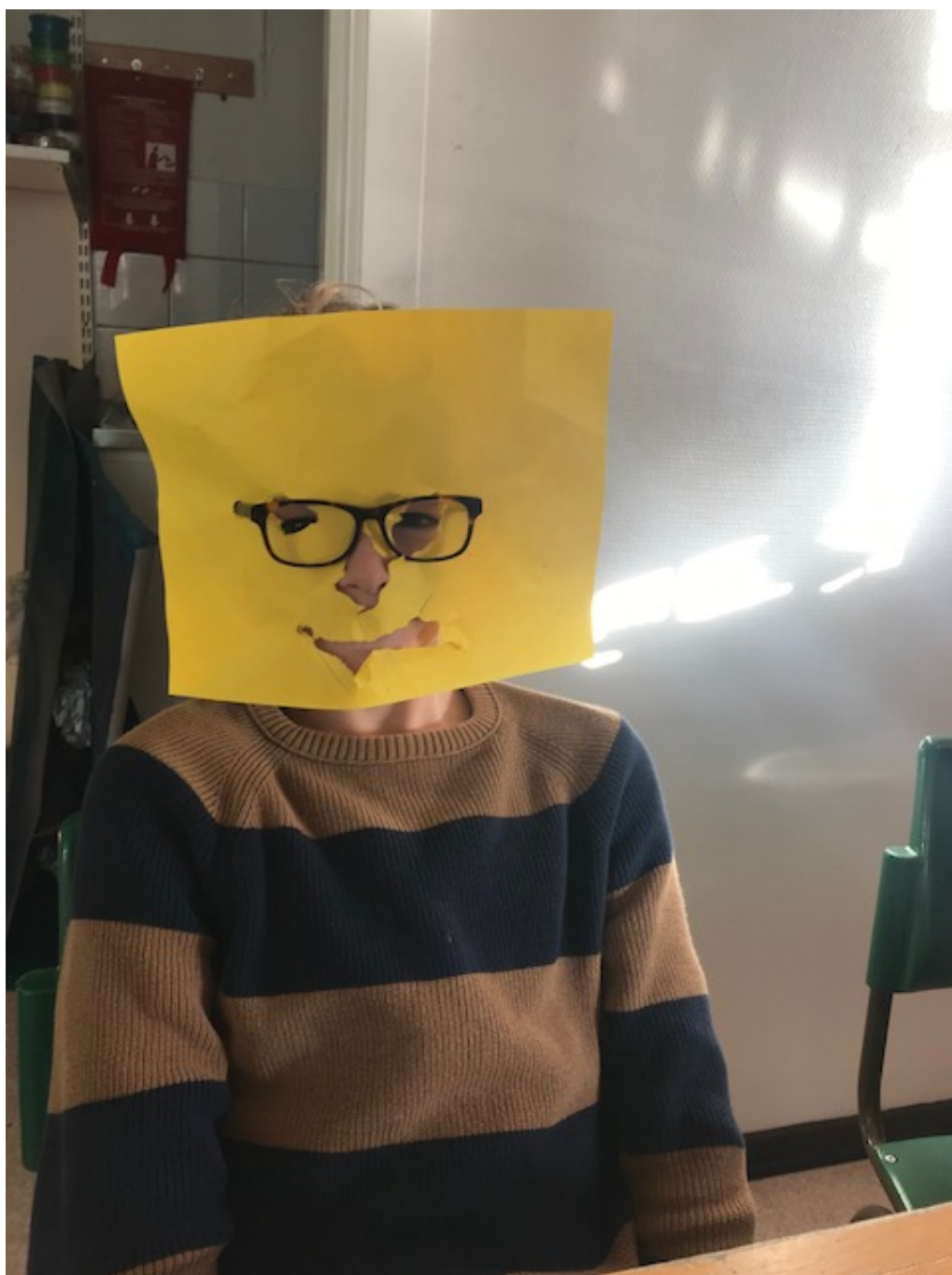








I tried out a different idea on the very same group, year 5. I gave them coloured paper and told them to create faces and expressions by only tearing and ripping the paper apart.





Finally we began creating puppets.

Year three made the base of the puppets. It was incredibly difficult wadding the nylon socks making it stiff and firm and then making sure it was well fastened on the bottle. We spent an hour doing this and I realised my time schedule was way too optimistic.







The good part is that we got a variety of shapes.

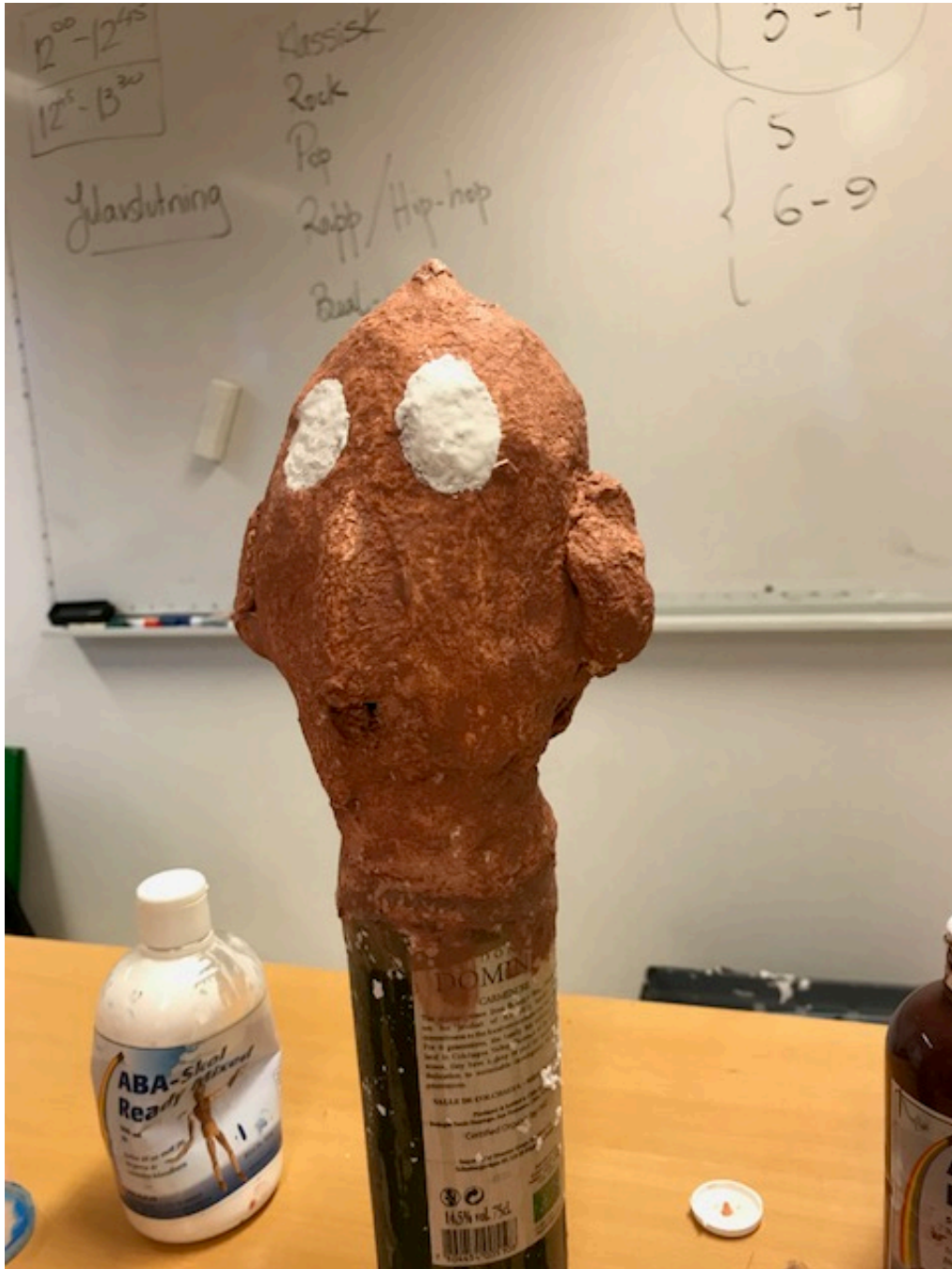
Next step is to cover the blobs with papier maché. With striped newspaper and with glue, we made a foundation that hardens.

It didn't work out. At all. Everything fell apart.



I had to think of something and bought already made papier maché, which is crumbled paper mixed with glue. When you add water you get a smooth easy to handle mixture that is slightly mouldable.

Then we came to the fun part. I let year 4 paint the faces.









The next challenge will be to remove the puppet head from the bottle and make clothes from our home made printed fabrics.



Year 9 will be making the set and year 7 will do the scenography (to be added later.)

## **Puppet Making**

We discovered a lot about the students' creative process during this exercise. In particular, we found that students had an easier time creating puppets that "looked like puppets." When challenged to create puppets out of natural materials, such as leaves and lumps of hardened clay, it took them longer to recognise the possibilities for creating their characters. We felt that the puppet activity required much more planning and prep work than we had originally budgeted for. This was due to the fact that the materials (such as the paper mâché paste) did not always function as they should.

The students found the activities both fun and challenging. They loved the "messiness" of the project and the possibility for creative expression, both when making the various puppets and painting the puppet faces. The students' idea of what puppets were (or could be) was developed over the course of this project, as all of them had the opportunity to create something, either from existing materials, or using the techniques learned in Greece.

