



# Young People's Puppet Theatre

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## Guidelines for authors considering writing scripts for

### The Young People's Puppet Theatre

January 2020, specific to the Purcell School / Commonwealth Blue Charter Project

A script for this project should have the following characteristics:

The story line must be suitable for students aged 10 and upwards.

It should be about 45 minutes long with interludes of music adding at least a further 15 minutes.

It is likely to be between 6500 and 7500 words long (total word count)

It should have between 8 and 12 major characters, and may have some minor characters (not including the narrator/s - see below).

It should have between 4 and 6 different sets (though each of these can be used for multiple scenes).

It should be fast-paced. Short scenes are fine, with frequent scene changes.

Stories based in foreign lands or on foreign cultures or with foreign folklore as their base are welcome.

Serial narrative is preferred. Jumps in time and flashbacks are possible but not to the extent of being confusing to a young audience.

Within reason, repetition of patterns within the script is a good thing.

If you are starting with a classical story which is either too short or too simple, you should consider adding a sub-plot from somewhere else.

Most productions will be performed in June or July and as such it's better to avoid very wintry stories.

Sounds effects are encouraged. They can either be manually created or digital sound files

Our lighting system permits quite dramatic / atmospheric lighting. Take advantage of it.

The script should have at least one narrator who moves the story along, sets the scene at the beginning of the show and covers the time needed for scene changes. The narrator(s) sit in front of the marionette stage i.e. they are people rather than puppets



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on the stage. Their role is primarily as continuity announcers, and they will normally not participate in the action while the curtain is up. If you find yourself writing them into the scenes to describe what is happening on stage, you should consider letting the action and dialogue do that job. It may be possible to incorporate a narrator as a "Greek Chorus" but that is something you should discuss with the YPPT beforehand.

Monologues of any length are to be discouraged.

Not every moment needs dialogue, particularly at the beginning of a scene, when the audience should be permitted time to absorb what they are seeing, particularly the first time the curtain comes up on a particular set.

Ideally there will never be more than 6 characters on stage at once due limited space for the puppeteers. Eight is an absolute maximum and with eight some of the puppets at the edges of the stage will not be visible to the entire audience because of sight lines.

Animal puppets may be included, but in limited numbers and ideally not as main characters due to the technical difficulty of making them.

Magic and special effects are encouraged but you should have some idea how they will be achieved. You should discuss these with the YPPT before making them central to your script. Some things are easy with puppets, such as flying, but some things such as trap doors are very difficult or impossible. Special effects which require coordinated action amongst multiple people backstage are encouraged as they require the performers to collaborate and get the timing right.

It is very difficult for puppets to pick things up, requiring an additional level of stringing complexity that is generally asking for trouble. It is almost impossible for one puppet to hand something to another puppet, so a script must not depend on objects being handed around. If you have an idea for a plot which is based around an object, you should consider making that object animate of its own accord. However, as with special effects, it is always worth discussing possibilities with the YPPT before either getting carried away or becoming too discouraged. We always want to make things possible, and we like to make the audience to wonder how something was done, but that is not to say that everything is possible.

These are merely guidelines, and if you feel you have a good idea which strays from them, feel free to contact the YPPT for a discussion rather than just abandoning your idea. We wish to encourage practicality without being too formulaic.