

# A Nativity Story

## Make Your Own Puppet Theatre at Home



## Hello, my name is Elizabeth.

I'm the Artistic Director of Pitlochry Festival Theatre. We're so pleased to be working with Holy Trinity Scottish Episcopal Church in Pitlochry to help you to make and perform your own shows, while we can't welcome you to the theatre.

As part of our illustrated guide series, [How to Build Your Own Theatre](#) here is *A Nativity Story* to perform together. It has been illustrated by some wonderful artists – Adrian Rees and Trudy Rees-Marklew. First, you'll find Elias' lesson story, and then THREE ways to perform the story by making your own Puppet Theatre at home.

We're going to show you how to create your puppets using socks or sticks, and then there's a slide puppet theatre too. You can choose the one you like, or make all three!

We'd love to see and hear how you've got on and hope you enjoy making theatre in your own home!

Stay safe! Lots of love and have a very Merry Christmas.

Elizabeth x



# A Nativity Story

## Elias' Lesson

### Introduction: Story from Luke's Gospel

We all know the story of how Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem because of the census, how there was no room at the inn so Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger; and how angels visited shepherds in the fields and how the shepherds came to worship the new born baby.

But what of the other people involved in the story?

**Reader:** Everyone agreed that Elias was a miser and a miserable old sinner who hated the world and everything in it, except money.



That winter, exciting news had come to the village. There was to be a national census and everyone was to return to their birthplace to be registered.



Elias rubbed his hands with glee, this meant many travellers and they would need food and drink, and maybe they would like to buy trinkets too. The opportunities for making money were excellent! So, he chose his spot carefully at the crossroads, a few miles from the little town of Bethlehem. (*Dramatic pause*)

For the last ten days he had sat selling his wares and his livestock, and now, just two days before the census, he had very little left – just a large basket of food and the last two animals he had: a bad-tempered donkey and an ancient cow.

Trade was poor that day, most travellers had already reached their destinations, and the day was cold with an East wind whipping up the dust on the road.

As evening approached he was just about to go home when he saw two travellers approaching. They were on foot: a man and a woman. The woman was heavily pregnant and looked tired, and as they passed him the man turned to Elias and heaved a great sigh, “My friend, how far is it to Bethlehem?”





"Oh, it's not very far," answered Elias, "but as your wife is in such a delicate condition why not buy my fine Donkey, he will carry you safely to Bethlehem.

The man looked at the donkey who was trying to bite Elias and shook his head, but the woman stepped up to the beast and, as she stroked his soft nose, he calmed and instead of kicking or biting laid his head on her shoulder. "Look Joseph," she said, "He's so gentle." Joseph put his arm around her, "Then I shall buy him Mary," he said. "How much do you want for him?"

As Elias opened his mouth, he found himself remembering his own wife Miriam, who had died so long ago. So, instead of asking for 40 denarii, he completely surprised himself by saying, "There's no charge, take him as a gift for the child." Then he watched as the woman rode away on his donkey and cursed his stupidity. What had come over him?



Some time later, Elias was still recovering from his unexpected act of generosity, so at first he didn't see the woman and she had to give him quite a nudge to get his attention.



"Elias," she shouted, "what are you day dreaming about? Look a poor women has just given birth in our stable, and what a beautiful baby boy he is! But my husband, said we must give the mother a nice milky drink, so he sent me to buy your cow. How much please?"

As Elias opened his mouth to speak, he found himself remembering the day his own son had been born. His son was away in the army now, but Elias couldn't help remembering his baby smiles.

So, instead of asking for 40 denarii, he completely surprised himself by saying, "There's no charge, take him as a gift. The milk will do her good." Then he watched as the woman lead away his cow and cursed his stupidity. What had come over him? *(Dramatic Pause)*



For a long time after the woman had left, Elias was aware of the lights in the sky. They seemed to gather around the sheepfold on the hill. Suddenly, as he watched, the light swelled and grew until it filled the whole sky! He thought he heard a voice saying, "Oh earth! Peace to all of good will."

Elias closed his eyes, "Humbug!" he muttered to himself. "It's time I went home." He had given away his cow and his donkey, and it had been a very bad day. But as he picked up his basket and prepared to leave, he heard the voices. Some men walked towards him with purpose in their steps. "Ah," he thought, "customers!"

The men were shepherds and they stopped to speak with him. "Did you see the angels?" they asked. "Angels?" said Elias. "Yes," said the oldest shepherd, "They told us of the birth of the Messiah, and said that we would find him in Bethlehem, in a Stable. We are going to see him and take our gifts to the new born King."

Elias was just going to tell them what he thought of this, when he remembered the young pregnant women, the innkeeper's wife and what had happened to his cow and his donkey. "I am coming with you," he said, "if you don't mind?"





"Of course not," said the Shepherds, "but we are quite hungry, you look as if you have some food left in your basket. What about a bite to eat before we go and how much will it cost?"

As Elias was going to open his mouth, he remembered all that had happened that day. "Let us share it," he said, "there's no charge." But he did wonder just what he was doing as they all sat down to eat. As they approached the stable, they could see light glowing around the door; sweet music filled the air and in his mother's arms lay the baby, his father Joseph close by, and the innkeeper and his wife kept watch.

Joseph looked up, "Come in," he said. "Come and see our baby. We have called him Jesus."

The shepherds knelt before the baby and gave his mother their simple gifts. Then it was Elias' turn, "I have no gift," he said. "I have nothing left to give him," and he began to turn away in shame. "It's Elias," said the Innkeepers wife. "He gave us his cow."







"And his donkey," said Mary, "when I was too weary to walk."

"And his food," said the shepherds, "when we were hungry and tired".

Elias felt a great peace come upon him. "I have nothing left to give," he said.

"The only thing I have left is myself and that I give freely."

"And his donkey," said Mary, "when I was too weary to walk."

"And his food," said the shepherds, "when we were hungry and tired".

Elias felt a great peace come upon him. "I have nothing left to give," he said.

"The only thing I have left is myself and that I give freely."

And Elias knelt in the straw and offered himself to the Christ Child  
with these words:





I come before the Christ Child.

I kneel before the infant.

I worship with the shepherds and kings.

I love him with Mary and Joseph.

I wonder at the 'Word made flesh'.

I bow before the mystery.

I sing Glory to God with the angels.

I will travel this day rejoicing,  
glorifying and praising God.



# the Sock and Glove Puppet Theatre at home!

You can use these ideas to make your Puppet Theatre, or you can make up your own ideas!

place the theatre on the edge of a table and work the puppets from behind and below

Cover a long, narrow cardboard box with strips of brown paper to look like wood. Use different browns.



Make the front of the stable out of card. You may have to glue several pieces of card together to make it strong.

Make the uprights long enough to go right through the box, through two slots cut in the top



# the Nativity

the Sock and Glove Puppet Cast of the Story of Elias, the Miser



the Innkeeper

the Innkeeper's wife

Joseph

Mary

Elias

- with his basket of food

A bad-tempered Donkey

An Ancient Cow

these Sock and Glove Puppets will need the use of a needle and thread/wool



the Shepherds

You may need to ask an adult to help you. Look at the following pages for some helpful hints for making these Characters.



# The Sock Puppets and How to Make Them!

Use an old sock  
for Joseph's  
Body.

You can make  
Joseph's moustache  
by making long  
stitches out of  
black wool, or  
draw them on with felt pen



## Joseph

to make the  
hat, cut the toe  
out of an old  
sock, add a  
pom-pom and  
sew it to the  
base sock.

for the eyes,  
cut out two oval  
pieces of white  
card and draw  
the eyes on in  
felt pen

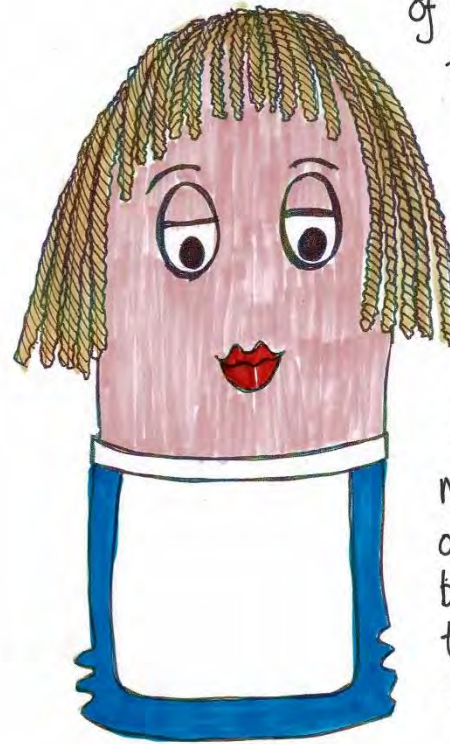
Use a piece of  
coloured ribbon  
for the scarf  
and sew it in  
place!

## Mary

Stitch, or glue strands  
of wool to the top of  
the sock to  
make the hair.

Cut out the  
eyes and lips  
in card and  
colour them in.  
Stick them in place

Make the dress  
out of a piece of  
blue sock and  
the apron out of  
ribbon and a  
square of fabric.



Make the apron  
reversible and draw  
Baby Jesus on the back - then flip it for  
the stable!



# Elias

Elias is made  
from one glove

Cut out  
cardboard  
eyes and  
colour with  
a felt pen

Use a piece of  
ribbon for the  
belt and a  
piece of card for  
the buckle.



add  
cotton  
wool  
for his  
hair and  
beard.

Sew the  
belt to  
the sock

+  
with a basket  
of food



Cut a section  
from an egg  
box and glue  
strips of coloured  
paper round the  
edges.

You could use  
some sweets for  
Elias's food.



## the bad-tempered Donkey

Use wool  
for the  
mane

try and find  
a brown, or  
grey socks for  
the donkey's  
body.

No one knows  
what made the  
donkey bad  
tempered.



Use card  
for the ears  
and horns.  
Glue in place

Make the  
eyes, noses  
and mouths  
from card.  
Glue in place.

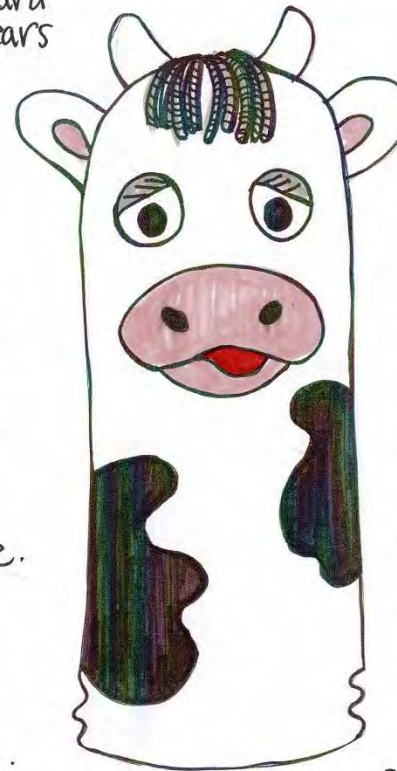
Colour and  
add details  
with felt pens.

## An Ancient Cow

Use knitting  
wool for the  
mane hair.

this cow said if  
the donkey was  
going to have a  
mane, then she  
wanted a mane, too.

You can use a  
black magic marker  
to make the  
cow's patches, or  
cut them from pieces  
of felt.

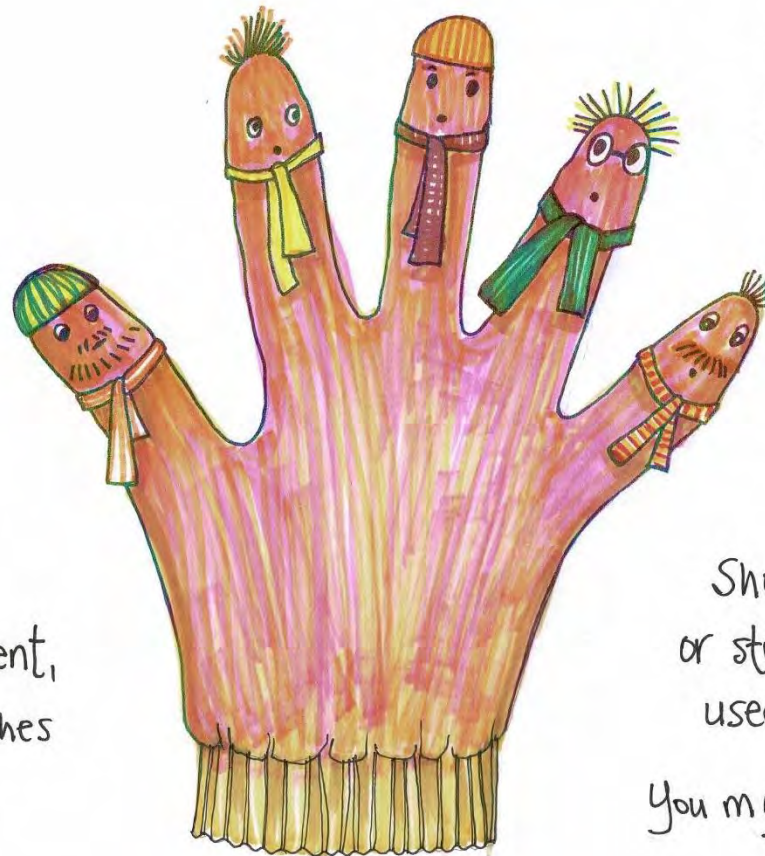


# "the Shepherds"

the Shepherds  
are made from  
one glove

You can use  
felt tipped pens  
for the details of  
the faces.

If you feel confident,  
you can use stitches  
for the details



to make the  
Shepherd's hats, cut  
off the tips of the fingers  
of another glove and sew on.

Use felt pens to draw  
details on the hats.

Use strands of wool for hair.

Short lengths of ribbon,  
or strips of fabric can be  
used for scarves.

You might need to ask an  
adult to help.





## the Innkeeper

Cut the top out of another sock and sew it on to the body sock to make the hat and use wool for the hair.

Use stitches for the beard and eye brows and card for the eyes



the bodies are made from old socks

Make aprons out of scraps of fabric and ribbons

## the Innkeeper's wife

Cut a triangle from some scrap fabric to make a scarf.

tie it as shown and then sew it in place

Use stitches and card to make the facial features.



these are only suggestions. You can make up your own designs!



Make a detachable  
star that can be used  
on both sides

Make a "wooden" wall  
to match the rest of  
the structure for  
backing the  
Nativity



## the Stick Puppet Nativity!

Use this side of  
the model to create your  
Nativity scene.

cut holes into the stable  
floor just big enough to push  
the puppet sticks through. Keep them  
a tight fit



## the Stick Puppet Theatre

You can paint the card structure, or stick coloured paper on top.

the star should be detachable and fixed to either side

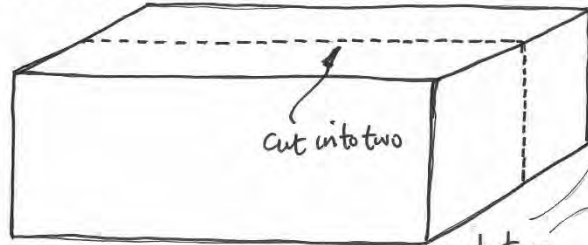


Use this side for the start of the story.  
Place the structure at the back edge of a table and hand-hold the stick puppets, as shown above.



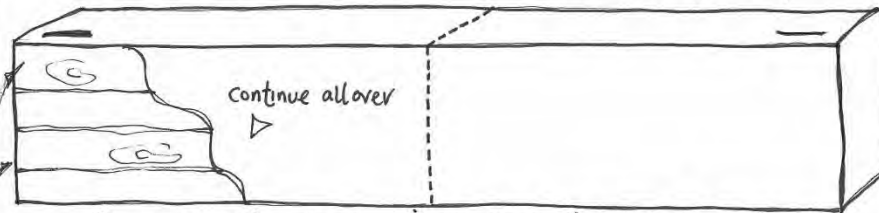
# 'How to Make the Stick Puppet Theatre'

You will need a long, thin cardboard box



this can be done by cutting a smaller box in half and fixing the two ends together and putting a back on it.

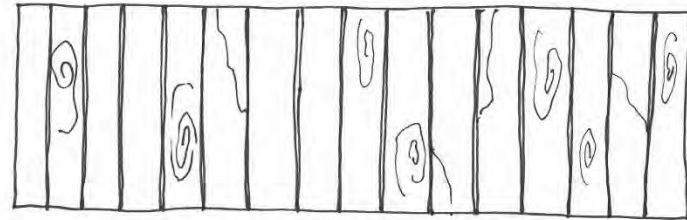
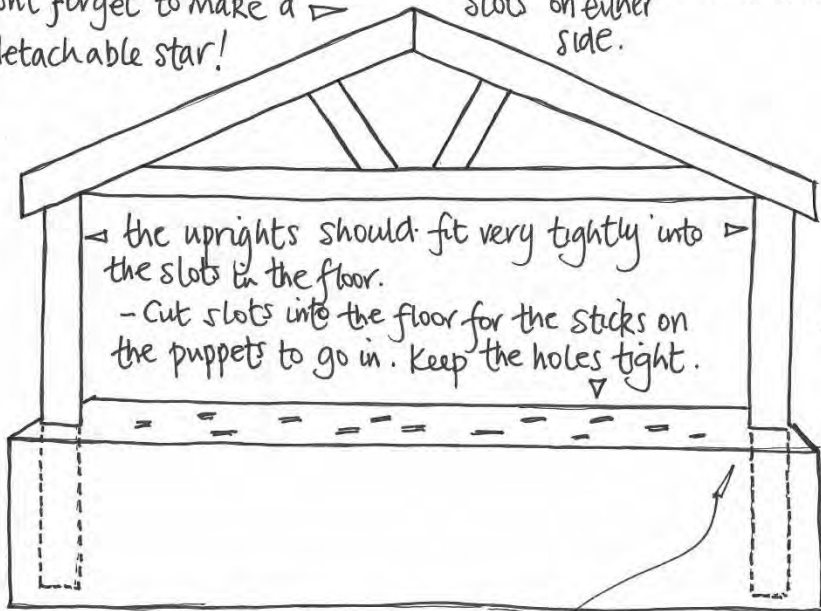
You will need to cover it all over with fake "planks"



Don't forget to make a detachable star!

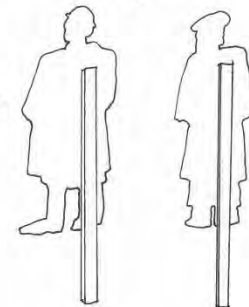
cut two slots on either side.

Cover the structure with paper planks, or paint it.



You will need to make a wall that fits into the hole. This will be needed for the actual Nativity scene.

the Puppets



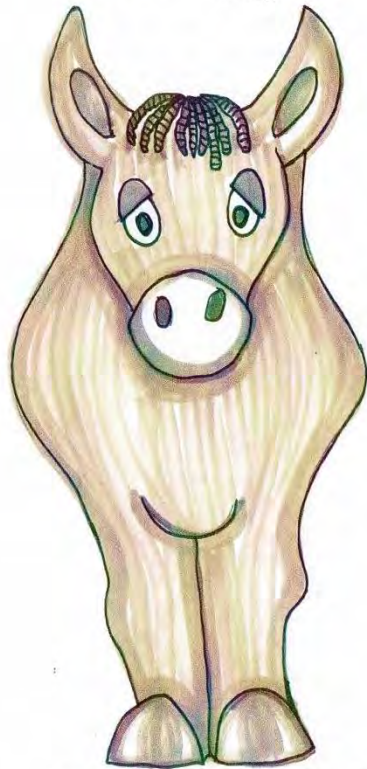
Cut out figures and stick them to card. Cut those out and glue a stick, or a piece of card down the back.

Use this side for the puppet show and position the structure at the edge of a table

cut slots and push the uprights through. Make sure they fit tightly



a  
bad-tempered  
donkey



Elias



an  
ancient  
cow



You could print these images from your computer, stick them on card, cut them out and put sticks on their backs, or you could draw your own puppets! Enjoy!



Joseph



Mary



and

Baby  
Jesus



use a sticky pad to fix Jesus to Mary



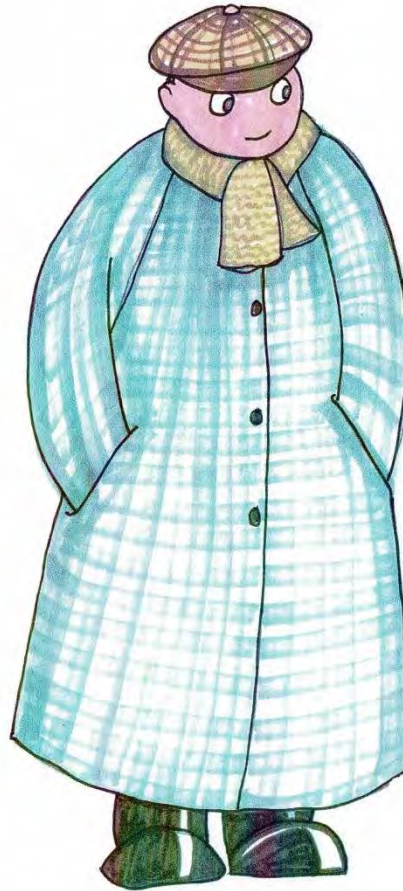
# the Shepherds



the  
Innkeeper's wife

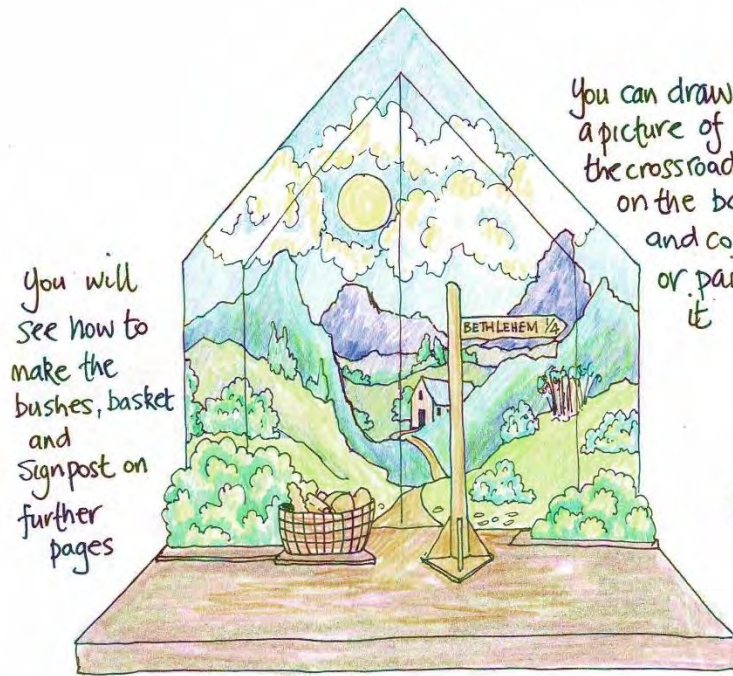


More Shepherds!





# Make Your Own Puppet Theatre at Home for the Nativity and the Story of Elias



You will see how to make the bushes, basket and signpost on further pages

You can draw a picture of the crossroads on the box and colour or paint it

the scene at the crossroads on the way to Bethlehem



the inside of the stable might look like this

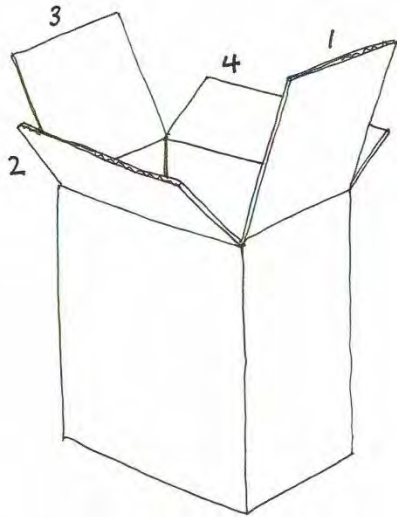
paint the back of the doors like the inside of a stable

Inside the Stable



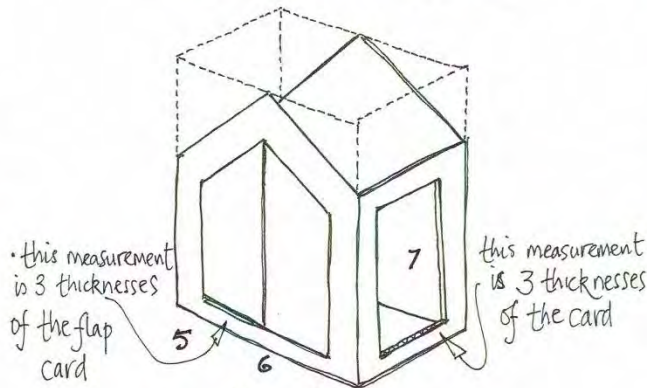
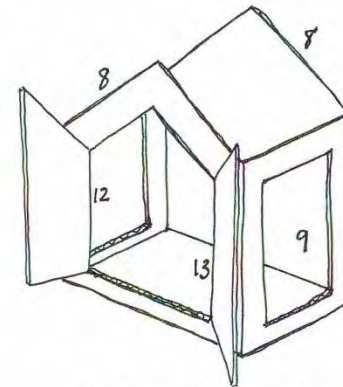
# How to make your own Puppet theatre

\* You will probably need an adult to help you with this project



- find a large box - the sort that has flaps at the top
- cut off the flaps, but keep them - you'll need them later! (1, 2, 3, 4)

- With a felt pen, mark out the sides and ends of the box as shown below
- Mark out two barn door shapes on one side as shown - the longer side (5, 6)



• this measurement is 3 thicknesses of the flap card

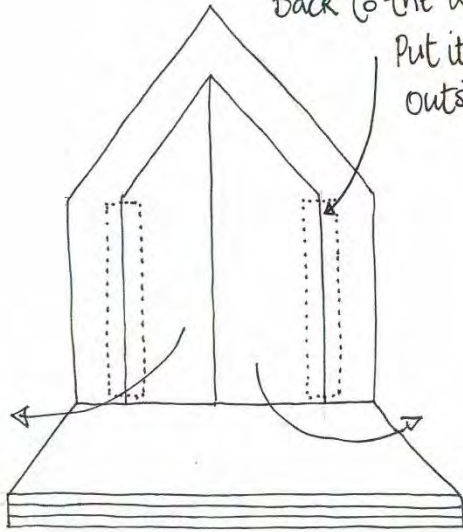
• this measurement is 3 thicknesses of the card

- On the shorter sides, mark out two oblongs as shown (7)

- Cut out the top sections and the two end oblongs as above (8, 9)
- Cut out the two doors at the front - You will need a sharp craft knife and an adult to help (10, 11)
- tape the side edges of the door flaps to the main box (12, 13)

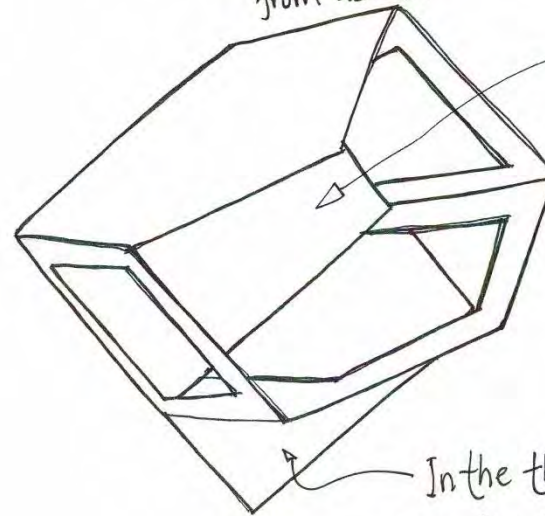


Use a strip of tape  
to attach the doors  
back to the wall.  
Put it on the  
outside.



Use the cardboard flaps from the top of the box to make the front of the stage. Three layers should be enough. Glue them together, then stick the whole floor to the front of your theatre box. Mark out the doors on the front as shown and cut them out.

★ this is looking down from above.



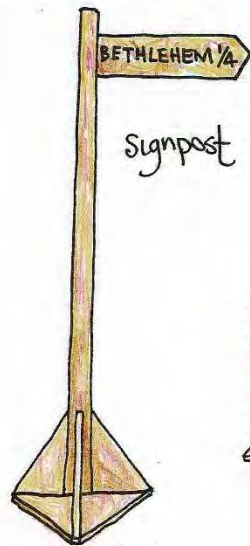
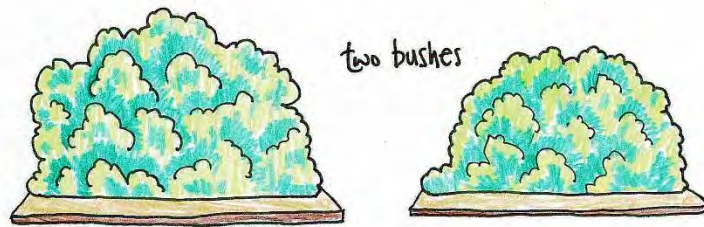
You will need to make the floor inside your box as high as the front - use any extra cardboard box that you have.

In the theatre, we call this area the "forestage", or the "apron".

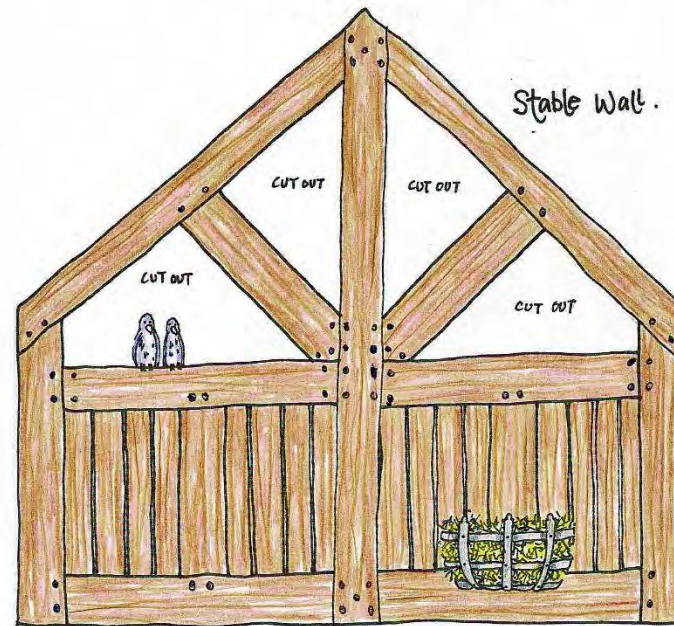
You can paint the outside of the box, or leave it "box" colour. You should paint the forestage to look like sandy ground.



Make two bushes as shown below and a signpost and a basket of food.



for the Nativity scene, you will need to make the stable wall below. You can draw it on a piece of card and paint it any way you want to. Use these ideas as inspiration and make your own stable!



these bits and pieces can be copied from your pc or you can draw them from scratch!

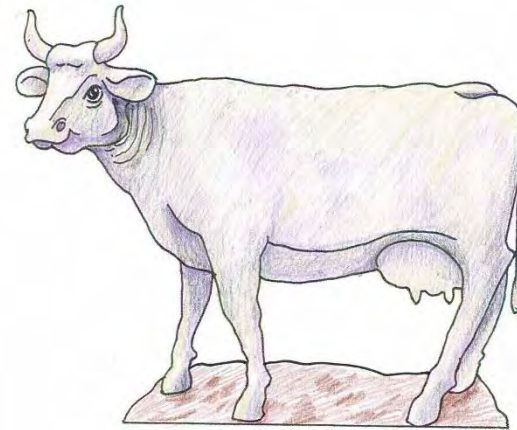


# Elias

a  
bad-tempered  
donkey



an ancient  
cow



Mary



Joseph



Mary and Jesus



the Innkeeper's Wife



the Innkeeper



# the Shepherds



You can copy these  
Shepherds straight from  
your pc, glue them to card,  
cut them out and make a  
small stand, OR you can  
draw your own characters!  
Use these as inspiration!



# the figures

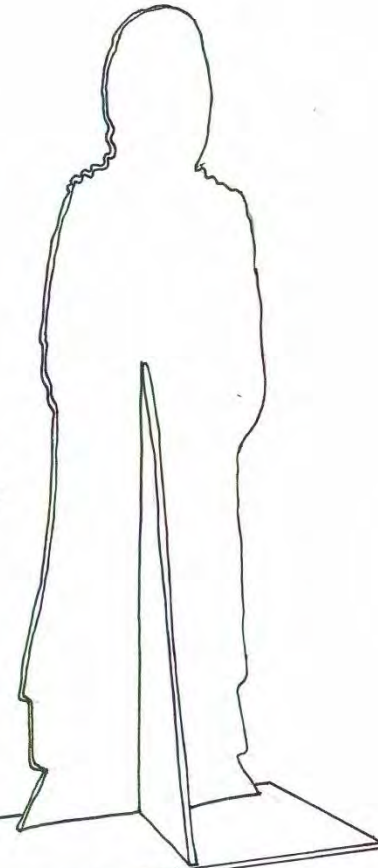
there are two ways that you can make your figures stand up.

the first is to cut two triangles - one long and one to fit the back of the figure (A). Glue in place as shown.

the second is to fix the figure with one long triangle onto a long strip of stiff card, as shown.



you might need to put a blob of Plasticine on the back to stop the figure falling over.



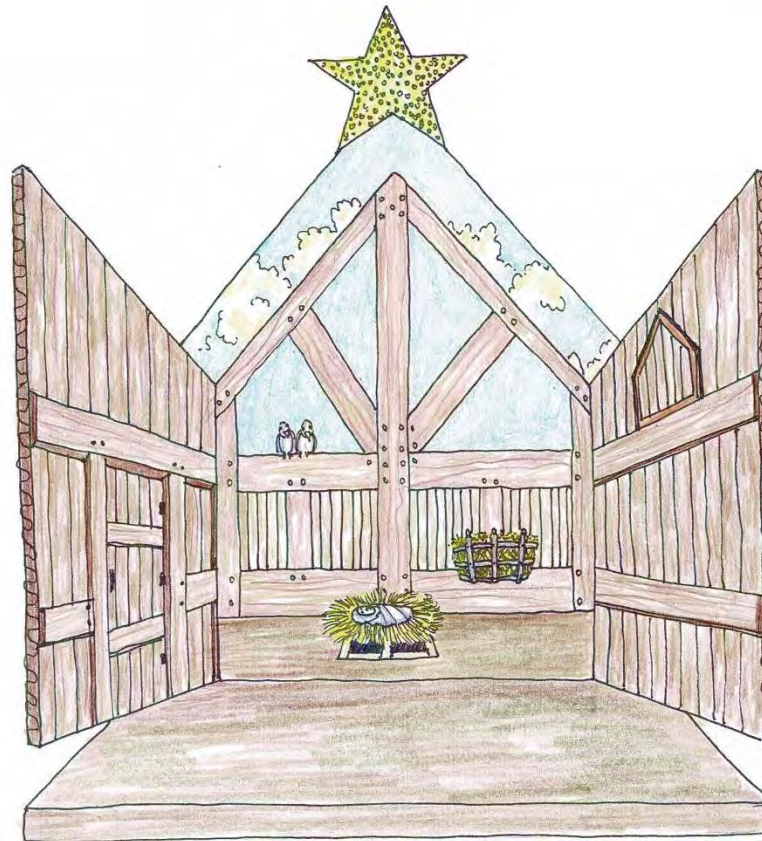
strip of stiff card

this enables you to move your figures in and out of your scene.





Wishing you **JOY** and **PEACE** this Christmas



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