

shadow puppets



These puppets, called Wayang Kulit, are from the Indonesian island of Java. Shadow puppets are popular all over Asia. These puppets are used to tell story of the Ramayana - an epic tale from India, which is more than 2000 years old. This story is well known all over the world. It is the story of Prince Rama as he tries to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. Rama is helped along the way by the monkey warrior Hanuman and, after a long battle, Rama defeats Ravana. He returns home, guided by the lamps of villagers across the country. This part of the story is remembered at Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

These types of puppet are carefully cut out of buffalo skin and then decorated with paint. Tiny holes are punched all over the puppet to create the outlines and textures of the character's clothes. The puppets are used as part of a performance that happens at night and can last for many hours. Hundreds of puppets are controlled by the Dalang (puppeteer) who moves them in front of a lamp to create shadows on a screen. The story is accompanied by music, which helps to create an atmosphere and to emphasise dramatic parts of the story.

As well as the shadow puppets, there are lots of other puppets in the Museum. Can you find the Punch and Judy puppets?

you will need

how to make

tracing paper

card

sticky tape

scissors

hole punch

thin sticks bamboo skewers

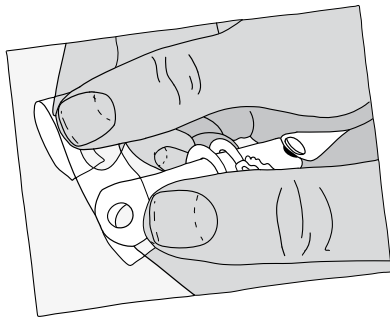
colouring pencils or crayons

paper fasteners

Photocopy or trace the puppet template on to card.

Colour it in.

Cut out the puppet's body and arm pieces.



Put a piece of sticky tape around the ends of the shoulder and arm joints to keep them strong.

Punch a hole at the end of each arm joint.

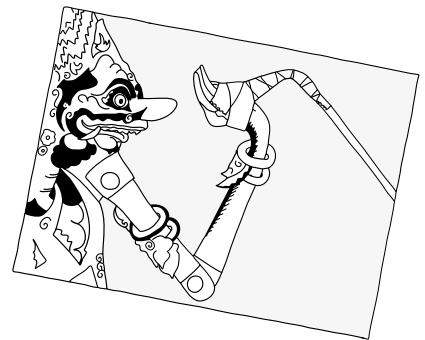
Attach the arm joints together using paper fasteners. Make sure you don't make them too tight or your puppet won't move!

Stick a straw on to the back of the puppet, leaving enough sticking out at the bottom to hold on to.

Wind the sticky tape around the end of the skewer a few times, so that you have a small bundle of tape sticking out.

Attach the sticky tape bundle to the puppet's hand.

This gives your puppet's arms more flexibility to move.



The shadow puppets have lots of tiny holes punched into them to create patterns and texture. You could do something similar using a thick embroidery needle.

Put a piece of Blu-tack on to the back of the puppet and press the needle through to make a small hole. How does that look held up to the light?

the story of the ramayana

By Becca McVean

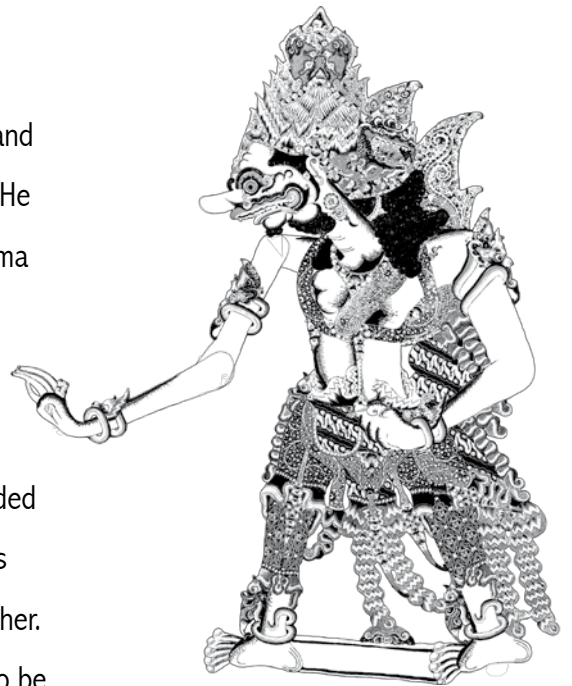


In a country faraway a handsome prince called Rama and a beautiful princess called Sita met, fell in love and, as is the way of things, married. However, Rama's jealous stepmother soon banished the happy couple to live in the forest for fourteen years. They were joined by Rama's brother, Laksmana, who shared their simple yet contented life.

But their peace was soon to shatter. Ravana, a wicked demon king with ten heads and twenty arms, caught sight of the beautiful Sita and decided to capture her for himself. First, he had to get her alone. He ordered a servant to become a golden deer, which Sita begged Rama to catch for her. Keen to keep his wife happy, Rama set off asking Laksmana to look after Sita.

Rama's cries for help suddenly exploded from the forest. Sita pleaded with Laksmana to help her beloved Rama. Reluctantly he agreed as long as she promised to stay inside a magic circle he drew around her. And so Ravana tricked her into being alone, as he had pretended to be Rama in distress.

An old sick man came stumbling towards Sita and asked her for some water. As Sita was explaining how she had to stay inside the circle, he suddenly collapsed. The pure and gentle-hearted Sita stepped out to help him without thinking. She realised her mistake an instant later as she stood before Ravana.



Sita screamed when she realised that his plan was to take her back to the island of Lanka in his chariot. Hearing her cries, Garuda, King of the Birds, swooped down to her rescue. But as Ravana cut off first one wing and then the other, he spun to the ground. Hearing all the noise, Rama and Laksmana came dashing back just in time for Garuda to break the devastating news of Sita's kidnap before he died.



The twists and turns of Rama's journey to get Sita back form the epic tale of the Ramayana, but his adventures are too many to tell here. Throughout his travels he had the help of the monkey warrior Hanuman and his monkey army. They built a causeway across the sea to Lanka which they travelled along to face Ravana and his demons in a mighty battle.

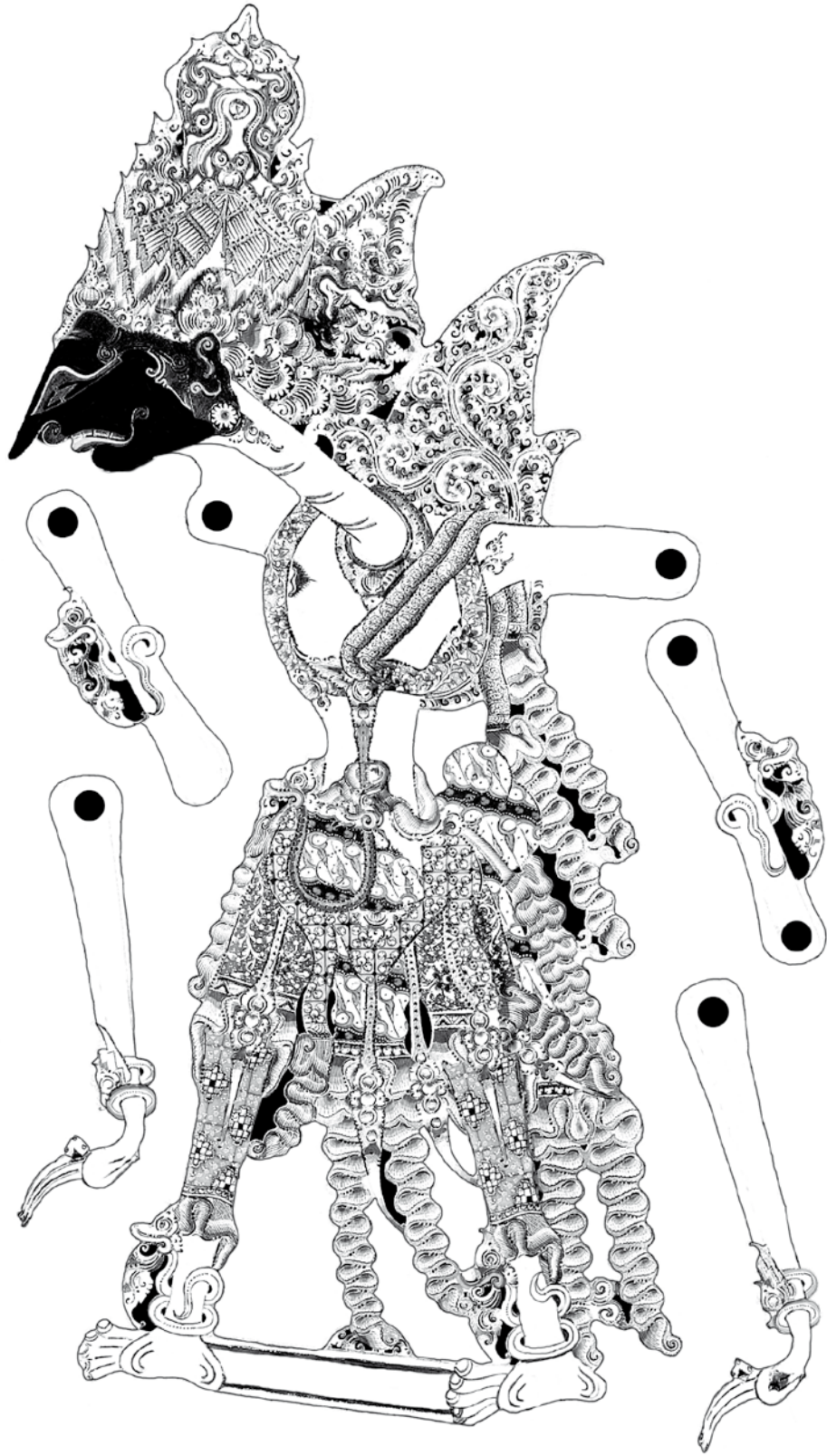
It is hard to fight demons who make themselves invisible and fire arrows that turn into poison-biting, breath-snatching snakes.

And so the monkey army suffered. When all seemed lost Hanuman remembered there was a magical healing flower that grew on a faraway mountain. He flew there at once but became distressed as he could not find the flowers. In desperation, he lifted up the entire mountain and carried it back to the battlefield where the flowers were found and used to restore the strength of the monkey soldiers.

At last our hero and villain, Rama and Ravana, stood face to face. Rama was surprised that each time he cut off one of Ravana's arms or heads, it just grew back again. As long as he touched the ground, Ravana had special powers. Tiger-headed arrows roared past Rama as he sat down in the middle of the battlefield and meditated. With clearness of mind, he remembered that he had in his backpack an arrow that had been blessed by the Gods. Carefully taking aim, the arrow fired Ravana so soaringly high into the sky that he was dead by the time he came back to earth.

Rama raced off to find Sita, and on being reunited they decided to go home. Hanuman flew ahead to the villages asking them to line the paths with lamps so the couple could find their way home. It is this safe return of Rama and Sita that is celebrated every year at Diwali – the Hindu festival of lights.

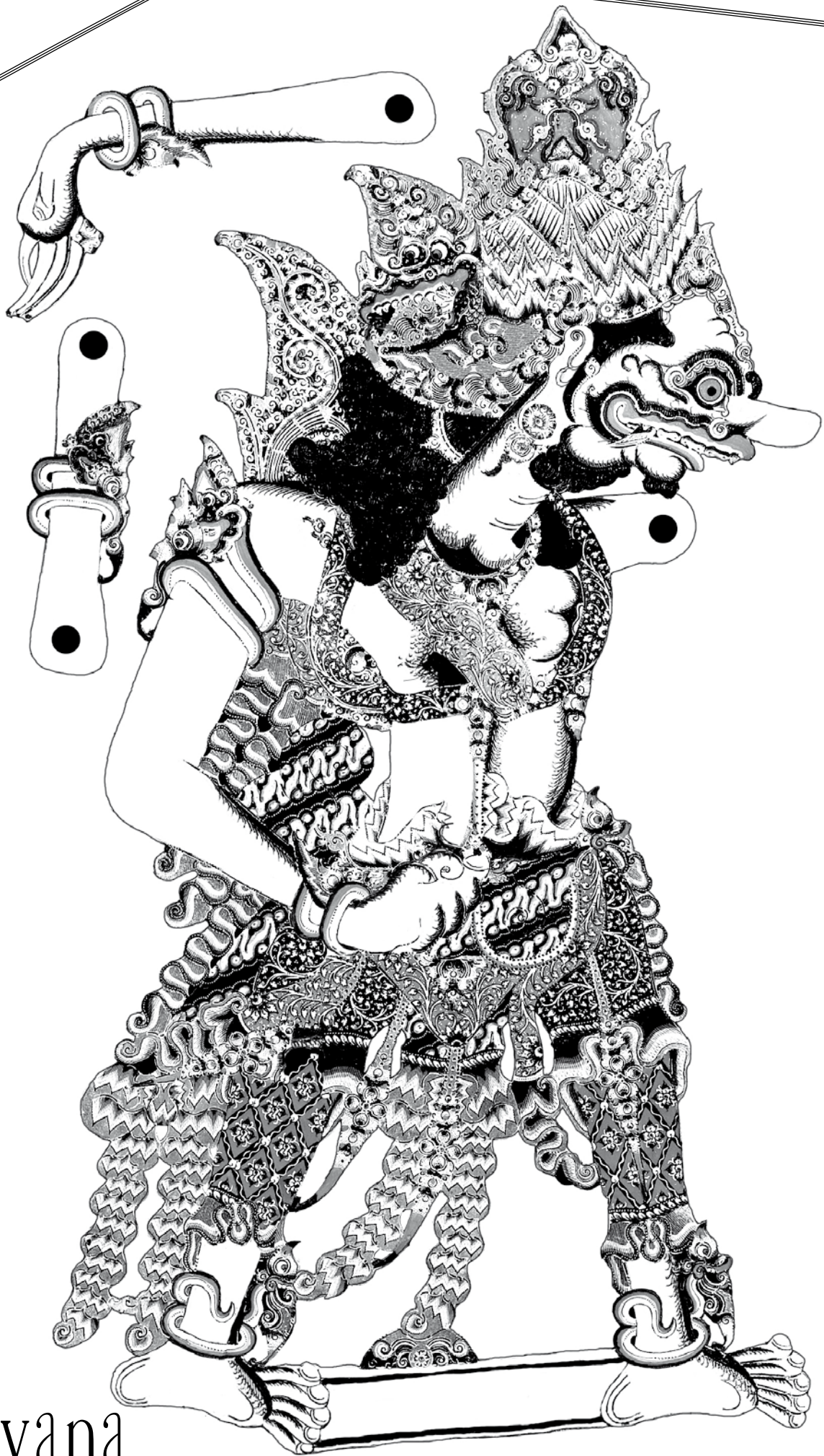
templates



Rama



Hanuman



Ravana

templates



Sita