

Shakespearean Sock Puppets

By [Kate Gorely](#) from The Belham Primary School, Peckham.



This is a project that I created with a Year 6 cohort. We were studying Macbeth in Literacy and working towards a performance for our whole-school Shakespeare Week.

The puppets were made in our DT sessions, which took place over 3 days. The students researched Tudor fashion and costume design before designing and making their own textile puppet. They used a variety of stitches to secure, join and embroider, as well as creating a structure onto which their puppet was formed. They made choices in fabrics, design and embellishments, each creating a unique character. It is a project that would also work very well for myths and legends, historical figures and fairy tales.

Session 1 – Research and Design

We shared a variety of images of Tudor clothing and costume as well as looking at some well known paintings. We discussed the work by John Singer Sargent and his 1889 [depiction of Lady Macbeth](#) which is on display in Tate Britain in London. Together, we established common themes and details in the clothing. The students then chose the character they wished to make from Macbeth. They came up with a number of designs before choosing their final costume design for the puppet. They annotated their sketches and chose the fabrics and braiding they wished to use.

Session 2 – Creating the Head



Two rods were cut, approximately 30cm and 10cm and joined in a cross position using wool.



Each student was given a 'pop sock' or a cut-off tights foot to stuff. I modelled stuffing the sock to make a potato shape, by tearing small sections of the craft filling, stuffing and moulding as I went along. This potato shape was then tied and

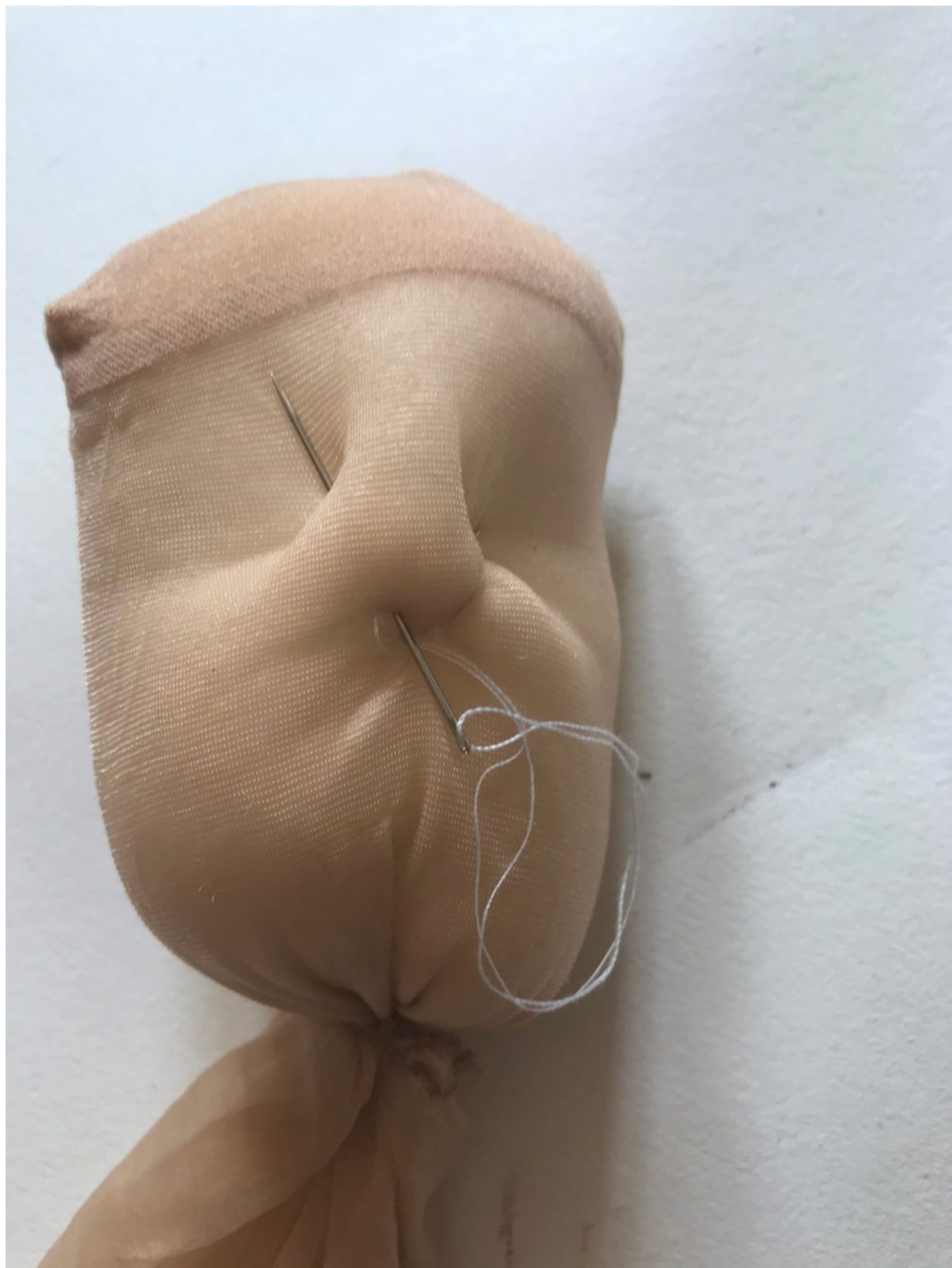
secured at the base.



The features could then be fashioned by pinching the potato head, to form a nose and securing this by stitching through the pinch to form eyes. It is worth reminding students at this stage about the natural spacing of features – eyes approximately halfway down the head, and the spacing of the nose, to avoid eyes being placed in the forehead area!



The nose is then formed by stitching up each nostril and into the eye stitches.



Once the features are in place, then wool can be added for the hair, stitching through the hairline and continuing down the back of the head to the lower hairline. Eyebrows and any facial hair can be added, plus small beads for the eyes. At this point, the puppets really begin to develop a character of their own.







The vertical rod is then carefully held against the back of the puppets head, the sock fabric pinched over it and then over-stitched to hold it in place.

A little stuffing can be added to the loose stocking chest area. This is then stretched and hooked over the horizontal rod to form the shoulders.

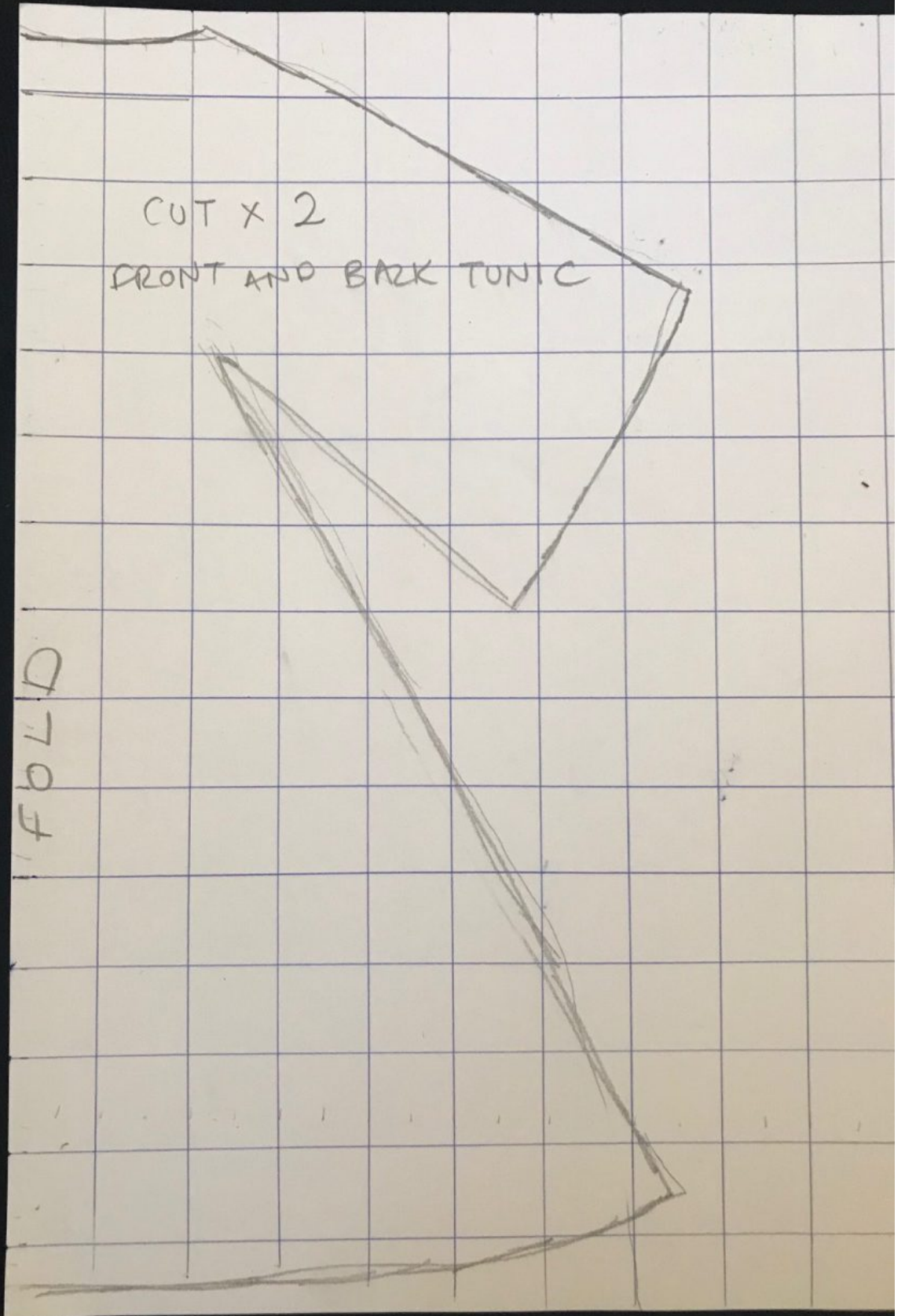


Session 3 – Creating the Costume

At this stage, students can review their designs. Is there anything they would like to add to the costume or adjust? Using squared paper, students can create their tunic pattern. This is then pinned to the chosen fabric and cut out twice - one for the front and one for the back.

CUT X 2
FRONT AND BACK TONIC

FOLD





Using a simple running stitch, the sides of the tunic and the sleeves are secured. Leave the neck of the tunic wide enough to slip up over the shoulders and then secure at the neck.

Following their designs, the students chose different textures, patterns and embellishments to create their costumes. Some folded kilts over the tunic base, others added hooded cloaks, knitted armour, sashes and belts.



To finish – felt hands were stitched to the end of the sleeves. To animate the puppets, rods can be glued to the hands.







Each puppet was so different, with its features and character

evolving over the course of the workshops. The students became very involved with the development of their puppets; one girl reflected, she felt she had created 'a friend'.

If you would like to deliver more puppetry sessions in your school, you can find more inspiration here.

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