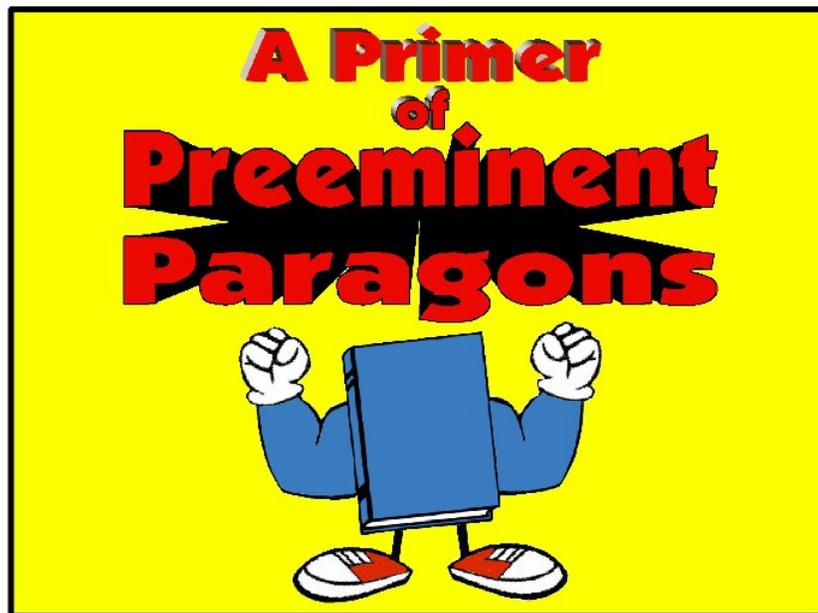




Using



in the  
Classroom

[www.runawaytheater.com](http://www.runawaytheater.com)

Thanks for downloading the lesson plan for our production **A Primer of Preeminent Paragons!**

### **Why are the arts important?**

The arts are intrinsic to our lives, but often arts education is an after-thought or considered nonessential. However the arts are how we define ourselves and put our lives and times in context. For example, think of the 1930's, the 1950's and the 1970's. When you think of these decades, what are the first things that come to mind? The fashion? The music? The design of the automobiles? The movies? Guess what? All of these things are "the arts!" Sure, you may have thought of who was President, and maybe a few world events came to mind, but you probably first put those decades into context by the various artistic forms that were prevalent at the time.

### **Why puppetry?**

For centuries, cultures around the world have entrusted the art of puppetry to explain their most important events, ideals, and morality. From the shadow puppets of Indonesia to the Bunraku puppets of Japan to hand puppets of Europe, puppetry is considered a medium to entertain, but more importantly, to teach young and old alike the traits and values the culture deems most essential. This is also born out in modern times. Studies continue to show that information, when presented by puppets, is often more easily taken in and retained longer than other, more traditional methods of instruction. As you yourself have probably noticed, when you have the students attention and interest, you can teach them anything. Using puppetry as a medium to teach the curriculum captures the students attention and interest quicker and more completely than almost any other art form.

It's staggering the number of new stories that are told every year in books, on television and on film. However, most of these "new" stories aren't new at all! They are retellings of the classic "hero's journey," the basic template for all great stories. From Hercules to Harry Potter to Hamlet, the stories that endure and that we pass down to the next generation are derived from this most basic tale.

**Runaway Puppet Theater** dives into this fundamental story with **A Primer of Preeminent Paragons**. Using kids natural interest in heroes, adventure, and action, **Runaway Puppet Theater** presents three heroes from various cultures and time periods. The iconic tales of Hercules, Robin Hood and Pecos Bill help illustrate how all hero stories have certain elements in common.

We hope your students enjoyed the show, and we hope that you can use the enjoyment of the show to create interest in your curriculum. Since many of the events in the stories of Hercules, Robin Hood, and Pecos Bill are universal, your students will be able to recognize them when they appear in other stories they may read for school or for fun.

Often theatrical performances are used to enhance language arts, reading, social studies, and other "humanities." However, it's also possible to use the show as a springboard to teach other parts of the curriculum as well like math and science. We have included lessons that will help generate interest among your students for these areas of instruction as well.

## **Synopsis**

Manfred is a kid who loves to read about heroes. Specifically, superheroes! After reading all of his comics, twice, his mom suggests he checks out his local library to see if they have any stories about superheroes. However, there are not books left in the library about superheroes! Apparently everyone else had the same idea as Manfred's mom. His helpful and knowledgeable librarian saves the day when she finds an old, musty book called A Primer of Preeminent Paragons. The book is full of stories about heroes from all over the world and throughout history. Manfred decides to try out that book and takes it home.

At first, Manfred thinks he's gotten a boring book that's going to analyze things heroes have in common. That is, until a hand appears out of the book and drags him inside of it! Manfred falls into the book and finds himself as the lead character in some of the most famous hero stories of all time!

First Manfred lands in ancient Greece and becomes Hercules! Hercules was known for his amazing strength. He was also known for his bad temper and poor judgement at times. Because of this, he was given 12 labors to perform. After realizing that he has Hercules fabled strength, Manfred completes four of the labors, defeating the Nemean Lion, the Erymanthian Boar, the Cretan Bull and the Lernaen Hydra.

Manfred is then transported through the book to the story of Robin Hood. Robin Hood's stories have been told and retold for centuries in books, plays, films and on television. Manfred learns that the stories were originally sung as ballads, even though Ethelbert the minstrel who is singing this ballad isn't the best. Through a series of misadventures and misunderstandings, Manfred is wanted by the nobility who put a reward out for his capture. The crafty Sheriff of Nottingham decides he'll capture Robin Hood and collect the reward. Manfred knows nothing about archery, but learns that, since he's Robin Hood in this story, he has all the ability and skill of Robin Hood!

Then, Manfred finds himself in the American Southwest as the ultimate cowboy, Pecos Bill. Pecos Bill was a hero from a set of "tall-tales" told during the westward expansion of the United States. Stories were told of how he created the Rio Grande river, how he invented rodeo by riding a twister, and how he created cowboy ballads to sing his cattle to sleep at night. Manfred isn't quite up to the task, since he's afraid of cows. Manfred is terrified until he remembers gaining Hercules' strength and Robin Hood's skill with a bow when he was the heroes of those stories. He decides that if he's supposed to be Pecos Bill, he'll act like Pecos Bill. Manfred uses his newfound courage to tame a herd of cows, use a snake as a lasso, and even ride a twister.

Manfred finally ends up back in his room after reading about the heroes. He tells his mother about his adventures, but she insists he's been in his room the entire time reading. Did Manfred really become the heroes in these classic tales or was it all his imagination?

**Lesson: Literature/Key Ideas and Details**

In the show, three traits of heroes are mentioned. They have amazing abilities, they defend others, and their lives are full of adventure. Name the specific ways these traits are shown in the stories of Hercules, Robin Hood, and Pecos Bill.

Vocabulary

|           |               |                |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| Skill     | Ability       | Supernatural   |
| Protector | Folk hero     | Downtrodden    |
| Demigod   | Heroic outlaw | Tall tale      |
| Mythology | Ballad        | Oral tradition |

**Lesson: Literature/Key Ideas and Details**

Hercules was the most famous of the Greek heroes, but definitely not the only one. Read stories about other Greek heroes such as Theseus, Perseus, and Bellerophon. Compare and contrast the various stories.

Vocabulary

|                |             |           |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| Labors         | Hydra       | Chimera   |
| Minotaur       | Crete       | Olympus   |
| Pegasus        | Gorgon      | Quest     |
| Heroic journey | Immortality | Epic poem |

**Lesson: Earth & Space Science/Universe**

Many of the constellations and planets were named after Greek mythological figures. Use a starmap and identify the constellations Andromeda, Orion, and Centaurus. What mythological characters are these constellations based on? In the myth, why were they put in the night sky as constellations?

Vocabulary

|                    |                  |               |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Constellation      | Corona Borealis  | Draco         |
| Astronomy          | Hemisphere       | Planetarium   |
| Absolute magnitude | Celestial sphere | Eclipse       |
| Gibbous            | Parallax         | Scintillation |

**Lesson: Physical Science/Forces in Nature**

Runaway Puppet Theater's show includes shadow puppets that are created by using an overhead projector. Discover how an overhead projector works to create an image on a screen. The materials Runaway Puppet Theater use to create the shadows are either opaque, translucent, or transparent. Define these words and find materials that demonstrate these qualities.

Vocabulary

|                           |                |               |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Light                     | Reflection     | Opaque        |
| Translucent               | Transparent    | Lumens        |
| Electromagnetic radiation | Spectrum       | Incandescence |
| Luminous                  | Bioluminescent | White light   |

Thanks again for downloading the study guide for **A Primer of Preeminent Paragons**.

If you have any questions about our show, how to use our show in your classroom, or methods of using puppetry to teach any aspect of your curriculum, please contact us!

**Runaway Puppet Theater**

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We love fan mail! For an extra writing assignment, have the students write us letters or emails telling us what they enjoyed and something new they learned from **A Primer of Preeminent Paragons!**