



Tongues on Fire! A Shadow Puppet Play By Deborah Wassenberg

This is a shadow puppet play and is easier to produce than you may think. However, you will need assistance from your drama group or your Kid's Church team, to assist you with lighting and special effects. You'll definitely need rehearsals. I've seen the laser light effect used in a production and it was amazing. The presentation will have tremendous impact on your children and I don't think they'll ever forget how dangerous the tongue can be!

Bible Reference: James 3:5-8

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Production Notes

Shadow Puppet Theatre:

You will need to set up a shadow puppet theatre. Secure a white plastic shower screen in place. Use an LED torch as your light source. You won't need to worry about cords, but you will need extra batteries if you are going to do multiple performances, as LED lights dull over time. Holding a puppet close to the light will make the shadow bigger. Holding it close to the curtain will make the shadow smaller. You will need a red laser light to represent sparks of fire. A pen pointer used for office presentations or a cat toy type will do. All laser pointers that are available to the Australian public have a radiant power output of less than 1 milliwatt. Lasers with an output below this are considered to be a low hazard BUT NEVER POINT A LASER AT THE AUDIENCE, OR ANY PERSONS FACE OR EYES! Ask a production team member to use the laser from the sound desk, or somewhere **behind** the audience.

Shadow Puppets:

You will find shadow puppet tutorials on You Tube. You don't have to use puppets with joints although the effect is better because the puppets can make movements.

You will need:

- Black card
- Thin dowel sticks
- White pencils (for sketching on the black card)
- Split pins for puppet joints
- Scissors or craft knife
- Black tape

Shadow Puppets to Make:

- Kookaburra
- Emu
- Koala
- Echidna
- Wombat
- Platypus
- Kangaroo

Scenery:

- Gum tree (like the one pictured) made from black card, and static, with one branch for Koala to sit in and another for Kookaburra to perch on



Soundtrack:

Pre-record your story with the accompanying music and sound effects. This means you can concentrate on manipulating the puppets without needing to be concerned about delivering lines.

Play:

Scene: the Australian bush

A eucalyptus tree is stage left. The koala is hidden amongst its leaves (unseen by the audience). Beneath the overhanging branches what looks like a rock which is actually a sleeping emu.

DIM HOUSE LIGHTS

Music: Instrumental 'Great Southland of the Holy Spirit' or Australian folk music

SFX: *Kookaburra laugh*

A kookaburra flies down from stage right and settles on the 'rock'. He opens his beak and calls once more.

SFX: *Kookaburra laugh*

Emu: *(The neck and head of the emu pops up and the emu says sleepily)*
What?
I didn't touch the sandwiches.
(Now awake)
Oh, it's you Kookaburra.
The bushman's alarm clock.
What's the big idea?

Kookaburra: Sorry Emu, mate.
I thought you were a rock.
Don't tell me you've been stealing sandwiches again.

Emu: I can't help myself.
Whenever a family sets up a bush picnic
I just have to snatch a sandwich.
Anyway, Kookaburra, you're one to talk.
I know you like to steal a barbequed sausage or two.

SFX: *Kookaburra laugh*

Kookaburra: It's easier than catching a snake I can tell you.
And the tourists love it.
They pull out their phones and take photos of me.

Emu: Well, what's up?
I mean down.
Why did you land on me?

Kookaburra: I wanted to see it with my own eyes.

Emu: See what?

Kookaburra: The billabong.
Goanna told me it's drying up.
He heard from Dingo who heard it from Galah.
We're running out of water.

Emu: But I love drinking water!
And without water we'll all die of thirst.
We're doomed!

Kookaburra: That's why I thought I'd fly down to have a look.
The bird's eye view you might say.
Strike a light!

LED FX: LED IS TURNED ON AND DOT OF LIGHT SITS ON KOOKABURRAS HEAD

And I think galah could be right.
The billabong looks like it's shrunk.
I'm off out of here.
If you've any sense you'll leave, too.

LED FX: LED LIGHT JUMPS FROM KOOKABURRA ONTO EMU'S HEAD

SFX: Kookaburra laughs and leaves stage right.

Emu: It's alright for you, Kookaburra.
I can't fly.
I suppose I'll have to run very fast.
Oh dear, oh dear.

Echidna enters in stage right.

Echidna: What's all the sooking about?

Emu: The billabong is drying up!

Echidna: Who told you?

Emu: Galah told Dingo who told Goanna who told Kookaburra.
Kookaburra told me and I'm telling you.
Echidna, did the water in the billabong look lower to you this morning?

Echidna: Well, you know my eyesight isn't the best.
I rely on my sense of smell to find ants.
So, let me have a sniff.
(Takes a long, loud sniff of air)
Oh, I'm afraid...

Emu: Afraid of what, Echidna?

Echidna: It's the smell...of drought.

LED FX: LED LIGHT MOVES FROM EMU'S HEAD ONTO ECHIDNA'S HEAD

Emu: We have to find out why our billabong is drying up
and put a stop to it before we die of thirst!

Wombat: *(Wombat enters stage right)*
Who is dying of thirst?

Echidna: We all will be.
The billabong is drying up.

Wombat: Said who?

Emu: Galah told Dingo who told Goanna who told Kookaburra.
Kookaburra said the billabong definitely looks lower.

Echidna: And I smelled it.
It's lower.

LED FX: LED LIGHT MOVES FROM ECHIDNA'S HEAD TO WOMBAT'S HEAD

Wombat: Well, I guess that settles it.
But why?
It's not the dry season.

Whatever will we do?

Echidna: Let's look at this logically.
Who lives in the water?

Emu: Yabbies. Fish. Dragon fly larvae. Frogs.

Echidna: All relatively harmless.
What about that shady character who only
appears at night?

Emu: You don't mean...Platypus?

Echidna: Well, he's outrageous.
A duck-billed, beaver tailed, otter furred, web footed
lay about that digs in the mud.

Emu: I thought you were related in some way.

Echidna: Humph.
There's a slight connection.

Emu: Now you say it, Echidna, I think you're right.
Platypus is very suspicious.
Always poking holes in the bank of the billabong.
No wonder it's leaking!
This drought must be his fault.
(Flaps around)
I don't mean to get in a flap
But I have to get out of here!
(Emu exits stage right)

Echidna: I'm leaving, too!
(Exits stage right)

Wombat: Wait, for me!
*(Wombat tries to leave quickly but goes in the opposite direction and bumps into
the base of the tree)*

Koala: *(Sound of yawning.)*
Koala moves in the crook of the tree)
Hey, who's that knocking at my door?
I don't want anything.

Wombat: You'll be wanting a drink before too long.
There's no water in the billabong.

Koala: Doesn't bother me.
I get all I need from the eucalyptus leaves.
(Yawn)

Wombat: No water, no tree.
No tree, no leaves.
No leaves, no you, Koala.

Koala: *(Yawn)*
What do you mean there's no water in the billabong?

Wombat: Emu heard from Kookaburra who heard it from Goanna
who heard it from Dingo who heard it from Galah.
Echidna smelled it.
The billabong is drying up.

LED FX: LED LIGHT MOVES FROM WOMBAT'S HEAD TO KOALA'S HEAD

Koala: What are we going to do!
A drought will wipe us all out.

Wombat: I'm leaving and if you know what's good for you
you'll leave, too.
(Wombat exits stage left past the tree)

Koala: *(Sobbing in the tree)*
Oh, I had better find another tree.
Right after this snack.
(Eats some leaves)
And a nap.
(Yawns)

Platypus: *(Suddenly shoots out from the bottom of the screen, centre stage, up onto dry land)*

I thought I heard crying.
Was that you Koala?

Koala: Huh?
(Yawn)
What do you care Platypus.
You've destroyed my tree and me.

Platypus: What are you talking about?

Koala: Galah told Wombat who told
Cockatoo who told Bilby who told somebody that you were
causing the billabong to leak because of your
duck bill.
And Emu (*Yawns*) told Dingo.... (*Yawns*)
And Echidna smelled it....(*Snores*)

LED FX: LED LIGHT MOVES FROM KOALA'S HEAD TO PLATYPUS' HEAD

Platypus: Well, of all the poison quills, this takes the biscuit.
I knew that spiny ant eater was two termites short of a
mound.
It's no wonder he's a solitary mammal.

LIGHT FX: *PUT A RED OR ORANGE FILTER OVER THE LIGHT, THROWING EVERYTHING INTO
A FIREY COLOUR.*

LEDFX: *THE LED LIGHT NOW JUMPS LIKE FLAMES FROM ONE HEAD TO ANOTHER*

Echidna: (*Re-enters stage right and faces Platypus*)
I heard that!
You are the animal that's a joke.
There was a time no one believed you were real
you mish-mash monotreme.

Emu: (*Re-enters stage right*)
There he is the troublemaker.
(*Emu accidently steps on Echidna*)
Ouch!
(*Flaps around*)

Echidna: Watch out you fool!

Wombat: (*Re-enters stage left*)
Oh good, you've caught Platypus.

SFX: *Kookaburra laugh*

Kookaburra: (*Flies in from upstage right and perches on a branch of the tree near Koala*)
I heard it was all the fault of Platypus.
Watch out everyone!
He has poisonous spurs!

Koala: *(Wakes up and yawns)*
What did I miss?
Oh, hello Kookaburra.

Kangaroo bounds in stage right and lands between Platypus and the rest of the animals.

Kangaroo: What is going on you mob?
I heard the screeching from miles away.
You're like a flock of Lorikeets fighting over nectar in a bottlebrush.

All: *(All the animals try and tell Kangaroo the story at the same time)*

SFX: *Kookaburra laugh*

Kangaroo: Alright Kookaburra.
What's so funny?

Kookaburra: There's no reason for a kangaroo court.
There's nothing to see here.

Emu: But there is Kookaburra.
Why, it was you who told me it was Galah who told Dingo,
who told Goanna who told you the billabong was drying up.
You said you saw it yourself.

Echidna: And I smelled it!
We're all going to die I tell you!

All: *(Again, all the animals are hysterical at once)*

Kangaroo: *(Rears back on his tail and thumps the ground with his strong legs)*
Every one...SETTLE DOWN!

LIGHT FX: REMOVE RED FILTER SO NORMAL LIGHT RESTORED

All: *(Sudden quiet)*

Kangaroo: My mob was at the billabong this morning and there's nothing
wrong with the water level.
I think I have a fair idea of what's going on here.
It's not drought you should be afraid of.
It's BUSHFIRE!

All: *(All the animals cry out in panic and faint)*

Kangaroo: We know only too well how a bushfire starts.
All it takes is one little spark and WHOOSH!
Bushfire destroys our food, our homes and
our families.
But did you know the tongue is a fire?
Someone set off a spark and instead of putting it out
you flamed it into a fire that could have destroyed lives.

Platypus: Yes, mine!

Kangaroo: Everyone's lives.
We animals could be tamed by humans,
but even they cannot control the tongue!
It can be as poisonous as the Mulga snake.
Life and death are in the power of the tongue! (*Proverbs 18:21*)
Don't pass on rumours, gossip or complaints.
Speak words that are life.
Speak words that encourage, comfort, and inspire each other, words that will
build each other up. (*James 3:13*)

Kookaburra: So it was all a joke?
There's nothing wrong with the billabong?
Wait till I get my beak on that clown of a galah....

All: Kookaburra!

Kookaburra: What? Oops. Okay.
How about I fly around and tell everyone there's nothing to be concerned
about...except, that is, remembering to use the right words!

SFX: Kookaburra's laugh

DIM HOUSE LIGHTS

Music: Instrumental Great Southland of the Holy Spirit.

Ministry to the Children:

Perhaps you've been burned by the words people have spoken about you. It really does hurt, doesn't it? A burn is cleaned every day to stop infection. You must do the same to any hurts using words God has said about you. What God says about you is worth more than anything anyone else says. His words will heal your burns. You can read God's words in the Bible. Maybe you're hearing all this for the first time! You didn't know God loves you and cares about

you. That He even cares about what you say or the words that have been said to you. God is interested in everything about you. He cares so much He sent His Son Jesus so you could become part of His family. Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life. (John 5:24) All you need to do is to ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins. Repent by turning your back on sin, and choose to follow Him for the rest of your life. (Altar Call)

Memory Verse: Proverbs 16:24

'Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.'

Hot Potato:

Children sit in a circle. Cover a ball in alfoil so it looks like a hot potato cooked in the camp fire coals. Write the verse in a couple of places where the children can read it. When the 'hot potato' is thrown to them, the child must say the next word of the verse and pass the hot potato on as fast as they can. After a few rounds, take away the written verse and the children pass the potato, reciting the verse.

Morning Tea: Honey

If it's a cold morning serve warm crumpets or muffins with honey. Or maybe honey biscuits or honey cake. The idea is a morning tea using honey and discuss the Memory Verse as you eat together.

Game: Wombat!

Children run around or move in the way the leader calls (crawling, skipping, hopping etc.). Then the leader calls 'Wombat!' When the children hear this they must all crouch on the ground with their hands covering their eyes so they cannot see. A leader covers one of the children with a blanket and then calls 'Heads up!' The children may then stand up and look around. Choose a child to guess who is under the blanket.

Craft: Aussie Animal Stick Puppets

You will need:

- Paddle pop sticks
- Glue
- Black and white pictures of Australian native animals photocopied onto white card

- Crayons or felt pens
- Decorations (optional)

What to do:

- Cut out the animal (have pre-cut animals for younger children)
- Colour (and decorate if you'd like to)
- Glue to the paddlepop stick

Aussie Animals in this Play

Galah:

Galahs are very fast and known to fly at 70km/hr. They are powerful and acrobatic, and do loop-the-loops, and duck through branches at speed. The word galah is also used in Australia for a silly person, a bit of a clown. This is thought to have come from the silly antics of Galah birds. Though highly intelligent, galahs often play the fool – hanging upside-down on branches, sliding down wires, tumbling and wrestling each other on the ground, doing somersaults and playing with toys.

Dingo:

Dingoes are similar to domestic dogs and are the largest land predator in Australia. For the most part, dingoes are carnivores that eat meat and a typical meal for a dingo includes anything from wild pigs, wallabies, possums to rodents, rabbits, birds or lizards. Dingoes are social creatures that live in groups called packs, though some dingoes choose to live alone. A pack usually has around 10 members. They travel together and hunt together. Dingoes howl and whimper and rarely bark.

Goanna:

The goanna is an Australian monitor lizard and some can grow to over 2 metres in length! Goanna will defend themselves ferociously using their tails, teeth and claws. They are fast runners, excellent climbers and swimmers. Goannas are carnivorous and will eat and swallow whole any prey they catch.

Kookaburra:

The Kookaburra is the largest member of the Kingfisher family. It is famous for having a loud call that sounds like human laughter. All kookaburras are mainly carnivorous. They eat a range of animals, from insects to snakes. Kookaburras are reasonably large birds. They have short round bodies and short tails. The most striking thing about a kookaburra is its big bill.

Emu:

Found all over Australia these large flightless birds are instantly recognisable due to their sheer size and their incredible speed. Even though it's flightless, the emu still has wings. The emu uses them to cool itself down. They stretch them out and allow air to move around the body. They also use them when they're running at top speed to steer themselves in the right direction. Emus are the second largest bird in the world. They can grow up to 2m tall. They can live between ten and twenty years in the wild.

They are covered in soft fluffy feathers. They have two sets of eyelids, one for blinking and the other for keeping the dust out! Emus eat plants, seeds, fruit and nuts and insects like grasshoppers, beetles and cockroaches. They require a large amount of water, drinking 9-18 litres a day. If not disturbed, they may drink continuously for ten minutes.

Echidna:

An echidna, also called a spiny ant eater, is a monotreme, an egg-laying mammal. There are only two in the world. The platypus is the other. Echidnas have no teeth. Instead, they put their slender snouts and strong claws to work, tearing open logs, ant hills and other food sources, then use their long sticky tongues (15cm long!) and pads on the roof of their mouth to break down their food. They eat ants, termites, worms and insect larvae and have been known to eat roughly 40,000 per day!

Wombat:

Wombats are built for digging. Wombats are herbivorous and feed mainly on grasses, sedges, and rushes. They also eat tubers and succulent roots. Occasionally, they chew bark. Their teeth grow throughout their lives. The teeth need to grow continuously because they are worn down by the tough plant fibres in their diet. Their barrel-shaped bodies and wide, strong feet with long claws enable them to excavate extensive systems of tunnels and chambers. A wombat can move up to a metre of dirt in a single day.

Koala:

Koalas are mostly nocturnal. Nocturnal animals are awake at night and asleep during the day. Koalas, however, sleep for part of the night and also sometimes move about in the daytime. They often sleep for up to 18-20 hours each day. Each Koala's 'home' is made up of several trees called home trees. They visit these same trees regularly. They are very fussy eaters and have strong preferences for different types of gum leaves. Koalas don't normally need to drink as they get all the moisture they need from the gum leaves. However, they can drink if necessary, such as in times of drought when the leaves may not contain sufficient moisture.

Platypus:

Male platypuses have a hollow spur on each hind leg connected to a venom secreting gland, and while their venom is lethal, there are no recorded deaths from platypuses. Like a shark, the platypus uses electronic impulses to detect underwater prey and locate objects in the darkest depths of the creeks and rivers they call home. They feed on insect larvae, freshwater shrimps, worms and yabbies, which they bring to the surface to eat. Despite being a mammal, platypuses lay eggs, which makes them a monotreme. Platypuses have two layers of fur – for insulation and waterproofing, platypuses use their fur to trap a layer of air next to their skin so they can remain buoyant and dry when they're underwater, which they are a lot. The platypus spends about 12 hours every day underwater looking for food. When platypuses were first discovered in 1798, British scientists thought they were a hoax created by putting parts of different animals together – webbed feet and a bill like a duck, a body like an otter and a tail like a beaver.

Kangaroo:

A comfortable hopping speed of a kangaroo is around 21-26km per hour, however they can move up to 71km per hour over shorter distances. That's faster than a racehorse! Kangaroos use their large feet and powerful hind legs to jump up to 9 metres long in one single leap. They have small front legs and a long strong muscular tail, which helps them balance while jumping. Kangaroos like to chew on grasses, herbs and shrubs. Kangaroos normally rest in the shade during the day and come out late in the afternoon or evening to eat when it is cooler. A group of kangaroos is called a mob, troop or court. Kangaroos are often just called 'roos'. Male kangaroos are called bucks, boomers or jacks. Females are does, flyers or jills. Baby kangaroos are called joeys.

Rainbow Lorikeet:

The Rainbow lorikeet is a medium-sized colourful parrot found in Australia. Its head is deep blue with a greenish-yellow nuchal collar, and the rest of the upper parts (wings, back, and tail) are green. The chest is orange/yellow in colour. The belly is deep blue, and the thighs and rump are green. In flight a yellow wing-bar contrasts clearly with the red underwing coverts. Rainbow lorikeets are social, active, and noisy birds. They often travel together in pairs and occasionally respond to calls to fly as a flock, then disperse again into pairs. They are territorial and each pair defends its feeding and nesting area aggressively against other Rainbow lorikeets and other bird species. They chase off not only smaller birds, but also larger birds such as the Australian magpie. Rainbow lorikeets feed and roost in treetops and rarely come to the ground. They are very strong flyers and daily travel up to 30 km between feeding and roosting sites. Rainbow lorikeets feed mainly on fruit, pollen, and nectar from flowers. They also eat crops and are frequent visitors at bird feeders placed in gardens, which supply store-bought nectar, sunflower seeds, and fruits such as apples, grapes, and pears.

Mulga Snake (aka King Brown):

The Mulga snake is the heaviest venomous snake in Australia and has the largest-recorded venom output of any in the world – delivering 150mg in one bite. Their temperament seems to vary with locality. They throw their heads from side to side and hiss loudly. Mulga's bite savagely, even hanging on and chewing as they inject massive amounts of highly toxic venom, which destroys blood cells and affects the muscles and nerves. Though commonly known as a king brown snake, the Mulga is actually a member of the black snake genus, and black snake antivenom is needed to treat a bite.

Expressions/Aussie Slang

Strike a light:	an expression of surprise or dismay
Soaking:	complaining or sulking about something
Takes the biscuit:	something stupid, rude or selfish (a biscuit is a cookie)