



let's create at home

One of a series of workshops for home-educators.

Try them as a family or form a group with friends on-line and share your creative experience.

6 - Retablo: This challenge is for you to make a Retablo of the Rainforest story of the most hated God-demon, Tupan.

You will need This is where your creativity comes to life; the basic frame for your retablo can be anything that can contain separate scenes to tell your story. Maybe a box, but there will be all sorts of other things you have in your home that could be used, and even if you haven't got a wide range of craft materials the figures and items in each scene can be made in so many different ways... look at the examples below, then get creative with what you've got.

So what is a Retablo?



Mythstories' Portable Nativity

A retablo from North Chile acquired for Mythstories by Storyteller Helen East 2006

Retablos are a tradition in Andean folk art, miniature three dimensional scenes housed in a portable box. It is thought the tradition was introduced to Latin America by Spanish priests who used the boxes in church ceremonies.

This portable, pocket nativity tells the story of the birth of Jesus with the odd cactus here and there.

It is a beautifully crafted artefact with baked dough figures painted and varnished enshrined in a case of split bamboo held together by tiny leather straps. It folds together fastened by a string of red and white wool to fit in the pocket. The partitions between the tableaux are made from recycled card.

Retablos are common throughout the Andean regions of Peru and depict not only religious scenes but also everyday life and folktales of the people of these mountainous areas. Below is a selection of retablos found on a Google image search showing different takes on the artform, including one using Lego!



Here's the story...

Tupan, an Amazonian God, was, and is much maligned and misunderstood, all because he loved his mum.

He'd get homesick living in the opposite corner of the sky and he just couldn't help himself. He'd jump into his sky-boat, made of two birds, and set sail scudding through the clouds on his way back to visit mum.

Banging into black clouds can only cause one thing, RAIN. And more rain is never welcome in the rainforest below. So poor Tupan ended up a God with no worshippers.

Tupan is a demon from the pantheon of the Tupinambas of the Amazonian rain forest. The black birds who make up his boat are considered to be heralds of storms. His story is thought to be social engineering, conditioning young boys who are sent to live in neighbouring villages when they reach puberty not to return to their home villages for fear of causing more rain.

In 2006 we set Rick Wilson a challenge. Rick, a musician and percussionist, has a long pedigree of working alongside storytellers and tells stories himself too, but could he tell stories with no words?

We gave him a Reception class from a local infants school to help him along with the task, and we chose three stories from the South American Rainforest for him to retell; one of them was Tupan's story, below is their wordless version of the God's story.

<https://youtu.be/C-vlfEIZJg8>

Rick's "Soundscapes" were part of a larger museum re-interpretation project funded by NESTA (The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts).

How to make your Retablo...

Decide on what you are going to use as your frame and then draw out a plan. Start by working out how many scenes you will need to tell the Tupan story and then devise a way to divide the frame into the correct number of segments. Remember each story scene doesn't necessarily need to be the same shape or size. Once your plan is complete, assemble the materials you will need and get creative!

Members of the Home Ed. Group each made a Retablo in a wooden letter from the word Mythstories for us to display in the museum. Each letter contains a story of a character beginning with that same initial letter.



"We were so engrossed in this project, time just flew by! Thank you for such an engaging session."

