



Arjuna, third of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, approx. 1950
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media

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Refined characters have white faces, bowed heads, and small and downcast eyes. They move in slow, gliding motions and speak in low, melodious voices. Their language is polite, and the thoughts they express are complex. Heroes and heroines are usually of this type. Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, and his wife Sita (Sinta); Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, and his wife, Subhadra (Subadra); Amir Hamzah in the *menak* cycle and his wife, Munigar—all these characters fall into the refined category.



Shikhandi (Srikandi), a wife of Arjuna, perhaps 1800–1900

Indonesia; Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media

Gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.85.27

Semirefined characters have white or pink faces, slightly more upright heads, and small eyes that gaze straight forward. They move in quick but measured steps and speak in high-pitched voices. While generally refined, these characters are a bit more direct than the purely refined characters and more inclined toward precipitous actions. Shikhandi (Srikandi), a female warrior and a wife of Arjuna in the Mahabharata, fits this character type as does Krishna (Kresna), an incarnation of the god Vishnu in the same epic. Rash moves by members of this character type often motivate a story. For example, Shikhandi rushes off, disguised as a man, to find her lost husband and encounters fearsome ogres, necessitating a rescue mission.



The monkey warrior Hanuman (Hanoman), aide to Rama, approx. 1960 Indonesia; West Java Wood, cloth, and mixed media

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Strong characters usually have faces of deep pink, blue, or other dark colors, and large, bulging eyes. Their heads are bowed if they are modest or held high if they are boastful. The bodies of these puppets are larger than those of the previous groups. Their voices are deep and gravelly. The puppeteer creates the sound by tightening his vocal chords and resonating the voice in his chest cavity. These characters are the worker bees of the wayang world. If there is a battle to be fought, a forest to be cut, or a bridge to be built, the strong characters are ready. Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca), the nephew of Arjuna and the protector of Pringgandani kingdom in the Mahabharata, is an example of this type of character. Hanuman (Hanoman), the monkey warrior of the Ramayana, is another strong character, though his light body color contrasts with the dark ones of others of this type.



The demon king Ravana (Rawana), enemy of Rama, approx. 1960
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media

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Emotionally uncontrolled characters have red or dark-colored faces, protruding eyes, and open mouths with visible fangs. They hold their heads high and have large bodies. They speak in piercing voices with a musical lilt. These characters are the antagonists. Duhshasana (Durasasana), who attempts to rape Draupadi in the Mahabharata, is an example of this type, as is the demonic Ravana (Rawana), who opposes Rama in the Ramayana.



The jester Semar, approx. 1960
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
*Promised gift from the Mimi and John
Herbert Collection, R2000.86.154*

Finally, there are special characters—those that do not fall into the other categories. Their voices and characteristics must be learned individually. There are perhaps fifteen characters in this category; many of them jesters.

The most important jester is Semar, who has a white face and a black body. He is actually a high god who has descended to earth to help humankind. He is both male and female, and is both father and mother to his sons. He is always groaning about how his sons do not pay attention to the important things that are happening around them. He loves them dearly but reprimands them regularly. His voice is slow and sometimes whiny.

Pug-nosed Gareng is the first son of Semar. While his two siblings fight with each other, he listens and thinks. If the brothers see two prongs sticking out of a bush, Cepot says "A bull!" and pulls out a cape, preparing for a bullfight. Petruk tells him the protuberances are TV antennas and then starts to argue about which program to watch. Gareng, on the other hand, shakes his head and mutters "Ogre"; immediately a demon attacks him. A strong fighter, Gareng often levels the enemy with a single blow.

The second son, the long-nosed Petruk, is the consummate nerd. Whatever the latest fad or most complicated news, he knows about it. He can program computers and recite verse with ease. He uses brains where Cepot uses brawn. Petruk's voice is high and nasal, and his diction more complex than that of his brother.

His third son is Cepot, who is a devotee of martial arts. In contemporary *wayang* performances Cepot sees all the latest movies and thinks of himself as a Rambo-like action hero when it comes to fighting. When his father tells him to work hard or study, he responds like the delinquent Bart Simpson. A proud underachiever who dreams of his prowess in battle, Cepot spends most of his time bickering with his brother Petruk, but bravely faces any demon. His voice is deep and guttural.



The demon Sisul, approx.
1970
Indonesia; Cirebon, West
Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed
media
*Promised gift from the
Mimi and John Herbert
Collection, R2000.86.142*

Rank-and-file ogres, or demons (*buta*), bear some resemblance to jesters. They tend to be portrayed as comic oafs, and they can be created with new special features and voices according to the innovativeness of the individual *dalang*. They are the perennial opponents of the jesters and are sure to be defeated by them.