

Reader's Theater Tips

Created by Ruhama Kordatzky Bahr, Burlington Public Library

Uses of Reader's Theater:

1. have older kids or teens as special guests at your storytimes
2. use a group for a regular family program (e.g. a lunchtime storytime)
3. arrange a theater night that is all Reader's Theater
4. work with a local theater group to see if you can arrange a performance at the area theater before a show or on its own

Always remind your readers to:

1. project their voices (no mumbling into their scripts)
2. use their emotions in their voices (no costumes or stage blocking to convey ideas or actions)
3. read slowly and clearly so all can understand
4. work on pronunciations to get words across appropriately

Workshop style

- ✓ hold mandatory practices and decide how many scripts to work with, and thus how long you will be meeting per practice
- ✓ read through the script with everyone first before dividing up parts
- ✓ divide the parts appropriately
- ✓ figure out staging—will you sit, stand and where will readers be placed on the stage (and with labels?)?
- ✓ do a run through of the script
- ✓ determine how many days you'll hold the workshop

Just for Fun style

- hold two or three practices—participants only *need* to attend one—of one hour each
- plan a performance of several plays and poems
- distribute parts
- do a run through of the script
- figure out staging—will you sit, stand and where will readers be place on the stage (and with labels?)?
- do another run through

Hop! Hop! Hop!

by Ann Whitford Paul; adapted by Ruhama Kordatzky Bahr

Narrators 1-7

Narrator 1: Hop! Hop! Hop!

Narrator 2: Big Rabbit hops big hops.

Narrator 3: Little Rabbit hops little hops.

Narrator 4: Big Rabbit hops over the flower.

Narrator 5: Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 6: SQUISH!

Narrator 7: Big Rabbit hops over the puddle.

Narrator 1: Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 2: SPLASH!

Narrator 3: Big Rabbit hops over the root.

Narrator 4: Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 5: PLUNK!

Narrator 6: Big Rabbit hops over the log.

Narrator 7: Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 1: CLUNK!

Narrator 2: Big Rabbit hops over the rock.

Narrator 3: Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 4: SMACK!

Narrator 5: Big Rabbit hops over the stump.

Narrator 6: Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 7: No! Little Rabbit stops.

Narrator 1: He looks at the stump.

Narrator 2: He looks at Big Rabbit.

Narrator 3: Then Little Rabbit hops—

Narrator 4: Hop!

Narrator 5: Hop!

Narrator 6: Hop!

Narrator 7: Around the stump.

Tiny Goes to the Library

by Cari Meister; adapted by Ruhama Kordatzky Bahr

Readers 1-5

- Reader 1: Tiny is a dog.
- Reader 2: He is my best friend.
- Reader 3: He goes where I go.
- Reader 4: If I go to the park, Tiny comes, too.
- Reader 5: If I go to the lake, Tiny comes, too.
- Reader 1: Today we are going to the library.
- Reader 2: I get my library card.
- Reader 3: I get my wagon.
- Reader 4: Time to go!
- Reader 5: Uh, oh. Sorry, Tiny.
- Reader 1: No dogs in the library.
- Reader 2: You wait here.
- Reader 3: I go inside.
- Reader 4: Tiny stays outside.
- Reader 5: I get dog books.
- Reader 1: I get frog books.
- Reader 2: I get bird books for Tiny.
- Reader 3: I fill the wagon.

Reader 4: Tiny helps.

Reader 5: Oh no! Too many books!

Reader 1: I cannot pull the wagon.

Reader 2: Tiny can!

Reader 3: Wait, Tiny! Stop!

Reader 4: Go, Tiny, go!

Reader 5: Good dog, Tiny.

A Name for the Cat

A story from China. Adapted by Ruhama Kordatzky

Narrator 1

Chief Advisor 3

Narrator 2

Chief Advisor 4

Emperor

Chief Advisor 5

Chief Advisor 1

Chief Advisor 6

Chief Advisor 2

Chief Advisor 7

Narrator 1: There was once an Emperor who had a cat that he was very, very proud of. It was a big black cat and it was very special because it had been given to him by a neighboring king.

Narrator 2: The cat sat on a satin cushion beside the Emperor and everyone who came to see him had to talk to the cat and ask questions.

Narrator 1: They would ask "What does the cat eat, Your Majesty?" and "How old is the cat, Your Majesty?." and "Does the cat have any toys, your Majesty?"

Narrator 2: And he was pleased to answer all these questions, but there was one question that he dreaded and that was: "What is the cat called your Majesty?" because he didn't know. He had no idea what to call the cat. If it had been a stray or just any old cat, he would have called it Puss or Tiddles, but you can't call a present from a neighboring king Puss or Tiddles, can you?

Narrator 1: So one day he decided that he would call his seven chief advisors together. Now these seven very wise, clever men never came together all at once except to answer questions of great importance such as:

Chief Advisor 1: Who shall we invade next week?

Chief Advisor 3: How much shall we increase the taxes?

Chief Advisor 5: Where should the Emperor go for his holidays?

Chief Advisor 7: What color should the Emperor's horses be?

Chief Advisor 2: Is there a national symbol that is most befitting for us?

Chief Advisor 4: Why are there ten cooks in the palace kitchens?

Chief Advisor 6: Who is responsible for health care?

Narrator 2: And they all came and stood with their heads lowered in front of the Emperor, waiting to be told why they had been summoned.

Emperor (grandly): I want you to think of a name for my cat.

Narrator 1: Well, they looked at each other because they hadn't ever been brought together for something so trivial before - to name a cat!

Narrator 2: But, he was the Emperor and they had to do as they were told. So the first advisor stepped forward.

All Advisors should speak as if they are thinking: slowly at first, but excited by the end of their speech.

Chief Advisor 1: Er, Your Majesty, Your Majesty, your cat is a big, sleek, strong, majestic cat. The tiger is a big, sleek, strong, majestic cat. You could call your cat Tiger.

Emperor(excited): Oo, oo, oo, Tiger. Tiger is a wonderful name for a cat."

Chief Advisor 2: Your Majesty, Tiger is a good name, yes, yes, but think about the dragon. The dragon is stronger than the tiger and the dragon can fly. You could call your cat Dragon.

Emperor(happy):Ooh, ooh Dragon. Oh Dragon is a wonderful name.

Chief Advisor 3: Er, hmm, Your Majesty, Your Majesty, Dragon is alright, yes, but think about the clouds. The clouds can fly higher than the dragon. And sometimes the clouds cover the entire sky. You could call your cat Cloud.

Emperor(slightly confused): Oh, Cloud, um, mm, ah Cloud is an interesting name, ha, ha.

Chief Advisor 4: Your Majesty, Your Majesty, Cloud is an interesting name but think about the wind. What happens when the wind blows? The clouds move. You could call your cat Wind.

Narrator 1: By now, the Emperor was losing track of the conversation.

Emperor(confused): Er, Wind? Oh, Wind, er, er yes, eh, hm.

Chief Adviser 5: Your Majesty, Your Majesty, yes, Wind, Wind is alright, hahaha, it's a good enough name. Wind is all right, yes, but what happens when the wind meets a brick wall? The wind goes to the side. The brick wall stops it you see. So you could call your cat Brick Wall.

Emperor(very confused): Oer,oer, bbbbbb br, bbbb, Brick Wall, oh, oh yes, oh, an interesting name.

Chief Advisor 6:Your Majesty, Your Majesty, Brick Wall, yes, it's all right, yes. Brick Wall is a reasonably interesting name but think about the mouse. The mouse chews a hole all the way through a brick wall. You should call your cat Mouse.

Emperor(very confused): Er oh, oh.

Chief advisor 7(elderly voice): Your Majesty, Your Majesty, think who kills the mouse, er, er, the cat. You should call your cat, Cat.

Narrator 2: And for the rest of its long life, the Emperor's cat was called Cat.

Dora Diller

by Jack Prelutsky, adapted by Ruhama Kordatzky Bahr

Reader 1: “My stomach’s full of butterflies!”

Reader 2: lamented Dora Diller.

Reader 3: Her mother sighed.

Reader 4: “That’s no surprise,

Reader 5: you ate a caterpillar!”

Rat for Lunch!

by Jack Prelutsky; adapted by Ruhama Kordatzky Bahr

All: Rat for lunch! Rat for lunch!
Yum! Delicious! Munch munch munch!
One by one or by the bunch—
Rat, oh rat, oh rat for lunch!

Reader 1: Scrambled slug in salty slime
is our choice at breakfast time,
but for lunch, we say to you,
nothing but a rat will do.

All: Rat for lunch! Rat for lunch!
Yum! Delicious! Munch munch munch!
One by one or by the bunch—
Rat, oh rat, oh rat for lunch!

Reader 2: For our snack each afternoon,
we chew bits of baked baboon,
curried squirrel, buttered bat,
but for lunch it must be rat.

All: Rat for lunch! Rat for lunch!
Yum! Delicious! Munch munch munch!
One by one or by the bunch—
Rat, oh rat, oh rat for lunch!

Reader 3: In the evening we may dine
on fillet of porcupine,
buzzard gizzard, lizard chops,
but for lunch a rat is tops.

All: Rat for lunch! Rat for lunch!
Yum! Delicious! Munch munch munch!
One by one or by the bunch—
Rat, oh rat, oh rat for lunch!

Reader 4: Rat, we love you steamed or stewed,
blackened, broiled, or barbecued.

Pickled, poached, or fried in fat,
there is nothing like a rat.

All: Rat for lunch! Rat for lunch!
Yum! Delicious! Munch munch munch!
One by one or by the bunch—
Rat, oh rat, oh rat for lunch!

Snails

Calef Brown

Reader 1: It never fails, those pesky snails
are always in the pudding.

Reader 2: Lousy guests, those nasty pests,
they're always up to something.

Reader 3: I've tried like mad to find their nest
but snails are smart I must confess.

Reader 4: The trails they leave can fool the best,
and snails are good at hiding.

Reader 1: Oh well, at least they don't make threats,

Reader 2: they don't eat meat,

Reader 3: they don't place bets,

Reader 4: they almost always pay their debts
and never puff on cigarettes.

Reader 1: I think I'll keep those snails as pets
and feed them lots of pudding.

PET POETRY THAT WORKS AS READER'S THEATER

Compiled by Barbara Huntington, Division for Libraries, Technology & Community Learning

The Blood Hound

by
Edward Anthony

1. I am the dog world's best detective.
2. My sleuthing nose is so effective
1. I sniff the guilty at a distance.
2. And then they lead a doomed existence.
1. My well-known record for convictions
2. Has earned me lot of maledictions.
1. From those whose trail of crime I scented
2. And sent to prison unlamented.
1. Folks either must avoid temptation
2. Or face my nasal accusation.

A Beagle Speaks of Noses

by
Tony Johnson

1. I should be good.
2. I wish I could.
1. But...
2. I sniff and sniff.
1. I catch a whiff of something new,
2. or something old to chew.
1. What can it be?
2. My nose drags me, so I drag you.
1. What can I do but wind through weeds
2. and twine through trees.
1. and check at each hole.
2. Please don't be cross.
1. My nose is boss.

from Pretlutsky, Jack. 1990. *Something Big Has Been Here*. New York: Greenwillow.

Fuzzy, You Are Underfoot!

1. Fuzzy, you are underfoot!
2. You're never stilly, you won't stay put
1. You twirl and try to catch your tail,
2. and never notice that you fail.
1. You clamber up and down the stairs.
2. depositing unsightly hairs,
1. and when it's time to go outside,
2. you scamper off and try to hide.
1. Fuzzy, though you understand,
2. you never follow my command.
1. I tell you "Sit!" I tell you "Stay!"
2. You lick my face and run away.
1. I buy you bones, and yet you choose
2. to gnaw the chair, to chew my shoes.
1. I would not mind a dog like that,
2. but you're peculiar for a CAT.

I Lost My Invisible Puppy

1. I lost my invisible puppy
2. when we were out walking today.
1. She disappeared into the bushes
2. and totally faded away.
1. My puppy is not too apparent.
2. My puppy is paler than pale.
1. She tries not to draw attention
2. She wags an invisible tail.
1. She wears an invisible collar,
2. her leash is invisible too.
1. I fear that she's vanished forever,
2. she's totally hidden from view.
1. I'll miss her obscure little antics,
2. her old indiscernible tricks.
1. She chased inconspicuous crickets,
2. She fetched invisible sticks.
1. My poor imperceptible puppy
2. is probably still in the park.
1. Perhaps if I pay close attention,
2. I'll hear her inaudible bark.

I Want a Pet Porcupine, Mother

1. "I want a porcupine, Mother,"
1. I said to her early one day.
2. She chuckled, "It's out of the question.
2. I wish you would go out and play."

1. "Then, Mother, I want a gorilla,
1. Or else I would like a giraffe!"
2. She answered without hesitation
2. "Ridiculous! Don't make me laugh!"

1. "Then, Mother, I want an iguana,
1. a burro, a boar or a bear."
2. She seemed to start growing impatient.
2. She shouted, "Get out of my hair!"

1. "Then, Mother, I want a pet lion,
1. I'm certain a lion would do.
1. I'd take him for walk every Sunday
1. to visit his friends at the zoo.
2. "You can't have a lion!" she told me.
2. Be glad with the pet that you've got.
1. I guess we're just keeping the rhino.
1. She's always liked Rhona a lot.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett, ed. 2003. *A Pet for Me Poems*. New York: HarperCollins.

I Would Like To Have A Pet

by
Karla Kuskin

1. I would like to have a pet,
2. any kind at all.
1. Something big.
2. Something small.
1. Something sleeping in the hall
2. would be just fine.
1. I would like to have a pet.
2. Will you be mine?

Just for Fun

by
J. Patrick Lewis

1. I set him on my elbow.
2. I put him on my knee.
1. I pet him with my finger—
2. My gerbil tickles me.

1. I know when he is hungry.
2. I feed him bits of seed.
1. And after dinner, there's a book
2. he likes to hear me read.

Grandits, John. 2004. *Technically It's Not My Fault*. New York: Clarion Books.

Staging Directions: One person is the Kid another the Mom. Four others stand with their backs to the audience holding tombstones. Each one turns and holds the tombstone for the audience to read, but also reads it aloud from a typed version on the back of the tombstone. After each reads, they put the headstone down on the floor as if it is planted in the ground. They stand in place and hold the tombstones.

Mom Says: "No New Pets!"

Kid: Mom, can I get a

Mom: No new pets.

Kid: Why not?

1. Here Lies SSSAMY
the Sssneaky Sssnake
You never should have
crawled into
that Laz-E Boy

2001

2. 2002

DIGGY
The Overactive Hamster

He broke his neck in his
exercise wheel.

3. Here Lies
PIRATE
the
Cat
She stole her last
chicken bone
on
February 3, 2003

4. RIZZO
2004
Excellent Rat.
Chewed to live.
Lived to chew.
But you shouldn't have
Chewed the toaster cord!

Mom: There's no more room in the backyard.