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Creating Motivation and Oral Reading Fluency Through Readers' Theatre

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ABSTRACT

CREATING MOTIVATION AND ORAL READING FLUENCY THROUGH READERS' THEATRE

by

Kelly Leaverton

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Readers' Theatre is a wonderful teaching tool in which students practice and rehearse scripts in order to put on plays in front of an audience. The focus is on word accuracy and expression in reading without having to memorize lines. Studies have shown that Readers' Theatre can strengthen oral reading fluency by repeated readings, and increase confidence and motivation to read as students learn to read their parts with fluency and precision. Unfortunately, due to lack of availability and training, Readers' Theatre is not used in the classroom to the extent it should be, and many educators are uncomfortable with the concept of Readers' Theatre. This project researched studies and information on reading fluency, repeated readings, motivation to read, and Readers' Theatre. A teacher resource manual on Readers' Theatre was created that included directions, scripts, tips, and additional resources for performing Readers' Theatre plays in the classroom to increase oral reading fluency and motivation to read.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background of the Study

Introduction

As educators, we are all faced with the challenge of reaching hesitant and reluctant readers and enlightening them to the joys of reading. One of the best methods to motivate students and improve reading skills is through an activity called Readers' Theatre. Readers' Theatre is an outstanding enlivening tool that consists of having children practice and rehearse scripts in order to present performances in front of an audience. Not only is Readers' Theatre incredibly pleasurable and motivating for students, but it increases reading fluency and sight word recognition, as well as strengthening vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skills (Rasinski, 2000; Rinehart, 1999). Readers' Theatre is a reading tool that can support any curriculum and accommodates a wide range of abilities in the classroom. Readers' Theatre can increase reading fluency by repeated readings, and may boost confidence of lower level readers as they learn to read their parts with accuracy and expression (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998). Children with reading problems gain tremendous assurance in their reading abilities, while participating in a fun and exciting activity.

With Readers' Theatre, parts are not memorized, and emphasis is not on costumes, props, or stage directions, but rather on reading the script fluently with voice expression and character. Students tend to view Readers' Theatre as a game, and don't realize that they are learning valuable reading skills through repeated readings and extensive practice. Possibilities for scripts are endless, and students may learn about historical events, holidays, genres of literature, dialogue writing, readers response, or even elements of

theatre such as directing, in the process. Since Readers' Theatre is a creative and unique method of teaching, students are more actively engaged and excited with the idea, and are much more willing to make the effort to do their best reading.

Significance of the Problem

In today's world of Playstation, digital cable, and a plethora of other electronic entertainment, lack of reading motivation is a widespread growing concern in our nation. In a 1996 study where students were given the Motivation to Read Profile, 45% of students worry about what other students think about their reading, 17% feel embarrassed to read out loud, and 17% would rather clean their rooms than read (Gambrell, 1996). Today, more than ever, students are under tremendous pressure to meet standards in high stakes testing, and teachers are expected to drastically bring up reading scores in time frames that are often unrealistic. Studies show that the most fluent readers tend to be the most motivated, and that reading comprehension is tied to reading fluency (Rasinski, 2000).

Readers' Theatre is one of the best ways to improve both oral reading fluency and motivation, but due to lack of training and teacher materials, Readers' Theatre is not used in classrooms to the extent it could be. Teachers need to be educated about the benefits of Readers' Theatre to improve their students' oral reading abilities and boost confidence levels.

Purpose of the Project Study

Although most teachers have heard of Readers' Theatre and understand the basic principles behind its use, the number of resources and ready-made scripts available for classroom use are limited. The purpose of this project was to provide a teacher resource

manual on Readers' Theatre. The manual includes the procedures for putting on a Readers' Theatre performance in a step-by-step process with tips and guidelines along with simple costume ideas, stage directions, blocking, and prop ideas. The resource manual includes ten scripts for various grade levels and reading abilities based on popular children's literature. The manual also provides additional resources with a performance invitation, Readers' Theatre survey, certificate of achievement, evaluation form, vocal coloring practice, and list of other Readers' Theatre books and resources. The positive impact of Readers' Theatre is evident after viewing the manual.

Although there are several advantages to Readers' Theatre, the major benefits that are the focus of this project are oral reading fluency and reading motivation. Readers' Theatre has been called the "ticket to fluency" (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999), and it is obvious to see that doing performances in front of an active audience would excite and motivate most students. The aspect of putting on performances in front of an audience is a major incentive for many children to put forward their best attempt when doing Readers' Theatre.

Limitations of the Project

Although Readers' Theatre can be utilized for all grade levels, this resource manual is designed for elementary teachers in the primary or intermediate grades. Scripts may be adapted for middle school or high school use if needed, but most scripts focus on significant children's literature in the form of picture books. The project does not include scripts in other languages or adaptations for English Second Language learners, although repeated readings from Readers' Theatre are extremely beneficial for bilingual or ESL students. Since all scripts include at least a small group of students, the manual is not

intended to be used for home schooled students, but is designed for a self-contained, integrated classroom setting.

Definition of Terms

Readers' Theatre – Dramatic oral representation of a script that focuses on reading aloud expressively rather than on memorization (O'Neill, 2001). Readers' Theatre does not require costumes, sets, or props, but rather relies on the imagination (Shepard, 1994).

Fluency – The ability to project pitch, stress, and intonation of the spoken word on written text automatically and at a natural rate (Richards, 2000)

Motivation – Possessing enthusiasm and a positive attitude for learning; having the desire to want to read or achieve (Baker & Wigfield, 1999).

Intrinsic Motivation – The desire to learn due to internal interests, needs or curiosities (Fawson & Moore, 1999).

Extrinsic Motivation – The desire to learn and participate in order to receive some type of external incentive such as rewards, prizes, or recognition (Fawson & Moore, 1999).

Comprehension – An active process that requires an intentional and thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Repeated Readings – A method of rereading short, meaningful passages several times until fluency is achieved so attention can be focused on comprehension (Samuels, 1997).

Prosody – The ability to speak or read aloud with expression and phrasing (Young, Bowers, & MacKinnon, 1996).

Script – The written play that outlines narrator and character parts, and may include actions and feelings of the characters.

Stage Directions – Include where the characters enter from and stand while on stage (which in most cases is the front of the classroom).

Blocking – The position of characters on the stage so the audiences' eyes are focused on the desired characters, actions, and any moves they make during a performance.

Characters are usually arranged in a triangle formation (Dixon, Davies, & Plitano, 1996).

Props – Any simple objects that may be of use when performing a play.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

Repeated readings, oral reading fluency, and motivation to read are the major themes expressed in this review of literature that provide insightful information into the development of Readers' Theatre in the classroom. This review will include four sections. The first section will explore the method and possible results of repeated readings, the second section explores related literature on oral reading fluency, and the third section includes studies on student motivation to read. The fourth section will review studies directly related to Readers' Theatre use in the classroom.

Effects of Repeated Readings

Due to the fact that scripts are reread repeatedly, Readers' Theatre is one of the best methods to practice repeated reading strategies in the classroom. Various research has supported using repeated reading methods with remedial readers to increase fluency and comprehension (Blum and Koskinen, 1991; Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1985; Samuels, 1997). The original repeated reading technique was developed by LaBerge and Samuels in 1974 that stemmed from the automaticity theory. This theory suggests that as a result of practice, fluent readers are able to automatically decode text so that all attention is focused on the comprehension process (Blum & Koskinen, 1991; Samuels, 1997). Struggling readers center all their attention on the decoding process, making them slow, dysfluent readers with little to no comprehension skills (Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985). These struggling readers need extensive practice in decoding and accuracy of text to become more fluent. Repeated readings can provide this essential practice for them.

The procedure of repeated reading entails the rereading of fairly short passages several times until an appropriate level of fluency is attained. Research has suggested that three readings are as effective in recall abilities as seven readings (Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993). The reader then moves on to more difficult passages, until the speed of reading gradually increases and word recognition miscues decrease (Samuels, 1997). The ultimate goal and theory of repeated reading is to increase reading fluency, which should in turn boost comprehension and motivation to read. Even adults use repeated reading strategies when reading something they don't understand – they read it again. Rereading a story is a common practice, yet teachers often don't allow their students to do so. Samuels (1997) believes that some teachers may move students too swiftly through a book before students have a chance to master any reading on the pages. If teachers were able to back up and let students develop mastery over the text from repeated readings, students would be confident in their abilities and more motivated to read.

Based on Samuel's theory of repeated reading, Herman (1985) conducted a study to validate repeated reading with fluency levels of struggling readers. The study tested eight intermediate level students in repeated reading strategies for five stories in a three-month period. Comprehension was calculated indirectly by combining miscues with the number of words read correctly. Results indicated that total miscues dropped substantially between the initial reading of the first story as compared to the fifth story, and miscue rate dropped from 17% to 6.5%. Accuracy improved extensively from the first to last story, with rates improving on the initial reading from 87% on story one to 92% on story five. By the time students had repeatedly read the first and last stories, their accuracy rate was 96%, and the rate and scores reflected that comprehension increased. Herman

concluded that, "Repeated reading appears to have had a strong positive effect on these students' oral reading, transferring from one story to another over time" (p.561).

Dowhower (1987) conducted an interesting experiment on the effect of two repeated reading procedures, read-along methods verses independent practice rereadings, on second grade transitional readers' fluency and comprehension. Dowhower found that in both cases the readers' accuracy, rate, and comprehension improved, although children in the read-along procedure were less frustrated with initial readings. One interesting aspect of this study was that Dowhower introduced prosodic reading, or reading with expression and meaningful phrases, into her study. Segmenting text with prosodic indicators is a vital aspect of the reading process. Students who pause or hesitate while reading will read less fluently and comprehension may be hindered (Dowhower, 1987). Results found that prosodic reading was most strengthened by the read-along method, and that these children no longer read word-by-word. Their phrases were lengthier and inappropriate pauses decreased, but this was not the case with students who practiced rereading independently.

Branching off of Dowhower's study, an additional experiment tested the importance of prosodic modeling, or reading with expression, with repeated reading strategies to increase fluency and comprehension (Young, Bowers, & MacKinnon, 1996). This study tested 40 fifth grade students with reading disabilities in four experimental groups. The groups consisted of a prosodic model with assisted repeated readings, a prosodic model with repeated listening, no prosodic model with unassisted repeated reading, and no prosodic model with repeated list reading. Results showed that students in all four groups made reading gains, but those groups practicing in repeated reading of text made greater

gains than those students who either listened to text or read isolated lists of words (Young, Bowers, & MacKinnon, 1996). Perhaps the most significant finding in this study was that modeling of prosody did not improve students' reading performance, but rather the repeated reading aspect in of itself revealed the most improvement in reading fluency and comprehension. In comparison to Dowhower's study on prosody, it may be that repeated reading helped students develop prosodic strategies of text association, not the other way around (Dowhower, 1987). Another baffling finding in the study of Young, et. al. (1996) was that listening to the text being read did not result in as great comprehension gains as did when students practiced rereading the text. This was unexpected since listening comprehension usually is greater than reading comprehension in struggling readers.

Not all studies support the repeated reading method over other strategies to increase fluency and comprehension. Rashotte and Torgeson (1985) found that use of the repeated reading method to increase fluency depends on the amount of like words among stories. They express that, "...if stories have few shared words, repeated reading is not more effective for improving speed than an equivalent amount of nonrepetitive reading" (p.180), and that advances in reading speed depend on the amount of mutual words in stories. They did note, however, that students in their study enjoyed repeated reading procedures, and that the technique encourages students to read more and have a positive attitude toward reading.

Another similar study that yielded consistent results with Rashotte and Torgeson measured the effects of repeated readings compared to nonrepetitive readings on fluency and comprehension in sixth grade Title I students (Homan, Klesius, & Hite 1993).

Findings showed that repeated readings and nonrepetitive reading methods improved comprehension and fluency. The study also lists limitations of repeated readings such as the redundancy of reading the same passage over and over again, and limitation to a wide genre of reading materials and topics. The significance of repeated reading was also discussed in the article, such as to, "...engage in a dramatic reading of the selection for an audience" (p. 98).

Summary of Repeated Readings

Although many studies on repeated reading have produced various results, most insight into the repeated reading method agrees that it is a successful strategy in increasing reading fluency and comprehension (Samuels, 1997; Blum & Koniskinen, 1991). Some research even supports theories that repeated reading aids in the prosodic development, or appropriate phrasing and intonation, of struggling readers (Dowhower, 1987, Young, Bowers, & MacKinnon, 1996). Repeated reading can be used not only for Readers' Theatre activities, but for partner reading, choral reading, echo reading, and audio listening and recording. One of the best analogies supporting the repeated reading method is to compare it with music and sports (Samuels, 1997). In both situations, individuals must repeatedly practice the activity to become proficient and reach mastery level. It makes sense that students should have the opportunity to master their reading before moving on to more difficult material. The piano player must practice the music until it can be played fluently and with expression so the mind can focus on the beauty and emotion of the piece. In the same way, the reader must practice until reading is fluent and accurate, leaving the mind free to focus on comprehension of the text.

Analysis of Oral Reading Fluency

Oral reading fluency has been referred to as “the neglected reading goal” (Allington, 1983). Struggling readers are often characterized by having a slow, choppy, word-by-word reading structure, but this problem is rarely treated (Allington, 1983). Instead, excessive attention is focused on comprehension, vocabulary, and word recognition skills, and somewhere down the line fluency instruction was ignored in the debate between phonics versus whole language reading approaches (Richards, 2000). Mastropieri, Leinart, & Scruggs (1999) pointed out, “...reading programs that do not attempt directly to enhance the reading fluency of dysfluent readers cannot be considered complete—no amount of comprehension training can compensate for a slow, labored rate of reading” (p. 278). Skillful teachers instruct their students in strategies to increase oral reading fluency, and Readers' Theatre is one of the best methods to meet this goal.

The three elements that have been used to describe oral reading fluency are pace, smoothness, and phrasing (Richards, 2000). Pace is usually described as the reading rate of students or number of words read per minute. Smoothness characterizes the flow and continuity of the text, in that reading is constant without any inappropriate pauses or cessations. Finally, the phrasing of text refers to the prosody of reading, including reading with expression, pitch, and intonation. Students who lack these three elements of reading fluency may experience poor comprehension, excessive frustration and negativity towards reading, and read less overall than more fluent readers (Rasinski, 2000).

Several studies have been conducted to demonstrate the effects of oral reading fluency on students' overall reading abilities. A study conducted by Rasinski, Linek, Sturtevant, and Padak (1994) analyzed the effectiveness of a daily fluency development

lesson on four classes of urban second graders. The lesson lasted about 15 minutes daily for six months, and the format consisted of the teacher modeling the reading of the text followed by a short discussion, class choral reading, and finally partner reading. The researchers chose texts according to season, themes being studied, predictability, rhythm, and general topics most students would be interested in. Results found that the experimental group made greater gains in reading rates and instructional reading levels than the control group. The teachers of the experimental groups had positive feedback on the fluency lessons in regards to student achievement and attitude, and one experimental classroom made fluency improvements that even succeeded the third grade standard. The authors point out that these daily fluency lessons can be used with such texts as poems, speeches, thematic stories and scripts.

Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1993) conducted an experiment to see if direct training in reading fluency would result in improved comprehension skills. Researchers selected seventy-eight second grade students to randomly be in either the control group of round robin reading procedures, or the experimental group of oral recitation lessons (ORL). In a four-month period, teachers taught either the round robin or ORL reading methods for thirty minutes a day. Procedures in the ORL approach to fluency training started with the teacher reading the text and initiating a discussion, students rehearsing and practicing their parts with performance assignments for the next day, and the students reciting their section of stories or readings to the class. Results concluded that students in the ORL group showed significant improvement over students in the round robin reading groups. This study also found a link between oral reading fluency and comprehension, and found that the ORL methods of teaching fluency are "...an effective alternative to current

practices” (p. 330). The other significant finding of the study was that due to the notable drops in post test scores, round robin reading is probably not an effective method to teach oral reading instruction.

Studies have also been conducted to examine the effects of reading fluency on students with reading disabilities. Mercer, Campbell, Miller, Mercer, and Lane (2000) conducted a study analyzing a reading fluency intervention program for middle school students with specific learning disabilities. Students were instructed ten minutes daily from six to twenty-five months on fluency of phonics, sight words, and oral reading with repeated readings. Results supported fluency practices as a method to increase students’ reading level and rate of reading. Mercer, et al. (2000) pointed out that fluency instruction is “...important and teachable” and, “...may be a key factor for many students who have severe reading problems” (p. 188).

Another method to increase oral reading fluency is the “Read Naturally” program. This program combines modeling of fluent reading, repeated readings, and progress monitoring with feedback provided to the students (Hasbrouck, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999). Read Naturally uses a four-step strategy in which the first three steps can be self-directed by the students. In the first step students do a one-minute cold reading, marking all the words they don’t know or have trouble reading. Students count number of words correct and graph this on their individual progress charts. In step two students reread the same passage three to four times along with a model from a tape recorder or trained reader. The third step encompasses the students reading the text independently, and in step four the teacher times the students for one minute while reading the practiced passage. If the students pass the reading goal of words per minute they may move on to a new passage.

Hasbrouck, Ihnot, & Rogers, (1999) support using Read Naturally as a successful program in increasing oral reading fluency. They believe that the speed and in which readers process text is highly correlated to strong comprehension skills. Students often enjoy immediate feedback on their progress, work primarily independently, and possess a positive attitude in their reading abilities. However, if students don't reach their goals, they are forced to start over with all four steps on the same passage again, possibly leading to frustration and boredom.

Summary of Oral Reading Fluency Analysis

Even though there are various methods of implementing fluency instruction into the reading curriculum, all studies examined noted the positive effects of oral reading fluency procedures in overall student reading achievement (Hasbrouck, et al., 1999; Mercer, et al., 2000; Rasinski, et al., 1994; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993). Research has indicated that fluent readers have better comprehension of text, are self-motivated to read and learn, and read more overall (Rasinski, 2000). Teachers may wish to provide methods in oral reading fluency through modeling, choral reading, partner reading, peer tutoring, computer-guided practice, tape recordings, and repeated readings. Readers' Theatre can be used with any number of these methods to introduce a challenging yet exciting variation to the instruction of reading fluency.

Promoting Student Motivation to Read

Enabling students to become motivated readers is a topic of great concern and interest to teachers, and in fact was the top priority out of 84 interest topics that were chosen in the National Reading Research Center national survey (Gambrell, 1996). Similarly, in the report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the Commission on Reading found that for the

majority of our nation's fifth graders, reading books occupies only 1% or less of their free time, and 50% of students read for a total of four minutes per day or less in their spare time (Moser & Morrison, 1998). Motivation is clearly an essential component of reading, but research continuously states that more data is needed, results are not conclusive, and not enough studies have been done to support findings (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Lazarus & Callahan, 2000; Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999). As educators, we must not forget that teaching children to read is only half the battle, the other half is to teach them to *want* to read.

Though few in comparison to other research, several studies have been conducted to evaluate the best methods to motivate children in reading, and how teachers can apply these to their daily teaching routines (Moser & Morrison, 1998; Dermody, 2001; Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000). Most findings have shown that motivating children to read doesn't have to be a difficult task, just a consistent on-going process. Reading is the foundation of all other learning and is integrated into every content area. If students lack the desire to read, all other content areas will suffer as a result.

Studies have shown that immersing students in a literature-rich environment will increase their motivation and interest in reading. In one such study of a fourth grade classroom, a two-hour language arts program was implemented every day which equally valued writing as much as reading (Moser & Morrison, 1998). The program included an hour of combined silent sustained reading and writing, book sharing, classroom literature set studies, and short mini lessons on reading and writing areas of needed improvement. The students had over 2,100 books to choose from every day during silent sustained reading, at least 150 of which were checked out of the public and school libraries every

month. The class read thirty-three classroom literature sets, such as *Julie of the Wolves*, which were ordered from funding that would normally be spent on basals and textbooks. Seventeen chapter books were read aloud to the students throughout the course of the year, and the teacher utilized parent volunteers and the school principal as reading role models for the class. The teacher used ample modeling of reading and writing, and displayed his enthusiasm for reading to his students.

Results of this study were phenomenal. Students' results of the Gates MacGinitie test more than doubled that of the national average in oral language, comprehension, and number of books read in one school year (Moser & Morrison, 1998). Lower ability readers increased four years in overall growth, which was way beyond the researchers' expectations for the study. Recommendations of the study were to allow daily silent reading time, choice in reading materials, provide ample literature sharing, and relevant modeling of reading to students (Moser & Morrison, 1998). Readers' Theatre activities could easily be integrated into a reading program such as this one.

On a positive note, some studies have noted that students with learning disabilities have expressed reading attitudes that equaled or exceeded those by non-disabled students of the same age when given the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (Lazarus & Callahan, 2000). It is generally thought that those students with reading disabilities would possess lower motivation in reading, but this may not be the case. Unfortunately, more research is needed to prove this theory as well. General studies show that most students are highly motivated readers through second grade, regardless of reading ability. Tragically, this tends to slowly decline starting at third grade and can follow students throughout their lifetimes (Lazarus & Callahan, 2000).

A controversial topic in the field of motivation research is whether intrinsic or extrinsic motivation is more beneficial for long-term reading success. Extrinsic orientation refers to any given task that is done to receive an external reward such as food, prizes, or recognition. Intrinsic orientation, on the other hand, relies on internal interests, needs, and curiosities that are the driving force in task completion (Fawson & Moore, 1999).

Although offering rewards does aid in motivation, many researchers believe this can be detrimental to the child's overall interest in reading. According to Fawson and Moore (1999), "By using extrinsic rewards many teachers might be discouraging the development of internal motivation to learn...liking for the task will be depressed" (p. 327). This belief would recommend not offering any prizes or external incentives to get children to read, such as the Accelerated Reading prize store that many schools implement. Other researchers agree. "Intrinsic motivation leads to more sustained involvement in reading...intrinsic dimensions of reading motivation relate most strongly to children's reading frequency" (Metsala, Wigfield, & McCann, 1997, p. 361). Students who are conditioned to receive a reward for reading may have a hard time reading in their spare time with no incentive at home. Although most research postulates that extrinsic rewards destroy reading motivation, differing opinions exist. "Rewards do not negatively impact intrinsic motivation with respect to attitude, time on task, and performance...books are indeed the best rewards" (Gambrell, 1996 p. 20). Once again, more research is needed to explore if extrinsic rewards negatively or positively impact reading motivation.

Summary of Student Motivation to Read

Although all research results conclude with slightly different data details, some common recommendations are found in all studies. Most would agree that, “Attention needs to focus on early literacy motivation” (Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki 1999, 238), especially since reading motivation tends to decrease after second grade. Studies have found that gender, ethnicity, self-efficacy, poor school curriculum, and family income level, as well as grade can all play a factor in reading motivation or lack thereof (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). In dealing with all these factors, studies agree that the characteristics and attitude of the teacher decide how motivated his/her students will be throughout the course of the year. With the variance of factors students bring into the classroom that can negatively contribute to their reading motivation, educators must be extra careful to not give up on the student who repeatedly cries, “I hate reading”. Educators hold the future of that child in their hands, and if teachers can open him/her to the abounding world of reading, they will impact the child’s success in learning forever.

Examination of Readers' Theatre in the Classroom

Unfortunately, there have been limited studies conducted directly linking Readers' Theatre to growth in fluency and intrinsic motivation to learn. Millin and Rinehart (1999) conducted a study examining the effects of Readers' Theatre activities to motivation and oral reading fluency in second grade Title I students. Title I classes were divided into two groups. The control group received traditional instruction in phonics and comprehension, while the experimental group participated in Readers' Theatre activities for a nine-week period. Results found that Readers' Theatre positively inspired confidence and motivation toward reading. Students who participated in Readers' Theatre activities showed a change

in attitude, appeared to be much more excited about reading, and showed greater enthusiasm in sustained silent reading. Students were more confident in their reading abilities and were no longer afraid to read out loud in front of the class. Readers' Theatre participants began reading with expression and “thrived on bringing a character alive while reading a script” (p.83).

A subsequent study conducted by Rinehart (1999) used Readers' Theatre as the focal point of a summer tutoring program for students with moderate to profound reading problems. Throughout the study, twenty-two elementary students participated in eighteen separate Readers' Theatre events, while keeping journals of their daily reading lessons and activities. Results of the study showed that students were now able to read with increased fluency and accuracy, and encompassed a better attitude with enhanced confidence in their reading abilities. Ample practice led to vast improvement, and less skilled readers were entirely able and excited about participating in Readers' Theatre. Most importantly, Rinehart noted that the newfound motivation students possessed toward Readers' Theatre carried over to other reading tasks.

Summary

Although studies on Readers' Theatre are few in number, researchers wholeheartedly support using this strategy to increase oral reading fluency and intrinsic motivation to learn. (Martinez et al., 1999; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Rinehart, 1999). Readers' Theatre experiences indicate positive effects for struggling readers, and although it was not mentioned in these studies, English second language learners would also greatly benefit from these repeated reading strategies to strengthen reading fluency and confidence.

Readers' Theatre emphasizes repeated readings of scripts, which in turn can lead to increased comprehension, word recognition, and fluency skills (Samuels, 1997). Rasinski (2000) noted that, "Speed does matter in reading" (p.146) and Readers' Theatre practices increase oral reading fluency, which then leads to improved comprehension and expressive reading (Rasinski, 2000). Finally, Readers' Theatre has been found to be instrumental in increasing the confidence and attitudes of students, and a facilitating factor in improving motivation to read (Martinez et al., 1999). Rinehart (1999) expressed that Readers' Theatre provides, "...a rare opportunity for the less-skilled reader to be on equal footing with better readers, through the advantage of preparation and additional practice time" (p.85). With all the advantages Readers' Theatre has to offer, any classroom teacher should be excited to implement these fun and valuable reading experiences with his/her students to instill in them a lasting love of reading.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to create a teacher resource manual on Readers' Theatre that included directions, scripts, and tips on performing Readers' Theatre to increase oral reading fluency and motivation to read. The manual included three sections. Following the introduction, the manual was divided into primary and intermediate sections that contained directions and scripts of plays based on popular children's literature stories. The third section contained additional resources such as evaluation procedures, invitations, and book listings for additional Readers' Theatre resources. The manual was very generalized so it could be utilized in any district or area.

Procedures

The goal of the teacher resource manual was to provide a quick and easy resource for teachers to use in supplementing their reading curriculum or adding additional activities into the classroom. It was brought to the author's attention that although many teachers are interested in conducting Readers' Theatre in their classrooms, scripts are frequently difficult and inconvenient to find. In addition, many teachers do not know how to go about implementing Readers' Theatre performances in the classroom and are often intimidated by what the process may entail. In all actuality, Readers' Theatre can be a very comfortable and rewarding process, but teachers simply need to have accessibility to information on establishing this activity in the classroom. Finally, many teachers would like to have access to scripts based on popular children's literature so Readers' Theatre can be more easily integrated into curriculum in the content fields. Readers' Theatre

scripts based on children's literature are often scarce and unattainable, therefore the manual was completed in the hopes that this process may be made smoother and easier.

The first part of the manual offers an introduction to the importance of Readers' Theatre. Readers' Theatre is a very successful and beneficial learning tool to any classroom, and as evidenced in chapter two, research has shown that Readers' Theatre greatly aids in oral reading fluency with appropriate phrasing and prosody when reading. Readers' Theatre is also one of the best methods to motivate students in reading through developing confidence and assurance in their abilities. This is achieved by applying the repeated reading process as students rehearse for performances. A step-by-step guide for putting on a Readers' Theatre play is offered next in the manual, with additional tips on simple costume, props, and staging ideas.

The manual is then divided into three sections. The first two sections are divided into primary and intermediate scripts, with five scripts in each section that contain overview pages for each play. The overviews give general facts about the story, list main characters, and simple prop, costume, and stage directions. The overview also tells the accelerated reader level of the book if the book is featured in the Accelerated Reading Program, a program in which many districts utilize. All of the scripts in the manual were originally created by the author of this project, and were based on popular children's literature stories for each age level. The author used personal background experiences with theatre, specifically children's theatre, to share the relevant simplicity and accessibility of Readers' Theatre in the classroom.

The manual concludes with a section of additional resources that includes an assessment page, student survey, invitations, certificate of achievement, a vocal coloring

activity, and a list of additional Readers' Theatre resources. The manual also includes a glossary and reference page in the back. The resource manual is intended to be an introduction for the classroom teacher to the benefits and advantages of using Readers' Theatre as a supplemental reading activity. It is hoped that this information will be adapted and extended to fit the individual needs and interests of the teacher, and will spark a lasting interest into this advantageous activity.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Project

The following pages contain a teacher resource manual created to aid teachers in performing Readers' Theatre plays in the classroom. Readers' Theatre is a teaching tool in which students read scripts in front of an audience with fluency and expression. It is not a full-scale dramatic production, but instead uses little to no costume and set designs, and scripts are not memorized. Students practice their parts before the production with repeated readings, becoming fluent, confident readers. Readers' Theatre can increase student motivation to read and provides students with assurance when speaking in front of an audience. Readers' Theatre is not included in most curriculums and resources on Readers' Theatre are limited. Many teachers do not feel comfortable with Readers' Theatre in the classroom and are intimidated by what the process may entail.

This manual was designed to be used to instruct educators with everything they need to know in order to put on successful Readers' Theatre performances that can be integrated into any curriculum or reading program. The manual contains simple directions for putting on a Readers' Theatre performance, tips on making the process run smoothly, and costume, prop, and staging ideas. The manual also includes scripts in primary and intermediate grades and additional resources. The primary and intermediate sections include five scripts each based on popular children's literature stories in a variety of genres. The scripts in the intermediate section also include stage directions. The third section of the manual includes additional resources such as a vocal coloring activity, student evaluation page, student survey, invitations, and certificate of achievement that can be used to supplement Readers' Theatre performances in the classroom.



The World of Readers' Theatre

A Teachers' Resource Manual
By Kelly Leaverton

The World of Readers' Theatre

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Introduction

The World of Readers' Theatre

What is Readers' Theatre?

Readers' Theatre is an exciting and interactive method of story telling through reading scripts and acting out character roles. The best thing about Readers' Theatre is that it requires no costumes or props, only a script and enthusiasm. Readers' Theatre is a wonderful method to build fluency in emergent or developmental readers and is a great motivation builder for all students. Students perform these plays without memorizing lines, but read their scripts with ease and expression.

Why Readers' Theatre?

Readers' Theatre is a wonderful way to spark interest in reading literature by taking words and making them into a multifaceted experience as dialogue and characters come alive. Readers' Theatre can be applied to all content areas and used as a supportive teaching activity with any curriculum. It creates confidence and enthusiasm for reading and learning, as well as preparing students for public speaking by giving them poise, clarity, and exposure to being in front of an audience. Readers' Theatre

helps every reader to become better and more fluent through repetition and repeated readings.

About This Manual

This manual contains scripts based on popular children's literature stories from a variety of genres and reading levels. The author chose stories that are often read or introduced in the classroom and can be used to supplement any curriculum. Some scripts, such as "Molly's Pilgrim", "Martin Luther King Jr. ", and "Christopher Columbus" can be read and performed in conjunction with holidays. The manual is divided into three sections. The first two sections contain scripts in two age levels: Primary and Intermediate. Preceding each script is an overview of the story, book information, and simple prop, costume, and staging ideas. The last section of the manual contains additional resources that can be used including invitations, rewards, and a Readers' Theatre survey. It is hoped that this manual will introduce teachers to the world of Readers' Theatre and all it has to offer.

How to Put on a Readers' Theatre Play

Putting on a Readers' Theatre play can be fun and easy. Here's how it's done.

1. Read the Story. The first step in putting on a Readers' Theatre play is to

read the story that the script is based on so students have a general understanding of the plot and direction of the script. This can be done as a whole class activity or as a guided reading lesson with small groups.

The teacher may read the story in front of the class or have students read the book independently. Some of the intermediate scripts are based on chapter books that the whole class or reading groups may be reading together.

2. Passing out scripts. The next step is to pass out the scripts. Most scripts in this book call for 5-10 readers, which is ideal for a small reading group or any situation in which students are grouped according to ability levels. Students can take turns reading parts out loud and then rotate scripts and reread with a new part. The teacher then must decide which students will read which parts. This can be done by giving stronger readers leading roles, holding a cold audition read aloud while looking

for students that read clearly with expression, or randomly assigning scripts.

3. Practice Time! Once parts have been assigned, it may be a good idea to copy duplicate scripts for students to take home and practice with at night. Then it's time to practice, practice, practice! It generally takes about two weeks of daily rehearsals for students to be ready to perform their plays in front of an audience. Start by reading scripts with the group until parts are read somewhat fluently. Then have students practice their parts standing up on stage (usually the front of the classroom) with simplistic stage directions, movements, and simple props if needed. Give students the following pointers while rehearsing for their performances:

- Speak very loudly and clearly so the audience can understand all the words read.
- Hold scripts at chest level so the audience can see the actors' faces at all times.
- Always face the audience while on stage. Actors can turn sideways but never have their backs to the audience.
- Try to make eye contact with the audience by looking up from the script occasionally.

- Students onstage who are not speaking must stand quietly and still so the audience is looking at the person speaking and not any other movements or sounds from elsewhere on the stage.

4. Add Costumes, Props, and Movement. Students generally enjoy themselves more and get more into the plays if simple costumes, props, and movement are added to the productions, but this is not necessary. If the teacher chooses to add simple costumes, props, or movement to their productions, the following tips are helpful.

5. Perform the Play. When the play is ready to be performed, it is important that there is always an audience, whether it be other class members, neighboring classes that come to see the play, the principal, parents, or the entire school! It is so important for students' self-esteem to have their hard work recognized and acknowledged by an audience.

Costumes

Adding simple costumes to a Readers' Theatre play is not hard to do! One thing that is commonly used is giving students name tags with their character's names so the audience can always see which character is speaking. Simple costumes can be cut out of butcher paper and worn or

taped to clothing. Students can wear certain colors or kinds of clothing such as slacks or dresses the day of the performance as well. Hats, necklaces, pins, ties, and jackets are all simple to add and can help create the character.

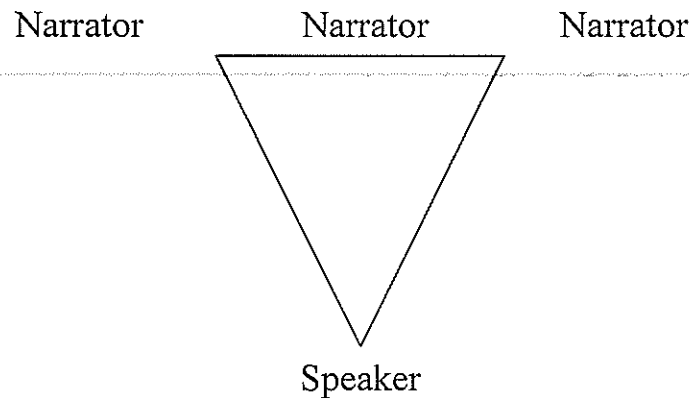
Props

Props can be added if characters hand each other objects, bring objects in to set down such as books or bags, or to create the mood or scene of the play. Simple props can be chairs, desks, blankets or bags that are not difficult to add. A colorful background to the stage can be added by designing or painting a big piece of butcher paper and hanging it on the wall behind the stage. If possible, using music stands to set scripts on is a great way to free up the actors' hands for holding props or creating movement and motion.

Stage Directions – Blocking

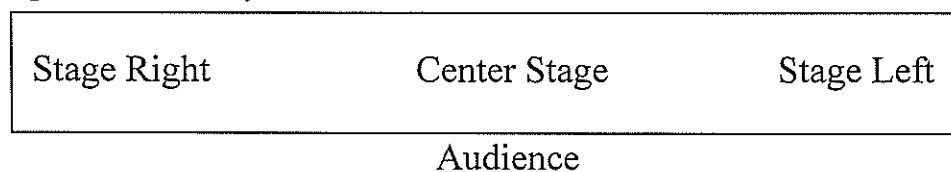
The intermediate scripts in this book all include stage directions, and the overview of each script includes staging or blocking ideas. Blocking is how the characters are placed on the stage so the audiences' eyes are focused on the desired characters and actions at the appropriate times. This can be attained by having the actors form a triangle shape on stage, with the point

of the triangle being the focal point of the audience. All scripts in this book include narrators that will form the back end of the triangle, and as characters enter the stage they will be making the point of the triangle.



For the very first play performed, it would be appropriate to have all the actors standing in a straight line with no movement. Students can get a feel for Readers' Theatre before adding stage directions. This format can be used every time, but adding stage directions adds to the play's overall feeling.

The stage is divided into three sections: stage right, center stage, and stage left. The directions are set up as if the actor was looking out at the audience. Stage right is the actor's right when they face the audience, or the left side of the stage to the audience. The stage also consists of upstage in the front of the stage closest to the audience, and downstage in the back of the stage further away from the audience.



Quick Steps to a Readers' Theatre Performance

1. Read the story to the class or have students read the story.
2. Pass out the scripts and do random reading of parts.
3. Assign roles for the play.
4. Send duplicate scripts home with students to rehearse as homework.
5. Practice reading parts first sitting down, then add movement, props, or costumes if desired (This usually takes from one to two weeks, about 5-10 practices).
6. Put on the play in front of an audience.

Primary Scripts

Frederick

Author: Leo Lionni

ISBN: 0394826140

Genre: Fiction, Picture Book

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: Kindergarten and 1st

Accelerated Reader Level: 3.5

Number of Characters: Six

Leads: Frederick

Supporting Roles: Spike, Tuffy, Pinky, Taylor, Narrator

Story Overview:

All the field mice are gathering food for the winter except for Frederick. Frederick is gathering sunrays, colors, and words to remember the summer when the mice are staying inside all winter. When the mice run out of food Frederick tells them to visualize a warm summer day while he recites his poems to them. The mice enjoy remembering the beauty of the four seasons.

Simple Props Needed:

None are necessary; little bags can be used to gather food (optional).

Costume Ideas:

Students can wear simple headbands with ears and whiskers, and a tail made of string to look like mice. They should also wear nametags that show what character they are.

Blocking Ideas:

This play can be used as a wonderful introduction to Readers' Theatre. Students can stand in a straight line at the front of the stage and take a step forward when they read their parts so they can focus on their scripts. If students are comfortable with their parts, more movement can be used on stage with the mice gathering food, then bundling together for the cold winter.

Frederick

by Leo Lionni

Cast of Characters:

Frederick
Narrator

Spike
Pinky

Tuffy
Taylor

Narrator: One cold fall day five field mice gathered supplies for the long winter.

Taylor: We must gather corn and nuts for the winter.

Tuffy: Don't forget the wheat and straw.

Pinky: We have been working hard all day and night, except for Frederick. Why won't he help us gather food?

Frederick: I do help. I help gather sun rays for the cold dark winter days. I gather colors, for the winter is gray.

Spike: Why are you just sitting Frederick? Are you dreaming?

Frederick: No, I am gathering words so we'll have things to say during the long winter.

Narrator: The winter came, and the five mice stayed in their hideout in the stones. At first there was lots of food, but it quickly ran out.

Tuffy: What do we do now? There is no more food and nothing to do.

Taylor: We have to wait until it is warm enough to go outside again.

Pinky: What about your supplies Frederick?

Frederick: Close your eyes. Now I send you the rays of the sun. Do you feel their golden glow?

Spike: I feel the sun. It is warm. What about the colors Frederick?

Frederick: Close you eyes and think about the green leaves, yellow wheat, and berry bushes.

Taylor: Yes, I can see them. They are so colorful.

Tuffy: What about the words Frederick?

Frederick: There are four little mice who live in the sky. They are the Spring mouse, Fall mouse, Winter mouse, and Summer mouse. They bring us the seasons of four. Think of a year with one less, or one more.

Spike: Wow Frederick! You know how to cheer up a dull day.

Pinky: But Frederick, you are a poet!

Frederick: I know it.

Narrator: So the five field mice lived happily ever after and never forgot the beauty of the four seasons.

The End

A decorative border of small, stylized fish swimming in a circular pattern around the page.

The Rainbow Fish

Author: Marcus Pfister

ISBN: 1-55858-009-3

Genre: Picture Book

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 1st and 2nd

Number of Characters: Eight

Leads: Narrator, Rainbow Fish, Little Blue Fish

Supporting Roles: Octopus, Starfish, Red Fish, Green Fish, Purple Fish

Story Overview:

All the fish in the sea envy Rainbow Fish's beautiful scales and wish they had scales like that too. But Rainbow Fish is vain and refuses to share the beautiful scales. Rainbow Fish doesn't understand why the other fish don't like her, so she goes to ask the wise octopus what she can do. The octopus advises sharing the scales, so Rainbow fish takes his advice. After sharing her scales, she feels even more beautiful and has all the friends in the sea.

Simple Props Needed:

Rainbow fish will wear 5 colored scales on necklaces made of yarn. The scales can be made of bright construction paper or tissue paper. At the end of the play Rainbow fish will give one necklace to each fish and keep one for herself. Paint a sea picture on butcher paper to hang on the back of the stage.

Costume Ideas:

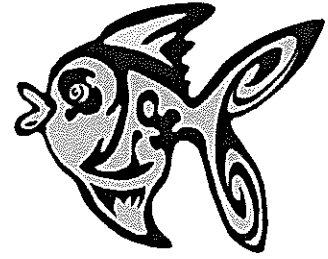
Fish can wear the color of their name (purple, blue, etc.) Crape paper or tissue paper can be hanging from the arms of each fish, and nametags used.

Blocking Ideas:

The narrator stands stage right, and other characters move throughout the stage, as if swimming. The octopus's cave can be downstage left.

The Rainbow Fish

By Marcus Pfister



Cast of Characters:

Rainbow Fish
Octopus
Purple Fish

Little Blue Fish
Red Fish
Narrator

Starfish
Green Fish

Narrator: Way out in the deep blue sea there lived a beautiful fish. Her scales were every shade of blue, green, and purple with silver throughout.

Red Fish: Look at that beautiful fish full of colors.

Green Fish: She is a rainbow fish.

Purple Fish: Rainbow Fish, come play with us!

Rainbow Fish: I will not play with you. I am too beautiful to play with such plain fish.

Little Blue Fish: Rainbow Fish, wait for me! Please give me one of your shiny scales. They are so wonderful, and you have so many.

Rainbow Fish: You want me to give you one of my special scales? Who do you think you are? Get away from me!

Narrator: Little Blue Fish told the other fish what Rainbow Fish said to him and the other fish did not like Rainbow Fish anymore.

Rainbow Fish: No one wants to look at my wonderful scales anymore. What should I do? I am so lonely.

Narrator: Rainbow Fish was the loneliest fish in the ocean. One day she poured out all her troubles to a starfish.

Rainbow Fish: I really am beautiful. Why doesn't anybody like me?

Starfish: I can't answer that for you. But if you go beyond the coral reef to a deep cave you will find the wise octopus. Maybe he can help you.

Narrator: So the Rainbow Fish swam all around until she found the cave with the octopus.

Octopus: I have been waiting for you, Rainbow Fish. The waves have told me your story. This is my advice. Give a glittering scale to each of the other fish. You will no longer be the most beautiful fish in the sea, but you will discover how to be happy.

Rainbow Fish: I can't! Give away my scales? My Beautiful shining scales? Never. How could I ever be happy without them?

Narrator: But the octopus had gone back into his cave.

Little Blue Fish: Rainbow Fish, please don't be angry. I just want one little scale.

Rainbow Fish: Give you a scale? Only one very small shimmering scale? Well, I might not miss just one.

Narrator: So Rainbow Fish gave Little Blue Fish one small scale.

Little Blue Fish: Oh thank you! Thank you very much! Look! Look! Look what Rainbow fish gave me!

Red Fish: Oh how pretty!

Green Fish: Can I have one Too?

Rainbow Fish: Of course you can. I have plenty.

Purple Fish: Can I have one too?

Rainbow Fish: Yes, I have enough for everyone. Here take one.

Narrator: So the Rainbow Fish shared all her scales with the other fish. The more she gave away, the happier she felt. At last she felt at home with the other fish, and she had only one glimmering scale left.

Little Blue Fish: Come on Rainbow Fish. Come play with us!

Red Fish: Yes, come and play!

Rainbow Fish: Here I come!

Narrator: So the Rainbow Fish was very happy and had a sea full of friends.

All: The End



Johnny Appleseed

Author: Retold by Steven Kellog

ISBN: 0-590-42616-8

Genre: Tall Tale

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 2nd and 3rd

Accelerated Reader Level: 3.3

Number of Characters: Nine

Leads: Johnny Appleseed, Narrators 1, 2, and 3

Supporting Roles: Woodsman 1 and 2, Pioneer Man, Pioneer Woman, Indian Boy

Story Overview:

Johnny Appleseed grew up in a noisy household and loved to escape to his apple orchard to relax. As Johnny grew up, he lived with nature and planted apple orchard after apple orchard for pioneers to come. He took part in many adventures and met many different people as he moved west and enjoyed life in the wilderness.

Simple Props Needed:

Apples, three makeshift axes made of paper towel rolls and cardboard wrapped with tin foil.

Costume Ideas:

Johnny Appleseed, woodsmen, and pioneer men can dress in overalls and plaid shirts. The pioneer woman can wear a long dress, and the Indian boy in white clothing.

Blocking Ideas:

The narrators stand stage right, center, and left, and stay in the background throughout the play. Other characters stand front and center, making sure not to block the narrators in the back. The goal is to have characters making a triangle shape with the tip facing the audience.

Johnny Appleseed

Retold by Steven Kellog

Cast of Characters:

Johnny Appleseed
Narrator #3
Pioneer Woman

Narrator #1
Woodsman #1
Pioneer Man

Narrator #2
Woodsman #2
Indian boy

Narrator #1: On September 26, 1774 John Chapman, later known as Johnny Appleseed was born in Massachusetts while the apples were as red as the autumn leaves.

Narrator #2: Johnny grew up in a loud household with over 10 brothers and sisters. The family owned an apple orchard and Johnny used to spend a lot of his time there in the peace and quiet of nature.

Narrator #3: As soon as Johnny was old enough to leave home he set out to explore the wilderness of the west. He planted his own apple orchard to take care of. In Pennsylvania, he met some Indians.

Indian Boy: Who are you?

Johnny Appleseed: My name is Johnny Appleseed. I love the beauty of nature and planting apple orchards. Even though I have my own orchard, I like clearing the land for the pioneers so they will have orchards when they come.

Indian Boy: Would you like to come to our village? We live with nature too and explore the wonders of its beauty.

Johnny Appleseed: Yes. We can be friends and share the forest. I live among nature too.

Narrator #1: So Johnny continued to plant apple orchards and live in the wilderness. One day he met a band of woodsmen.

Woodsman #1: We are such good woodsmen that we catch more wildcats than anyone else. Are you a woodsman too?

Johnny Appleseed: I am not a woodsman. I live with nature and I don't hurt any animals. I would never do that.

Woodsman #2: What kind of a man are you then? How about a wrestling match to find out?

Johnny Appleseed: I have a better idea. How about a tree chopping contest?

Woodsman #1: OK, if you really want to. But you won't beat us.

Woodsman #2: After all, we are real woodsmen and you aren't.

Narrator #2: So Johnny Appleseed and the woodsmen had a tree chopping contest. When the contest was over, there was no question who the winner was.

Narrator #3: It was Johnny Appleseed of course!

Johnny Appleseed: I sure am tired! But this is the largest piece of land I have ever cleared for an orchard. I better start planting. Thank you woodsmen!

Woodsman #1: Your welcome I guess. I'm so tired!

Woodsman #2: Lets get out of here!

Narrator #1: Over the next few years Johnny continued to move westward. Before long, his planting spread across the state of Ohio.

Narrator #2: Meanwhile, pioneer families were coming and buying Johnny Appleseed's young trees.

Pioneer Man: Are you the one who planted all these trees?

Johnny Appleseed: Yes, and you can buy them to use for your own orchards.

Pioneer Woman: Thank you so much. We just traveled all this way and are ready to start our new homestead.

Johnny Appleseed: Do you need help building your home? I'll help you. It's no problem.

Pioneer Man: That would be a big help. Let's start with the floor.

Pioneer Woman: Please stay for dinner too. We would love to have you eat with us.

Narrator #3: Johnny Appleseed helped many families build their homes and told many stories about living in the wilderness to their children at night.

Pioneer Woman: Johnny, why don't you build a house for yourself and settle down?

Johnny Appleseed: That would be no fun. I live like a king in my wilderness home and I want to stay living in the forest I love.

Narrator #1: Many people told stories of Johnny Appleseed's adventures in the wilderness.

Woodsman #1: Did you know that Johnny Appleseed sleeps in the trees and talks to the birds?

Woodsman #2: I heard that Johnny was attacked by a rattlesnake but still survived.

Pioneer Man: I heard that Johnny liked to play with bear families and once kept a hurt wolf as his pet.

Narrator #3: Johnny continued to move west and visit pioneer families for many years. He was always welcome in their homes.

Narrator #2: One day in 1845, when Johnny was over 70 years old, he became sick in a snowstorm and died a few days later.

Narrator #1: But the stories continued for many years. No one knows how many of the stories are true or fantasy, but everyone remembers Johnny Appleseed, his kindness, and his love for nature.

Narrators #1, #2, and #3: The end.



Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Author: Retold by Jan Brett

ISBN: 0-698-11358-6

Genre: Traditional Fantasy

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 1st and 2nd

Number of Characters: Six

Leads: Narrators 1 and 2, Goldilocks, Papa Bear

Supporting Roles: Mama Bear, Baby Bear

Story Overview:

When the three bears go for a walk in the woods, a young girl named Goldilocks comes upon their empty house and goes inside. She eats Baby Bear's porridge, breaks his chair, and goes to sleep in his bed. When the bears return they see things out of place and look for the culprit, all the while Goldilocks is sleeping soundly upstairs. Will they find her?

Simple Props Needed:

Three bowls for porridge, three different sized chairs, and three makeshift beds made of blankets on a few chairs or on the ground.

Costume Ideas:

Goldilocks can wear a bright dress, and the three bears can wear makeshift costumes of brown butcher paper.

Blocking Ideas:

The narrators stand stage right, center and left, and stay in the background throughout the play. The other characters will move about the stage quite a bit looking at the props of bowls, chairs, and beds. The bowls can be stage right on a small table, three chairs center stage, and three beds set up stage left.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Retold by Jan Brett

Cast of Characters:

Narrator #1

Goldilocks

Papa Bear

Narrator #2

Mama Bear

Baby Bear

Narrator #1: Once upon a time there were three bears who lived together in a house in the woods.

Mama Bear: The porridge is now done. Come and eat it!

Papa Bear: This porridge is too hot. Lets go on a walk in the woods while our porridge is cooling off.

Baby Bear: Yes, lets go.

Narrator #2: So the bears left to find honey, and while they were gone, a young girl named Goldilocks came upon their house in the woods.

Goldilocks: Look at this strange house. I wonder if anyone is home?

Narrator #1: Goldilocks looked in the windows and keyhole, and after seeing that there was no one home, went inside.

Goldilocks: What is that wonderful smell? Oh look, there is porridge on the table. Three bowls. This big bowl is too hot. This middle-sized bowl is too cold. But the porridge in this little small bowl is just right. I think I'll eat it.

Narrator #2: So Goldilocks ate the porridge of the wee baby bear. Then she saw the chairs of Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear.

Goldilocks: I want to sit down. Here is a big huge chair. But this chair is too hard. Here is a middle-sized chair. But this chair is too soft. But look at this little small chair. It is neither too hard nor too soft. It is just right. I think I'll sit down.

Narrator #1: So Goldilocks sat down on the chair of the baby bear. But it was made for such a wee baby bear that it broke under her weight and she fell to the floor.

Goldilocks: Oh no, the chair broke! I think I'll go upstairs and see the bedrooms. I'm awfully tired.

Narrator #2: Goldilocks went upstairs and saw the bed of Papa Bear first, then Mama Bear, and finally Baby Bear.

Goldilocks: Look at this big bed. I want to get on this bed, but it is too high for me. Oh, here is a middle-sized bed. But this bed is too low for me. But look, here is a little small bed that is just the right size for me. I think I'll lie in this bed for just a moment.

Narrator #1: Here comes the bears back from their walk.

Papa Bear: Let's eat our porridge. It will be cool now. Wait! Someone has been eating my porridge. There is a spoon in mine!

Mama Bear: Someone has been eating my porridge too!

Baby Bear: Someone has been eating my porridge and it is all gone!

Papa Bear: Let's look at the rest of the house to make sure everything is in order. Wait! Someone has been sitting in my chair! The cushion is crumpled.

Mama Bear: Someone has been sitting in my chair too!

Baby Bear: Someone has been sitting in my chair and they have broken it!

Papa Bear: Let's go look in the bedrooms!

Narrator #2: So the three bears went upstairs to look in their bedrooms.

Papa Bear: Wait! Someone has been sleeping on my bed. The pillow is out of place!

Mama Bear: Someone has been sleeping on my bed too!

Baby Bear: Someone has been sleeping on my bed, and here she is!

Narrator #1: At all this noise Goldilocks awoke from her sleep to see the three bears staring down at her. This scared Goldilocks and she got down and jumped out the window. She ran away as fast as she could and didn't look back.

Narrator #2: No one knows what happened to Goldilocks after that day, but the three bears never saw her again.

All: The End!



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Author: David A. Alder

ISBN: 0-8234-0847-7

Genre: Biography

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 2nd and 3rd

Number of Characters: 11 speaking roles, 5-10 additional extras

Leads: Narrators 1, 2, and 3, Martin Luther King

Supporting Roles: Protesters 1 and 2, Rosa Parks, Friends 1 and 2, Bus driver, Martin's mother

Story Overview:

This story is the outline of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life from when he was a boy, to growing up and deciding to take a stand, to his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, and his tragic death. It also highlights the Rosa Park's story and the bus protest of the 1960s.

Simple Props Needed:

Two rows of chairs to simulate the bus reenactment, something to use as a podium, picketing signs for the bus protest reenactment.

Costume Ideas:

General clothing is fine. Martin Luther King Jr. can wear a nice jacket and tie for his famous speech.

Blocking Ideas:

Since this play can use the entire class, the stage should be big and encompass a large area. The narrators can stand downstage right, center, and left. Most of the action with a large group can take place to one side so that the extras will fill up the center of the stage. Make sure that characters are facing toward their audience or to the side, with no backs to the audience.

A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By David A. Alder

Cast of Characters:

Narrator #1	Martin Luther King	Friend #1
Narrator #2	Rosa Parks	Friend #2
Narrator #3	Martin's mother	Bus Driver
Protestor #1	Protestor #2	
5-10 Protestors and Followers		

Narrator #1: Martin Luther King Jr. was one of America's greatest leaders.

Narrator #2: He was a powerful speaker, and he spoke out against many laws which kept black people out of many schools and jobs.

Narrator #3: He led protests and marches demanding fair laws for all people.

Narrator #1: Let's take a look back at the life of Martin Luther King Jr.

Narrator #2: Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15th, 1929 to a pastor in Atlanta, Georgia. He liked to sing and play sports with his friends.

(Sports flashback reenactment)

Martin Luther King: Hey guys, ready for a game of football?

Friend #1: We're going to play football in the park today, but you can't play with us anymore.

Martin Luther King: Why not? What did I do?

Friend #2: Nothing, it's just that our parents told us not to play with you anymore because you are black and we are white.

Martin Luther King: What difference does that make?

Friend #1: I don't know, that's just the way it is.

Friend #2: White people aren't supposed to do stuff with black people. Sorry you can't play with us anymore. *(Boys leave)*

Martin's Mother: What's going on boys?

Martin Luther King: Mom, they said I can't play with them anymore just because I'm black. I don't understand. What's wrong with me?

Martin's Mother: Nothing Martin! Many years ago black people were brought in chains to America and sold as slaves. Long before you were born the slaves were set free. But there are still some people who don't treat black people fairly.

Martin Luther King: But that's not fair!

Martin's Mother: Sometimes life is not fair Martin. There are still signs and places that are "White Only" areas, and many black people still cannot find jobs.

Martin Luther King: Well I'm going to do something about it. One day I will make the world change their minds. *(Exit Stage)*

Narrator #3: Martin Luther King Jr. studied hard and went to college. He became a minister.

Narrator #1: In 1955, a woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for sitting behind a "White Only" section of a bus.

(Bus Reenactment)

Rosa Parks: I'm so tired from my long day at work. The bus is crowded. I'm glad I got this last seat right behind the "White Only" section.

Bus Driver: Excuse me lady, but you need to move. There are no more seats in the "White Only" section so I'm going to have this white man sit in your seat.

Rosa Parks: But I've worked all day. I'm tired and I shouldn't have to move. I'm sitting in my own section and I'm not moving.

Bus Driver: Then I'm stopping the bus and you will be arrested. You have to do what I tell you and you can't talk back to me.
(Two men escort Rosa Parks off the bus against her will)

Protestor #1: That's not fair. She didn't do anything wrong.

Protestor #2: You can't arrest her.

Bus Driver: Yes I can. She didn't listen to me when I told her what to do. She has to do what I say because I am white and she is black.

(Enter Martin Luther King)

Martin Luther King: My friends, we must do something about this situation. There comes a time when people get tired of being kicked about. Let us protest this injustice. We will not ride buses until the law changes.

Protestors: Yes!

Protestor #1: I say we fight for justice with our fists!

Martin Luther King: No my friends. We must love our white brothers. We must meet hate with love. We will walk to work and the stores until the law changes.

(Protestors march around the stage in a circle)

Narrator #2: The bus protest lasted for a year. When it ended, there were no more "White Only" sections on buses.

Narrator: #3: Martin Luther King continued to do peaceful protests and marches for freedom for black Americans.

Narrator #1: In 1963 he led the biggest march of all in Washington D.C.

(Followers circle around Martin Luther King)

Martin Luther King: I have a dream. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. This is our hope - and if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

(Followers clap and cheer, then exit the stage)

Narrator #2: The country was changing. New laws were passed. "White Only" signs were taken down.

Narrator #3: Not everyone liked what Martin Luther King did for our country. In April of 1968, a man killed Martin Luther King outside his hotel room in Memphis Tennessee.

Narrator #1: The nation suffered when he died. Carved on his gravestone are the words, "I'm free at last".

All: We will not forget you, Martin Luther King!

Intermediate Scripts

The Memory Coat

Author: Elvira Woodruff

ISBN: 0-439-14133-8

Genre: Historical Fiction

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 3rd and 4th

Number of Characters: Eight, or ten with added narrators

Leads: Grisha, Rachel

Supporting Roles: Narrator, Father, Mother, Bubba, Grandfather,
Inspection Doctor, added extras as needed for line at Ellis Island

Story Overview:

Rachel and Grisha's family must leave Russia and travel to America to escape persecution from the Russians. They travel to Ellis Island in New York and wait in line to be inspected and allowed to enter America. When Grisha doesn't pass the inspection test, the family must be creative in order to keep Grisha from being sent back to Russia. Inspired by actual events, this story is a heartwarming tale of courage and love.

Simple Props Needed:

Chairs at the home in Russia for Bubba and Mother, yarn for sewing, signs that say "Ellis Island", and "Inspection Line".

Costume Ideas:

The main costume is Grisha's coat. Use an old solid coat. The inspection doctor will tape a white "E" of construction paper to the back. The coat must be able to be turned inside out. The family is very poor, so any old or tattered clothes will be appropriate. The inspection doctor should wear white.

Blocking Ideas:

The narrator stands stage right, with the family center stage. As they stand in line at Ellis Island, they will stand stage left and move right with the line.

The Memory Coat

By Elvira Woodruff

Cast of Characters:

Narrator (1,2,3)

Rachel

Grisha

Father

Mother

Grandfather

Bubba

Inspection doctor

Scene One - Russia

Narrator(1): Many year ago, in a small Jewish town in Russia, there lived a young girl named Rachel and her cousin Grisha. They were the best of friends and loved to tell pretend stories and play make believe. Grisha lived with Rachel's family and he loved them very much, but sometimes he was very sad.

(Mother and Bubba are sewing together center stage when Rachel enters the room stage left, a little upset)

Rachel: Mother, why is Grisha so sad?

Mother: You must remember Rachel that it was only one year ago that Grisha's parents died from an epidemic. Grisha still misses them very much and he always will.

Bubba: But we worry about Grisha when he runs out in the cold to be alone. He only has his threadbare coat to keep him warm.

(Enter Grisha stage left, walking with his head down very slowly)

Mother: There you are Grisha! Why don't you let your grandmother and I make you a new coat so you won't be so cold outside.

Grisha: *(Defensively)* I like my coat the way it is!

Rachel: *(Going over to comfort him)* It's OK Grisha. I think your coat is fine! *(She places an arm around him)*

(Grandfather and Father run into the room stage right, very upset)

Grandfather: My family, we have very bad news for you. We must leave Russia. We must leave soon because the Cossacks are coming to our town and they will kill anyone who is Jewish.

Rachel: But we are Jewish!

Father: Russia is no longer a safe place for us to live. We must go to America. In America, we will be safe.

Grandfather: Yes, it is true. We must leave as soon as possible.

Mother: We must pack and sell almost everything we own. We will have to take a boat to America, where all the immigrants are inspected at Ellis Island to make sure we are healthy and have enough money to take care of ourselves. But what if they send us back to Russia?

Father: Don't worry, Mother. We must make a good impression at Ellis Island in New York, so we'll be able to stay in America.

Grandfather: Yes, if we make one mistake they will send one or all of us back to Russia and we could be separated forever.

Mother: Then there must be no mistakes.

Bubba: Then we will have to do something about Grisha's coat. If we want to make a good impression it cannot be torn and tattered. We will have to make you a new one.

Grisha: No!

Mother: Grisha, the coat is very old and falling apart. Why do you like that old coat so much?

Rachel: He sees the inside. It's lined with the beautiful wool from his very own mother's coat. The coat reminds him of his mother!

Bubba: Yes, now I understand why Grisha wants to keep his coat. So he shall keep it.

(All exit stage left)

Narrator(2): So the family set about making plans to leave. They sold almost everything they owned and said goodbye to all their friends and neighbors. The next day the family made the long and hard journey to America. They traveled first by wagon, then by train, and finally on the big ship that crossed the ocean to America. The trip took 14 days. Finally they reached New York.

Scene Two - New York, Ellis Island

(Enter family stage left, tired and weak from the long journey. They stand in a line waiting to be inspected)

Grandfather: We are finally in America.

Mother: Yes, but the worst is still ahead. We must now pass the health inspection so we will be allowed to stay in America.

Rachel: I'm scared.

Bubba: Don't be scared Rachel. We won't let them separate us. We will all pass the inspection.

Grisha: There are so many people here.

Rachel: I know Grisha. Let's play our pretend storytelling game. Then we won't be so scared. I'll tell the story.

Grisha: Alright Rachel, let's play.

Rachel: Once there lived a magical bird with golden feathers. It had beautiful wings and it flew all around.

(Rachel flaps her arms and pretends to fly around in circles. She accidentally bumps into Grisha and they both fall down. Grisha hits his head on Bubba's basket)

Grisha: Ouch, my eye!

Rachel: Grisha are you OK? Let me see your eye. It looks like you scratched it.

Father: What's going on children?

Rachel: We were playing pretend and we fell, and Grisha scraped his eye.

Grisha: It's OK, it only hurts a little.

(Enter inspection doctor stage right, who begins to look up and down each family member. The doctor looks at their hands, down their throat, and squeezes their arms. One by one, the family passes through the inspection. Grisha is the last one to be inspected)

Inspection doctor: *(Very professionally)* Young boy, what is wrong with your eye?

Grisha: *(Doesn't understand English)* Umm, I think he's asking about my eye. I hit it when I fell down playing pretend. It's OK though. It doesn't even hurt anymore.

Inspection doctor: I'm sorry I can't understand you. I don't speak Russian. I'm going to place an 'E' on your coat for "eye trouble". You will not be allowed to stay in America.

Father: Please! His eye is healthy. It's just a scratch!

Inspection doctor: I'm sorry. I don't speak Russian. I can't understand you. The boy will have to go back to Russia. We can't let him stay in America with an eye disease.

Rachel: What's wrong? Why won't they let Grisha stay? Is it because of his coat?

Mother: No Rachel, they think that there's something wrong with Grisha's eye.

Rachel: I won't let them send you back Grisha! *(thinks a moment)* I have an idea. Grisha, turn your coat inside out so the beautiful wool is showing from your mother's coat. Now the 'E' is hidden.

Father: Come Grisha, let's get you examined by another doctor, one that speaks Yiddish and Russian. He will understand what happened to Grisha's eye and let us stay in America.

Grandfather: Rachel, you were so smart to think of turning the coat inside out!

Bubba: You were right Grisha. This coat of yours is very special. Your mama's memory will be with you for a very long time. Not only here on the outside, but on the inside as well. The most important place of all.

(Bubba hugs Rachel and Grisha, the family exits stage left)

Narrator(3): The other inspection doctor allowed Grisha to pass the examination and the family was able to stay together in America, the land of opportunity. They were now free and no longer had to be afraid because they were Jewish. They were very happy.

All: The End



Sarah, Plain and Tall



Author: Patricia MacLachlan

ISBN: 0-590-97409-2

Genre: Historical Fiction

Book Description: Chapter Book, 64 pages, Newbery Medal winner

Target Grade Levels: 4th, 5th, and 6th

Accelerated Reader Level: 3.9

Number of Characters: Eight

Leads: Sarah, Papa Jacob, Anna, and Caleb

Supporting Roles: Narrators 1 and 2, Maggie and Matthew

Story Overview:

Sarah is a mail order bride that answers the ad Papa Jacob places for a wife and mother for his two children, Anna and Caleb. The children anxiously await her arrival, and once she has arrived, are fearful that she will miss her old home and leave them. Sarah is a warm, wise, and wonderful woman whose long-awaited visit just may change the family's lonely lives forever.

Simple Props Needed:

Letters, a shell and sea stone, stuffed animal cat (optional), a few chairs

Costume Ideas:

A yellow bonnet for Sarah. Sarah, Anna and Maggie can wear long dresses, Papa Jacob, Caleb, and Matthew can wear white T-shirts, jeans, or overalls.

Blocking Ideas:

Most of the reading takes place center stage. Narrators can be sitting or standing stage left and stage right throughout the performance as if in the background. The house is in the direction of stage left, and road/yard is stage right.



Sarah, Plain and Tall

By Patricia MacLachlan

Cast of Characters:

Narrator #1

Sarah

Anna

Maggie

Narrator #2

Papa Jacob

Caleb

Matthew

Narrator #1: Long ago in the rolling prairies of the mid-west, there lived a small family with Papa Jacob, his daughter Anna, and his son Caleb.

Narrator #2: Even though the family was very happy, they wished they had a mother to take care of them. The children's mother had died the day after Caleb was born.

(Enter Caleb and Anna from stage right)

Caleb: Do you remember Mama, Anna?

Anna: Yes, a little.

Caleb: What was she like?

Anna: *(Sadly)* She liked to sing.

Caleb: Do you remember any of the songs she used to sing?

Anna: *(Impatiently)* No I don't, and you are being annoying.

(Enter Papa Jacob, stage left)

Papa Jacob: Good morning children. I have something I need to tell you. I've placed an advertisement in the newspapers for help.

Anna: You mean like a housekeeper?

Papa Jacob: No, not a housekeeper. *(Pause)* A wife.

Caleb: You mean like a mother?

Papa Jacob: That too. Remember our neighbor Matthew? He wrote for a wife and mother for his children and Maggie came. Well, I have done the same and I have received an answer. This is the letter I got. *(Takes out letter)*

"Dear Mr. Jacob Witting, I am Sarah Wheaton from Maine and I am answering your advertisement. I have never been married and have lived with my older brother who is about to be married. I love the sea, but I feel a move is necessary. If you should care to

write I would be interested in your children and about where you live. And you. Very truly yours, Sarah Elisabeth Wheaton.

(There is a pause in the room. No one speaks)

Anna: One thing Papa.

Papa Jacob: What's that?

Anna: Ask her if she sings. *(Anna, Caleb and Papa Jacob exit stage left)*

Narrator #1: Papa Jacob, Caleb, and Anna all wrote letters to Sarah and anxiously awaited her answers.

(Anna enters stage left with a letter, stands center stage)

Anna: Dear Anna, Yes, I can braid hair and I can make stew and bake bread, though I prefer to build bookshelves and paint. My favorite colors are gray and green because they are the colors of the sea. Very truly yours, Sarah Elisabeth Wheaton.

(Anna moves to stage right, and Caleb enters with letter, stands center stage)

Caleb: Dear Caleb, My cat's name is Seal because she is gray like the seals that swim offshore in Maine. Your house sounds very lovely, even though it is far out in the country with no close neighbors. Yes, I can keep a fire going at night. I do not know if I snore. Seal has never told me. Very truly yours, Sarah Elisabeth.

Anna: You asked her if she snores?

Caleb: Well, I wanted to know!

(Enter Papa Jacob from stage left with letter, stands stage left)

Papa Jacob: Dear Jacob, I will come by train. I will wear a yellow bonnet. I am plain and tall. Sarah.

Caleb: What does it say at the bottom of the letter?

Papa Jacob: It says, tell them I sing.

(Papa Jacob, Caleb, and Anna exit stage left)

Narrator #2: Sarah came in the spring. Papa Jacob got up early for the long day to the train and back, and Anna and Caleb waited impatiently for their return.

(Caleb and Anna enter from stage left)

Caleb: Is my face clean?

Anna: Yes, your face is clean.

Caleb: Will Sarah be nice?

Anna: Yes, Sarah will be nice.

Caleb: Will Sarah like us? *(Pause)* Of course she will like us. We are nice.

(Anna looks stage right)

Anna: *(Pointing, excited)* Look!

Caleb: *(Looks right)* A yellow bonnet!

(Papa Jacob and Sarah enter from stage right)

Caleb: Did you bring some sea?

Sarah: Something from the sea, and me, and my cat Seal.

Papa Jacob: The cat will be good in the barn for mice.

Sarah: The cat will be good in the house too. Here is a seashell for you Caleb, and for you Anna is a sea stone. *(Hands items to the children)*

Caleb: We do not have the sea here.

Sarah: No. There is no sea here. But the land rolls a little like the sea.

Papa Jacob: Let me take you inside Sarah to get settled.

(Papa Jacob and Sarah exit, stage left)

Caleb: Sarah is nice.

Anna: Yes, she is nice, but she looks lonely. In a month's time the preacher might come to marry Sarah and Papa. In a month's time Sarah might change her mind and leave us.

(Anna and Caleb exit stage left)

Narrator #1: Sarah continued to adjust to prairie living and life without the sea. Anna and Jacob were shy around Sarah, but Caleb talked nonstop.

Narrator #2: One day neighbors Matthew and Maggie came to visit.

(Enter Matthew and Maggie, stage right, and Sarah and Jacob, stage left)

Jacob: Matthew, Maggie, this is Sarah Wheaton from Maine.

Matthew: It's so nice to meet you Sarah.

Maggie: You are lonely, yes?

Sarah: I miss the sea.

Maggie: I miss the hills of Tennessee sometimes.

Sarah: I miss my brother, William, but he is married. The house is hers now. I have three old aunts that squawk together like crows. I miss them too.

Maggie: There are always things to miss, Sarah. No matter where you are. Soon you can drive your wagon over to my house and we can visit more.

Sarah: In Maine I would walk to my neighbors' houses.

Maggie: *(Reassuringly)* Here it is different. Here you must drive.

Matthew: We are glad you are here. You are a new friend. Maggie misses her friends sometimes.

(Maggie and Matthew exit stage right; Sarah and Jacob exit stage left)

Narrator #1: The summer days grew nearer and nearer.

Narrator #2: Sarah continued to adjust and enjoyed many adventures with the children and Jacob like playing in the hay and learning to drive a wagon.

Narrator #1: Anna and Caleb continued to grow closer to Sarah, but they still feared she might leave them.

Narrator #2: One day the children could not find Sarah.

(Anna and Caleb enter stage left)

Anna: Papa, papa!

(Papa Jacob enters stage right)

Papa Jacob: What is it children?

Anna: We have been looking everywhere and we cannot find Sarah.

Papa Jacob: She has taken the wagon and gone into town.

Caleb: What did she go into town for?

Papa Jacob: I don't know.

Caleb: I know. She has gone into town to buy a train ticket back to Maine because she is homesick. She doesn't like it here.

Anna: Hush Caleb! She likes us.

Caleb: But she doesn't like us enough to stay.

Anna: Look! Dust. Sarah is coming back with the wagon.

(Enter Sarah, stage right)

Caleb: We thought you left us. We thought you went back to Maine.

Anna: We thought you might be thinking of leaving us because you miss the sea.

Sarah: No. I will always miss my old home, but the truth is I would miss you more.

(Sarah hugs the children)

Anna: What were you doing in town then?

Sarah: I bought these colored pencils for us so I can draw the sea. Blue, gray, and green.

Caleb: Papa guess what? Sarah has brought us the sea!

Narrator #1: So Sarah and Jacob were married and lived happily on the prairie. Anna and Caleb had a mother once more.

Narrator #2: The end.



Christopher Columbus

Author: Kimberly Weinberger

ISBN: 0-439-29546-7

Genre: Biography

Book Description: Picture Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 4th and 5th

Number of Characters: Eleven

Leads: Christopher Columbus, Sailors 1 and 2

Supporting Roles: Narrators 1, 2, and 3, King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, Columbus's father, Native Boy and Native Girl

Story Overview:

This story is the summary of Christopher Columbus's life, starting with when he became a sailor at age 14, gained financial support from the king and queen of Spain, and made the long voyage to the America. What Christopher Columbus really thought was a voyage to the Indies turned out to be a big mistake! The story honors Columbus's bravery and his mistaken discovery to a new world.

Simple Props Needed:

A map, a spool of yarn for Columbus's father, two chairs to serve as thrones, bells and thread or fruit for gifts that natives and sailors exchange, a makeshift flag of Spain.

Costume Ideas:

Columbus can be wearing a big coat or a cape, and the king and queen of Spain can be wearing makeshift cloaks with sheets and homemade crowns. The sailors can wear white T-shirts with caps, and natives can wear light clothing.

Blocking Ideas:

The narrators are standing in the downstage at right, center, and left stage. The rest of the play takes place center stage.

Christopher Columbus

By Kimberly Weinberger

Cast of Characters:

Narrator #1

Narrator #3

King Ferdinand

Sailor #1

Native boy

Columbus's father

Narrator #2

Christopher Columbus

Queen Isabella

Sailor #2

Native girl

Scene One – Italy, 1470's

Narrator #1: More than 500 years ago, a boy named Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy. Columbus loved to watch ships come and go. He wished he could sail away on them.

(Enter young Columbus and his father, stage right)

Christopher's Father: Christopher, help me with this cloth.

Christopher Columbus: Alright, in a minute.

Father: You know that this is my business. I need your help in order to be able to provide for our family. Are you looking out the window at the sea again?

Christopher Columbus: I can't help it father. The sea is so vast. You can look as far as the eyes will reach and never see the end of it.

Father: *(Sadly)* I knew this day would come.

Christopher Columbus: *(Startled)* What do you mean father?

Father: Christopher, you are only fourteen years old, but you are at the age where I can no longer keep you under my care. I know that you dream of the sea. I have found an opening on a ship for a sailor to help man the sails and care for the vessel. The job is yours if you truly want it.

Christopher Columbus: Oh Father! I would love to work on a ship and be a real sailor. Thank you so much! I will start right away.

(Christopher Columbus and his father exit, stage right)

Narrator #2: Columbus loved his new life. He took many trips. He saw many cities. He heard people speak of rich, faraway places.

Narrator #3: And what was the most wonderful place of all? The Indies!

Narrator #1: The Indies was a land filled with gold and spices. But getting there was very hard. The mountains and deserts in between were very dangerous.

Narrator #3: So Columbus had a better idea!

(Enter Christopher Columbus and two sailors, stage right. Christopher is looking over a map)

Sailor #1: Columbus, what are you doing with that map? You look at it constantly.

Sailor #2: Yes, you'd think it would contain a hidden treasure.

Christopher Columbus: Maybe it does. The Indies contains many treasures, but it is too hard to sail there going east. I think I can sail there by going west over the Great Western Ocean.

Sailor #1: You are crazy! You can't cross the Great Western Ocean. No one has ever done that before.

Sailor #2: Besides, if you sail west you will sail right off the earth.

Christopher Columbus: You are wrong. I can sail west and reach the Indies. I only need a strong crew and some ships.

Sailor #1: And just how do you think you will get the money and supplies to sail west? You have swallowed too much sea water!

Christopher Columbus: I will find someone to give me the money to make the trip. Then I will share some riches with them.

Sailor #2: You are still crazy! Good luck! But if you ever find anyone to pay for you to sail west, we'll be on the ships with you the whole way!

Sailor #1: In your dreams!

(All exit, stage left)

Scene Two – Spain, 1492

(King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella are sitting side by side at their thrones, center stage)

Narrator #2: Columbus traveled to many countries in search of funds to pay for his voyage west. Every country said Columbus was crazy and turned him down.

Narrator #1: Growing desperate, Christopher Columbus was running out of people to ask. He came to Spain to ask King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella for their help.

King Ferdinand: You may enter Christopher Columbus.

(Enter Columbus, stage left)

Christopher Columbus: King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, thank you for seeing me. I am looking for someone rich and powerful to fund my trip west to the Indies. When I reach the Indies I will be able to get rare spices and gold.

King Ferdinand: Many sailors want to go to the Indies for riches. But the trip is dangerous and difficult. No one has ever suggested traveling there by the West Sea.

Queen Isabella: How do you know you will be able to reach the Indies by going west?

Christopher Columbus: Because the world is a sphere. If I travel west I should go around the world and meet the Indies from the west. I have studied many maps and I know it can be done.

Queen Isabella: You are very confident Mr. Columbus. But why should we give you so much money so you can go to the Indies?

Christopher Columbus: If you pay for me to go, I will bring riches back to Spain for your country to enjoy.

King Ferdinand: I say we give him a chance. If this voyage can be done from the west, Spain will be rich and known for the first country to find a better route to the Indies. We will give you three ships, food, and a crew for each ship.

Christopher Columbus: Thank you so much. You won't regret this decision. I will bring back riches and gold for Spain.

(Christopher Columbus, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella exit, stage left)

Scene Three – Atlantic Ocean, near the Americas

Narrator #3: Columbus took three ships: the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. He brought about 100 men with him. They sailed across the lonely ocean for weeks and weeks.

(Enter Columbus and Sailors, stage left)

Sailor #1: We have been on the ocean for so long. I'm so tired. I just want to see land.

Christopher Columbus: *(Reassuringly)* We are almost there, we have to be. We will be reaching the Indies any moment now.

Sailor #2: I'm scared that we will never see land. We will fall off the side of the Earth and all die. Today is October 12 and still no land. We will never reach it.

Christopher Columbus: You must not give up hope. You must be strong. We are almost there.

Sailor #1: Look! I see land! Just over there!

(Columbus and sailors strain to look to the right)

Christopher Columbus: Yes, I see it! The Indies! We did it!

Sailor #2: When we get there, I'm kissing the ground!

Narrator #1: Soon the sailors were docking on the land they believed was the Indies. Or was it?

Christopher Columbus: We are here at last! We have reached the Indies. When we return to Spain with all the riches and gold everyone will be proud of us. I will be a hero.

Sailor #1: Wait! I see people over there! Natives!

Sailor #2: I have never seen people who looked that way before.

(Enter Native Boy and Native Girl, stage right)

Native Girl: Who are those white skinned people? Did they fall from the sky?

Christopher Columbus: I will call these natives Indians. Here, have some bells that jingle. I'll trade you for riches. *(Hands bells to Native Boy)*

Native Boy: I will give you fruit, thread, and parrots in exchange. *(Hands items to Columbus)*

Christopher Columbus: But where is the gold?

Native Boy: What is gold? I do not know what you mean.

Sailor #2: Here is the flag of Spain that you wanted from the ship.
(Hands flag to Columbus)

Christopher Columbus: I will put the flag of Spain on this island claiming it for all of Spain.

Native Girl: *(To Native Boy)* What is he doing? He didn't ask us permission to take over our land. Do we have to share now with these strange people?

Native Boy: It doesn't look like we have a choice. They bring weapons and things we have never seen before. If we don't stay friends with them, they could hurt us.

Native Girl: I don't like these strange people

Native Boy: Neither do I.

(All exit stage right)

Narrator #2: So that was how Columbus discovered new land. But we know now that Columbus made a mistake.

Narrator #3: The land he thought was the Indies was really North America and South America.

Narrator #1: Columbus made four voyages over the Atlantic Ocean. He never did find all the gold he wanted, but we remember him today as a brave soldier.

Narrator #2: And we honor him for his mistake!

All: The End

Rumpelstiltskin

Author: Retold by Paul O. Zelinsky

ISBN: 0-590-05699-9

Genre: Traditional Fantasy

Book Description: Picture Book, 48 pages, Caldecott Honor Book

Target Grade Levels: 3rd, 4th, and 5th

Accelerated Reader Level: 3.7

Number of Characters: Seven

Leads: Rumpelstiltskin, Anna

Supporting Roles: Narrators 1 and 2, King, Miller, and Servant

Story Overview:

This is the retelling of one of Grimms' most popular tales about a young Miller's daughter who was mistakenly identified as one who could spin straw into gold. A little magical man named Rumpelstiltskin can spin the straw into gold for her for a price. After the miller's daughter has given him her necklace and ring, she unwillingly must promise him her firstborn to survive. When the time comes the little man gives her three days to guess his name in order to keep her child. The young girl must outsmart Rumpelstiltskin somehow.

Simple Props Needed:

A simple ring and necklace. Yellow yarn or construction paper that can be used to represent straw, and brighter yarn to represent gold. You can also use a big sack and pretend the straw or gold is in the sack. The characters will look in the sack and react accordingly.

Costume Ideas:

Anna is wearing a long simple dress. The king can wear a cloak from a sheet and paper crown. Be creative with Rumpelstiltskin. He can wear a funny hat and funny colored clothing that is bright and mismatched.

Blocking Ideas:

The narrators are standing in the back at right and left stage. Anna will stay center stage in the front. Rumpelstiltskin always enters and leaves from left stage.

Rumpelstiltskin

Retold by Paul O. Zelinsky

Cast of Characters:

Narrator #1
Miller
Rumpelstiltskin
King

Narrator #2
Anna (Miller's daughter)
Servant

Narrator #1: Once upon a time there was a poor miller who had a beautiful daughter.

Narrator #2: On his way to town one day the miller encountered the King. He wanted to impress the King, so he told a lie.

(Enter Miller and King, stage left)

Miller: Oh noble King, I am a poor miller, but I am grateful to be living in your kingdom.

King: I haven't time for peasants. What is it you want?

Miller: I wanted to tell you something that will impress you. *(Thinks about it)* Um, well, my daughter knows the art of spinning straw into gold.

King: *(Excited)* Is this true? Your daughter can turn straw into gold? You must bring her to me at once. I must meet her, and she must show me how she spins straw into gold.

Miller: Yes your highness. I will bring her to you right away!

(Miller exits stage right)

Narrator #1: The next day the miller brought his daughter to the King. The King was not a very nice man and was very demanding.

(Enter Miller and Anna stage right, the King is sitting center stage on his throne)

Miller: Oh wise King, I have brought you my daughter who can spin straw into gold.

King: Excellent. Miller you may leave. *(Miller exits, stage right)* Girl, what is your name?

Anna: *(Timidly)* Anna sir, but I cannot spin straw into gold.

King: Nonsense! This room is filled with straw. Here are spools and a spinning wheel. You may spin all night, but if you have not spun this straw into gold by morning, you will be terribly punished.

(King exits, stage left)

Anna: Oh no! What shall I do? I cannot spin straw into gold. *(She gets on her knees and begins to cry into her hands)*

(Rumpelstiltskin enters stage left)

Rumpelstiltskin: Good evening Mistress Miller. Why are you sobbing?

Anna: Oh, I must spin this straw into gold and I don't know how.

Rumpelstiltskin: What will you give me if I spin it for you?

Anna: I will give you my necklace. Here. *(Hands necklace to Rumpelstiltskin)*

Rumpelstiltskin: Then it is done. Swish!
(He moves his hand through the air and the straw is turned to gold)

Anna: You did it! You saved me!

Rumpelstiltskin: I must go fair maiden!

(Exit Rumpelstiltskin stage left; enter King stage right)

King: Well, look here! You have done it.

Narrator #1: So the King led Anna to a larger room filled with straw.

King: Spin this straw into gold by the morning, if you value your life.

(Exit King, stage right)

Anna: Oh no. I don't know what to do again and I don't know how to bring the little man back. I am surely doomed. *(Kneels and begins to weep)*

(Enter Rumpelstiltskin, stage left)

Rumpelstiltskin: Well, it looks like you're in trouble again.

Anna: Can you help me again like you did yesterday?

Rumpelstiltskin: What will you give me this time?

Anna: The ring on my finger. Here, take it. *(Takes off ring and hands it to him)*

Rumpelstiltskin: Then it is done. *(He moves his hand through the air)* Swish! Fresh gleaming gold for you! Goodbye!

(Rumpelstiltskin exits stage left)

Narrator #2: The next morning the King was delighted to see all the gold in the big room, but still was not satisfied. He led Anna to an even bigger room.

(Enter King, stage right)

King: *(Delighted)* You are beautiful and talented. This is the largest room in the castle and it is filled with straw. Tonight, you must spin this straw too, and if you succeed, you shall become my wife.

(Exit King, stage right)

Anna: *(Despairingly)* Once again I am in trouble.

(Rumpelstiltskin enters, stage left)

Rumpelstiltskin: Are you in trouble yet again?

Anna: Oh little man. I need your help. I must spin this straw into gold again.

Rumpelstiltskin: What will you give me this time?

Anna: I already gave you my ring and necklace. I have no more to give you.

Rumpelstiltskin: I hear you will be queen if you spin this straw into gold tonight, yes?

Anna: Yes.

Rumpelstiltskin: Then promise that when you become queen, your first child will belong to me.

Anna: *(Gasping)* how can I make such a promise? Yet, what choice do I have? If I don't spin this straw into gold I will be doomed! There is no other way to save myself. Yes, little man, I promise.

Rumpelstiltskin: Then it is done. Swish! *(Sweeps his hand through the air)* Fresh gold for you. Goodbye!

(Rumpelstiltskin exits stage left; enter King, stage right)

King: Oh! Everything is as I wished. You are amazing! Anna, I will now make you my wife.

Narrator #1: So the King married the beautiful miller's daughter and she became a queen.

(King and Queen Anna exit, stage right)

Narrator #2: One year passed, and the queen brought a handsome baby boy into the world. She didn't think about the little man.

(Enter Queen Anna stage right with a bundle in her arms. She sits at a chair center stage. She doesn't see Rumpelstiltskin appear stage left)

Rumpelstiltskin: Did you forget about me? Shame on you! Now give me what you promised me!

Anna: Please little man. I am very grateful for what you did, but I cannot give you my child. He is my pride and joy. I would die if you took him away from me. Please, what can I do? I'll do anything! I'll give you all the royal treasure. Please!

Rumpelstiltskin: Well, well, well. I will give you three days. If by the end of that time you know my name, you may keep your child. Goodbye, for now. *(Exits, stage left)*

Anna: Oh, what shall I do? I must think of his name.

Narrator #1: So the queen sat long into the night and the next day thinking over all the names she had ever heard.

Narrator #2: When the little man returned the next day, she recited every name she knew, but none were his name.

Narrator #1: The same thing happened on the second night, to no avail. The queen was growing truly frightened.

(Enter servant to the queen, stage right)

Servant: Faithful Queen Anna, what is wrong? The last two days you have been moping in misery. How can I help?

Anna: Only since you are my most faithful servant I will tell you. I am in fear of losing my child from a silly promise I made to a little man long ago. I need help in finding this man and discovering his name.

Servant: Shall I search for this man? Where should I go?

Anna: Search the kingdom far and wide. You must find this little man and discover his name for me or I will lose my child!

Servant: Queen Anna, you have been nothing but kind to me since the moment you stepped into this castle. I will not let you down. I will find him.

(Anna exits stage right, and the servant exits stage left)

Narrator #2: And with that, the faithful servant searched the kingdom far and wide through thickets and clearings, deep into the forest. At last, near the top of a high hill, the servant spied him.

(Enter Rumpelstiltskin, stage right. He does not see the servant creep up stage left and silently spy on him)

Rumpelstiltskin: *(singing a chant)* I fix my drink, I bake my loaves, and soon the queen's own son I'll claim. Oh lucky me! For no one knows that Rumpelstiltskin is my name!

(Servant creeps off stage left; Rumpelstiltskin exits stage right)

Narrator #1: Late that evening the little man arrived at the castle. This time the queen was ready, having heard the little man's name from her faithful servant.

(Enter Anna stage left, and Rumpelstiltskin stage right)

Rumpelstiltskin: We meet again. This is your last chance. Now Mrs. Queen, do you know my name or do I take the child?

Anna: Is your name Will?

Rumpelstiltskin: No!

Anna: Is your name Phil?

Rumpelstiltskin: No!

Anna: Then in that case, is your name Rumpelstiltskin?

Rumpelstiltskin: *(Angry)* Who told you that? Who told you that?

(Rumpelstiltskin begins jumping up and down and yelling)

Narrator #2: Rumpelstiltskin was in such a fury that he was outsmarted somehow. He ran out of the room yelling wildly in anger.

(King and Servant run into the room stage right, Rumpelstiltskin exits just before they see him, stage left)

King: My goodness, what is all this noise?

Servant: Are you all right my queen?

Anna: Yes, everything is fine now and I couldn't be happier. I have my family with me.

Narrator #1: And Rumpelstiltskin was never heard from again. The end.



Molly's Pilgrim

Author: Barbara Cohen

ISBN: 0-439-14868-5

Genre: Historical Fiction

Book Description: Chapter Book, 32 pages

Target Grade Levels: 3rd and 4th

Accelerated Reader Level: 2.1

Number of Characters: Ten, with additional classroom students as needed

Leads: Molly, Molly's Mother, Miss Stickley, and Elizabeth

Supporting Roles: Narrators 1 and 2, Hidla, Emma, Michael, and David

Story Overview:

Molly is nearing her first Thanksgiving in America. The other students in her class make fun of her because she has an accent and is unfamiliar with American ways. When Molly is given an assignment to make a pilgrim for Thanksgiving, her mother helps her make a modern-day pilgrim instead. Molly is embarrassed that her pilgrim is different, but her pilgrim helps Molly find a place for herself in America.

Simple Props Needed:

Classroom books, desks, and chairs to model a classroom, tiny dolls used for pilgrims and Indians.

Costume Ideas:

The time frame is the early to mid 1900s so the girls can wear long dresses and boys button up shirts and slacks. Molly should wear clothes that are a little more old-fashioned.

Blocking Ideas:

The classroom can be set up to take up the entire stage, with the narrators on the sides. Molly's home can have 2 chairs in the middle of the stage.

Molly's Pilgrim

By Barbara Cohen

Cast of Characters:

Narrator #1

Molly

Elizabeth

Hilda

Miss Stickley

(Other School Children as needed)

Narrator #2

Molly's Mother

Emma

Michael

David

Scene One – Winter Hill Elementary, USA

(School children are seated in a classroom; Miss Stickley is at the head of the classroom)

Narrator #1: Long ago in America, a young Jewish immigrant girl named Molly didn't like third grade at Winter Hill Elementary. The other children made fun of her and called her names because she was different.

Miss Stickley: Who would like to read next?

(Other children raise their hands, but Miss Stickley looks around. Her eyes rest on Molly even though Molly isn't raising her hand)

Molly, you haven't read yet, why don't you read.

Molly: *(Embarrassed and hesitant)* Alright. The c...c..cr..cr..crops w..w..were made of c...cor..corn and wh..wh..wheat. The first Th...Th...Thanks.. *(Frustrated)* I don't know that word!

(Other children begin laughing)

Miss Stickley: It's a hard word Molly. Who can tell Molly what the word is?

(Several hands shoot up)

Miss Stickley: Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: *(Confidently)* Thanksgiving. I thought everyone knew that.

Molly: Thanksgiving? What's Thanksgiving?

Elizabeth: *(Cruelly)* You don't even know about Thanksgiving? I guess you people don't celebrate American holidays.

Miss Stickley: Yes, Elizabeth, that's enough. And thank you Molly for reading. Now time is up. Class is almost over for today. Please do the next ten arithmetic problems in your primer for your homework tonight, and I have one more thing for you to do. Thanksgiving is almost here. I thought we'd do something different this year and make a

model of the Pilgrim village at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Your assignment is to make a Pilgrim or Indian person at home. Boys will make an Indian doll and girls will make a Pilgrim doll out of clothespins. See you tomorrow with your dolls, and bundle up, it's getting cold outside.

(Miss Stickley leaves, other children slowly gather their things to leave. Elizabeth approaches Molly)

Elizabeth: You talk funny Molly. You look funny Molly. Just like the song I made up:
Jolly Molly, Your eyes are awfully small
Jolly Molly, Your nose is awfully tall
(To the other children) All together now!

Elizabeth, Hilda, and Michael: Jolly Molly, Your eyes are awfully small
Jolly Molly, Your nose is awfully tall
(Children all laugh)

Emma: Elizabeth you're so funny.

Elizabeth: Do you guys want to come to my house today after school? I have peppermint sticks for you and new toys that my father just gave me.

Emma, Hilda, and Michael: Sure!

Elizabeth: Molly, you're not invited!

(Children laugh and exit stage right)

Molly: *(Sadly)* I hate school. *(Exits stage left)*

Scene Two – Molly's apartment

Narrator #2: Molly sadly returns to her apartment that afternoon after school. She is miserable in Winter Hill, and only dreams of returning home to Russia.

(Molly enters stage right walking sluggishly with a sad look on her face. Her mother is sitting on a chair center stage)

Molly's Mother: Good afternoon my little one. What's the matter?

Molly: Mama, let's go back to New York City. I don't talk like the other boys and girls. They make fun of me. I hate going to school.

Molly's Mother: Poor child! We can't go back to New York City. Your father has a good job here at the general store. We were very poor in New York City and your father worked hard long hours at a factory.

Molly: Well, then let's go back to Goraduk. We only came to this country last winter. I bet we could still get our old house back.

Molly's Mother: The Cossacks have taken over our city and burned down our houses. We were not safe in Russia, and besides, in Goraduk Jewish girls don't get to go to school at all. If the other children tease you, I will talk to your teacher.

Molly: No Mama! Don't do that! I will talk to her myself. You look and sound different from the rest of the mothers and you hardly speak English. I can handle it myself.

Molly's Mother: Very well then. Do you have any homework today?

Molly: Yes, I have ten arithmetic problems and I have to make a pilgrim doll out of a clothespin.

Molly's Mother: (*Frowning, confused*) I don't understand. What is a pilgrim?

Molly: Pilgrims came to this country from the other side. They came for religious freedom.

Molly's Mother: Like us?

Molly: Yes, like us.

Molly's Mother: Go do your arithmetic problems. I will make the pilgrim for you.

(Molly's mother exits stage left. Molly sits in the chair and begins working on her math)

Narrator #1: Molly's mother worked hard on a pilgrim doll modeled after herself as a child. The next morning her mother presented Molly with the beautiful pilgrim doll.

Narrator #2: The doll was carefully made with different colored clothes, hair out of dark brown yarn, and sewn eyes, a nose, and a mouth.

(Mother enters stage left and hands the doll to Molly)

Molly: Mama she is gorgeous! But, she doesn't look like the Pilgrim woman in the picture in my reading book.

Molly's Mother: No?

Molly: She looks like you in that photograph that was taken when you were a girl.

Molly's Mother: Of course, I did that on purpose. What is a Pilgrim Molly? A Pilgrim is someone who came here from the other side to find freedom. That's me. I am a Pilgrim!

Molly: Thank you mother.

Molly's Mother: You're welcome little one. Have a wonderful day at school today.

(Molly's mother hugs Molly and exits stage left, Molly exits stage right with her pilgrim)

Scene Three – Winter Hill Elementary

(students are entering with their Pilgrims and Indians and setting them on their desks. Molly enters stage right with her Pilgrim in a brown paper bag, hidden from view)

Narrator #2: Even though Molly loved her mother's Pilgrim, she was sure there was something wrong with what her mother had said.

Narrator #1: Molly's Pilgrim was not the kind from the reading book at school, but all she could do was take the one she had to school. She didn't have time to make another one.

Elizabeth: *(Approaching Molly with Hilda)* Where's your Pilgrim Molly?

Molly: It's in here, in my desk.

Hilda: Take it out then. We want to see it.

(Molly takes her Pilgrim out of her desk)

Elizabeth: *(Sneering)* Oh my goodness! How can anyone be as dumb as you, Jolly Molly? That's not a Pilgrim!

Hilda: Miss Stickley is going to be really mad at you Molly. She's going to get you this time!

(Miss Stickley enters. All children take their seats)

Miss Stickley: Good morning students. I see you have your Pilgrims and Indians on your desks. I'm going to walk around and take a look at them.

(Miss Stickley begins to circle the room) David, good job. Michael, what a magnificent headdress. Where did find so many feathers?

Michael: From the chicken coup.

Miss Stickley: Elizabeth, your doll is very rich. Emma, Hilda, nice job. David, great work.

Elizabeth: I think mine's the best so far.

Miss Stickley: *(Reassuringly)* Well, it's very good. Molly, where is your Pilgrim?

(Molly slowly takes her Pilgrim out of her desk)

David: That's not a Pilgrim Molly!

Elizabeth: That's some Russian or Polish person. What does a person like that have to do with Pilgrims?

Miss Stickley: She's very beautiful. Perhaps Molly just didn't understand.

Molly: *(Defensively)* Mama said...

Miss Stickley: What did your mother say Molly?

Molly: This doll is dressed like my mama. Mama came to America for religious freedom too. Mama says she's a Pilgrim.

(Students begin laughing)

Miss Stickley: Listen everyone! Molly is right. Molly's mother is a Pilgrim. She came here, just like the Pilgrims long ago, so she could worship in her own way, in peace and freedom. She is a modern Pilgrim.

Elizabeth: Are you sure?

Miss Stickley: Very sure. Molly, can I borrow your Pilgrim to place on my desk? That way it will remind us that Pilgrims are still coming to America.

(Miss Stickley takes the doll and places it on her desk. Molly smiles proudly)

Emma: Your doll is the most beautiful Molly. It's the most beautiful one of all.

Molly: *(Proudly)* Yes, I know.

(Children all circle around Molly's desk, except for Elizabeth)

Hilda: Can I play with you at recess Molly?

David: Want to play on the swings with us?

Michael: We could pretend we are Pilgrims like Molly coming over the sea for freedom.

(Elizabeth puts her hands on her hips as if pouting. She wants to be the center of attention once more)

Narrator #1 : Molly decided she liked school at Winter Hill Elementary and it was OK to be different.

Narrator #2: And she learned one valuable lesson too. It takes all kinds of Pilgrims to make a Thanksgiving.

Additional Resources

Readers' Theatre

Student Evaluation Form

Rate the student on his/her performance based on the rubric at the bottom of the page.

Student Name _____

Title of Play _____

Date of Performance _____

1. Student was able to read the part fluently. _____

2. Student used expression in his/her voice. _____

3. Student participated in daily practice and rehearsals to the best of his/her ability. _____

4. Student spoke loudly and clearly so the audience could hear him/her. _____

5. Student cooperated with and respected others in the performance and shared props, costumes, etc. if used. _____

6. Student used costumes, props, and movement in his/her performance (if applicable). _____

7. Student practiced the part at home as homework (If applicable). _____

Total Score _____

1	2	3	4
Student did not try or willingly participate in the performance.	Student participated minimally in the performance and effort could show improvement.	Student participated in the performance and made an effort for all aspects of the performance.	Student did an exceptional job in the performance, was a leader, and excelled beyond the expectations set.

Name _____

Readers' Theatre Survey

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

1. I enjoyed doing Readers' Theatre this year. _____
2. Readers' Theatre makes me feel like a good reader. _____
3. Readers' Theatre helps me read better. _____
4. I would rather do Readers' Theatre than other reading group work. _____
5. Readers' Theatre helped me feel better about speaking in front of people. _____
6. I was able to memorize my lines in one or more of the plays we did this year. _____
7. I (did / did not) like doing Readers' Theatre this year because _____

7. My favorite Readers' Theatre play that I did this year was _____ because _____
_____.



*You're Invited to our
Readers' Theatre!*

Place: _____

Time: _____

From: _____

Come join us!




*You're Invited to our
Readers' Theatre!*

Place: _____

Time: _____

From: _____

Come join us!



Certificate of Achievement

*Presented to _____
For Completing a Readers' Theatre*

Performance

Signed _____

Date _____

Vocal Coloring Sentences

Use the following strips to cut out, mix up, and have students draw a strip to practice saying the sentence in the tone of voice listed.

(Happily) Hi! How are you today?

(Shyly) My name is _____ and I like to read and draw. What do you like to do?

(Frightened) There's someone knocking on my door. I don't know who it is!

(Surprised) What are you doing here? I thought you moved away!

(Nervous) I wanted to ask you why I got this math problem marked wrong. I think I did it right.

(Whispering) Shh. Don't let them hear us or we will get in trouble. Be very quiet.

(Eagerly) When are we going to the waterpark? I want to go now.

(Angry) Why did you break my toy? Now I have to buy a new one. I'm so mad!

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Glossary

Blocking – The position of characters on the stage so the audiences' eyes are focused on the desired characters and actions (usually arranged in a triangle formation).

Center Stage – The middle front part of the stage where most of the action takes place in a play (the center of the triangle).

Characters – The individuals in the play who are acting out parts of people.

Costumes – Any article of clothing or accessories actors may wear to compliment their character.

Downstage – The back part of the stage farthest away from the audience.

Fluency – The ability to read with ease, at a steady pace with understanding and little to no errors.

Motivation – Enthusiasm for learning; having the desire to want to read or achieve.

Narrator – The person or persons who are telling the story from an outsider's third person perspective. They usually are standing to the sides of the stage near the back throughout the performance (making up the back parts of the triangle).

Props – Any simple objects that may be of use when performing a play.

Readers' Theatre – Dramatic oral representation of a script that focuses on reading aloud expressively rather than on memorization. It does not require costumes, sets, or props, but rather relies on the imagination.

Set – Items placed on the stage or pictures in the background to create the setting for the play.

Script – The written play that outlines narrator and character parts, and may include actions and feelings of the characters.

Stage – The area where the play will be performed. In the classroom this is usually the front of the room.

Stage Directions – Include where the characters enter from and stand while on stage.

Stage Left – The left side of the stage from the actors' point of view as they face the audience.

Stage Right – The right side of the stage from the actors' point of view as they face the audience.

Upstage – The part of the stage in the front closest to the audience.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations

Summary

This project created a teacher resource manual on Readers' Theatre that included directions, scripts, tips, and additional resources for performing Readers' Theatre in the classroom to increase oral reading fluency and motivation to read. This project researched studies and information on reading fluency, repeated readings, motivation to read, and Readers' Theatre. Most of the studies supported the fact that Readers' Theatre can be an effective teaching tool to increase oral reading fluency and motivation to read for all students. The manual created consisted of scripts with plays based on popular children's literature stories. The manual was very generalized, so it may be utilized in any district or area. The goal of the teacher resource manual was to provide a quick and easy resource for teachers to use in supplementing their reading curriculum or adding additional reading activities into the classroom.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were reached as a result of this project:

1. Readers' Theatre can be an effective way to increase oral reading fluency and motivation to learn in the classroom.
2. Putting on Readers' Theatre plays can be a very fun and simplistic process that takes little to no preparation.
3. Readers' Theatre accommodates a wide range of reading abilities and grade levels, as well as utilizes different genres and styles of reading materials.

4. The number of published resources for Readers' Theatre is still very limited. More publications need to be created to teach and support Readers' Theatre as a supplemental tool that can be used for all content areas.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered after reviewing this project:

1. It is recommended that these Readers' Theatre scripts be integrated into the content fields and used to supplement any current reading curriculum.
2. Begin using Readers' Theatre with shorter scripts that require no stage directions or costumes, and work up to more theatrical performances as students grow more comfortable with Readers' Theatre.
3. The evaluation form is very beneficial to assess student performance and may be used on a regular basis.
4. Readers' Theatre scripts can be easily created for any popular children's literature stories, and intermediate students may want to develop their own scripts and put on their own performances as they gain more exposure to Readers' Theatre.
5. Readers' Theatre is recommended for English Second Language learners due to the fact that repeated readings help them gain confidence and mastery over reading skills.
6. Readers' Theatre can be used as a comprehension tool as well as fluency builder, since the more students read the scripts with fluency, the better understanding they will have of the stories. Teachers can create many supplemental projects with Readers' Theatre such as writing response activities, writing summaries, comparing and contrasting stories, and responding to questions based on the story.

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