



Readers Theater: A "How to" Guide

Getting Started

Consider your participants when selecting scripts, make sure reading level is consistent with the readers' abilities.

Highlight scripts for individual roles, this helps keep the readers focused on their lines.

Use consistent method of presentation; consider using binders or lecterns for readers to hold scripts.

When first introducing RT, use performance ice-breakers to create a comfortable atmosphere for participants.

Planning and Promotion

Have 2-3 scripts on hand in case you have more participants than roles; this will give you plenty to do to last through the entire program.

Materials, props, etc needed before first program

There are two styles of RT: with props and without. Some would say that true readers theater does not use props, but with younger children you may find the overall experience and program is more enjoyable with the use of props and background.

Be sure to have the correct number of copies of the script for each role.

If using microphones, set up prior to program.

Promotions

Create in-house flyers or have children create flyers for additional involvement.

Creating Your Own Script

Use established scripts or adapt your favorite book or story

Scripts and tips for scripting can be found in various resources on Readers Theater. (See bibliography that follows.)

Look for pieces that have a lot of dialogue and lead to a surprising, heartwarming or funny conclusion.

Consider how many characters will be needed; it works best when there are at least five roles.

Sample scripts that were adapted from published texts. (See the Kids! Campaign tool kit/Fun Activities Your Library Can Hold at www.ala.org/kids.)

The Library Dragon by Carmen Agra Deedy

Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

The Library Card by Jerry Spinelli

Copyright: Are you infringing?

Fair use is in play when you consider four factors.

What is the purpose and character of the use?

What is the nature of the copyrighted work?

What amount of the copyrighted work is used in relation to the whole?

What is the effect of the use upon the potential market value of the copyrighted work?

Use your adapted scripts for a performance in or on behalf of the library, but do not publish it in any way without permission from the author and/or publisher. This includes posting it on the Web.

In general, adapting a copyrighted work for educational use such as Readers Theater is considered "Fair Use."

Bibliography

Books

Bany-Winters, Lisa. *On Stage: Theater games and activities for kids*. Chicago Review Press: Chicago, IL. 1997.

Covers basic theater vocabulary, puppetry and pantomime, sound effects, costumes, props, and makeup; includes several play scripts.

Bauer, Caroline Feller. *Presenting Reader's Theater: Plays and poems to read aloud*. Illus. by Lynn Gates Bredeson. H. W. Wilson: Bronx, N.Y. 1987

Barchers, Suzanne I. *Fifty Fabulous Fables: Beginning Readers Theatre*. Teacher Ideas Press: Englewood, CO. 1997. A collection of theater scripts based on traditional fables from around the world and grouped according to reading levels.

Freeman, Judy. *Once Upon a Time: Using storytelling, creative drama, and reader's theater with children in grades prek-6*. Libraries Unlimited: Wesport, CT. 2007. Offers activities, strategies, and creative ideas for using nonsense rhymes, songs, chants, and folk literature to promote thinking, reading, and listening skills in young learners.

McBride-Smith, Barbara. *Tell It Together: Foolproof scripts for story theatre*. August House Publishers, Inc.: Little Rock, AR. 2001.

Shepard, Aaron. *Stories on Stage: Children's plays for reader's theater with 15 play scripts from 15 authors*. Shepard Publications: Olympia, WA. 2005. This collection of closely adapted story scripts for elementary children is basically the same as the original with a couple of changes. It is pared down from 22 stories to 15 and omits the appendix of information on using readers theater in the classroom and on these scripts in particular.

Shepard, Aaron. *Stories on Stage: Scripts for reader's theater*. H.W. Wilson: Bronx, N.Y. 1993. A collection of twenty-two plays adapted from folk tales, short stories, myths, and novels and intended for use in readers theater programs with middle grade and junior high school students.

Laughlin, Mildred and Kathy Howard Latrobe. *Readers Theatre for Children: Scripts and script development*. Teacher Ideas Press: Englewood, CO. 1990.

Web sites

Readers Theater Scripts and Plays

<http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>

http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/reading/index.shtml#theater

Aaron Shepard's Readers Theater

<http://www.aaronsherp.com/rt/index.html#RTE>

Read, Write, Think – a partnership between the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=172

ALSC Wiki – Kids! @ your library® Best Practices

http://wikis.ala.org/alsc/index.php/Uses_of_the_reader%27s_theater_script

Articles

The Power of Readers Theater: An easy way to make dramatic changes in kids' fluency, writing, listening, and social skills by Jennifer O. Prescott

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/readerstheater.htm>

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http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr280b.shtml