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California State University

San Bernardino

Readers Theatre in the Classroom

A Project Submitted to

The Faculty of the School of Education

In Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Education: Reading Option

by

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San Bernardino, California

1987

APPROVED BY:



Advisor



Committee Member

READERS THEATRE IN THE CLASSROOM

Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, M.A.

California State University, San Bernardino, 1987

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to promote an effective, enjoyable and additional way to teach critical reading skills and the appreciation of literature in the classroom.

The writer of this project feels that through the use of Readers Theatre in the classroom, emphasis and motivation will naturally and concurrently occur on the whole language practices of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

It is this author's belief that Readers Theatre in the classroom can stimulate greater reading purposes resulting in increased over-all comprehension and test results.

In addition to nurturing a well-rounded language arts program, Readers theatre experience can promote positive personal development and social growth as well.

Procedure

Readers Theatre research in the classroom was first examined, summarized and reported according to many references and authoritative sources. The curriculum features were correlated and exemplified

according to the "instructional potential" of Readers Theatre. Special emphasis on "whole language" uses and classroom approaches was reported. In addition, the author addressed discussions on: the convenient adaptations of Readers Theatre to other grade levels, space, materials and cost, time schedule and possible support services.

Described in length are the four different and basic styles of Readers Theatre. The author used a story taken from a first grade basal text. Through adaptations and modifications of the original story, each style was modified and exemplified.

Suggestions for classroom compiling and adapting material were itemized along with actual text samples and examples.

In-depth discussion on Readers Theatre classroom use and procedures was related and include suggestions from "planning the lesson" to tips on all aspects of performing a Readers Theatre production.

Assessment and evaluation procedures of the Readers Theatre experience were discussed and itemized. Varieties of rating scales and checklists were included which could be used upon teacher-discretion, purpose, and or instructional methods.

In conclusion and incorporated in the Scripts section, are twelve adapted stories for simple Readers Theatre taken from the 1983 Scott Foresman Reading Series. This author compiled and adapted the scripts which are stories taken from each basal text beginning with the primer, "Rainbow Shower" through the sixth grade text, "Star Flight".

Readers Theatre is an effective and enjoyable way to teach critical reading skills and the appreciation of literature. It offers valuable learning experiences through the use of drama but it does not require

the conventional staging procedures. Readers Theatre provides emphasis on whole language practices and adapts easily in the classroom contributing to a well-rounded language arts program.

From all of the work completed on this project, it is obvious that this technique is most effective in teaching comprehension and whole language in the elementary classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

Readers Theatre and reading plays aloud in the classroom is an ideal way to introduce a simple, new and rewarding dimension into the reading program in any classroom. It offers infinite possibilities and advantages not only for teachers but for students as well.

For students, there is an automatically high rate of interest whether they are taking part in the production or listening. It is an enjoyable way to increase their reading proficiency and skills, sharpen their awareness of language in use, develop their social skills and enhance their own self-confidence. It will also stimulate and inspire further reading on their own as well as their creativity and imagination. Finally, Readers Theatre with handicapped children offers varied therapeutic possibilities.

Suggestion and simplicity are the key words in Readers Theatre. Creating "an imagined action" resulting similarly as in the old Greek "suspension of disbelief" to the audience is ideal for the classroom teacher since there is little or no movement involved. There are no bounds for a more innovative and creative teacher, however, who wishes to go into a more detailed and dramatic presentation. The possibilities lie restricted only to the imagination and the situation of the teacher.

Most school reading programs include a basal text. These are usually highly dialogue in percent and can easily be scripted with or without the children.

Simple Readers Theatre includes written scripts which can be student made, simple, minor props such as desks, and chairs or stools which are easily accessible in the classroom. The lines do not have to be memorized but can simply be read in turn, emphasizing expression. This creates a form

of security to any child who is very apprehensive or the least bit inhibited at the thought of performing in front of others or an audience.

Since most teachers have two or more reading groups, it allows a homogeneous group to unite their skills and work together on the same level more comfortably. It can also be used on a large scale including the whole class which adds to its versatility.

Children, as a rule, are natural "hams" and dearly love the opportunity to perform in some way. What better way than to use actual stories taken directly from their basal text! Even those who are unresponsive to traditional reading programs (ie round-robin) will respond with enthusiasm to taking part in a simple Readers Theatre format.

Readers Theatre does not need to be restricted to reading only. It can be generalized to all other subject areas taught in the classroom. Once children become familiar with the format, the more creative volunteers can be encouraged to write their own scripts using a social studies concept, math, or any other theme, lesson, and moral taught in school.

Presentations for PTA's, holidays, and end of the school year always present and impose added pressures and a "racking of the brain" search for creative ideas. Readers Theatre poses as an excellent solution and alternative to this dilemma, as well as being very enjoyable and impressive.

For students, there is a definite correlation of oral-language to reading improvement. According to recent studies, the encoding process of speaking directly relates with practice to the decoding process involved in reading. In addition, Readers Theatre not only allows for a variety but highly encourages the oral and verbal skills which in turn keep the readers' attention and leads to an increased comprehension.

The new or unfamiliar vocabulary words cannot be skipped over and in turn are reinforced and clarified. The retention rate is also higher on a percentage basis. This is especially an enjoyable and effective means to vary any traditional reading program.

Readers Theatre, while highly inspiring and advantageous, also promotes oral and speaking skills necessary in most careers later in life. (ie: television and radio, films, teaching, lecturing, law, politics, public relations etc.) Voice control and expression are very necessary in all professional jobs. Even those who do not go on to those professions will find the carry-over from oral reading training helpful in their everyday lives, whether in presenting a report or paper, making a persuasive sales presentation, or as a parent reading aloud to a child.

Oral reading as an important part of the classroom reading program can not only teach the mastery of expressive oral reading skills, but also add immeasurably to the development of his or her personal and social values. Often a shy or withdrawn child takes on a totally different personality, acting like a changed person as he or she takes the part of an outgoing character in a play, for example. Inhibitions are released. Creativity and resourcefulness are stimulated. A sense of responsibility to others in the group enhances his self image as well as satisfaction from meeting this type of challenge. Providing this challenge often gives an individual self-confidence and personal esteem that is immediate and enjoyable as other school achievements may not be.

The social values as well as personal attributes taught by experiences through Readers Theatre have long-range effects on the individuals' growth and development and total personality. Cooperation of the whole cast is imminent and the participants in a play reading group quickly

feel the need for mutual respect and tolerance. Each player must be aware and perceptive. The interaction as each waits for a cue and the response required are factors that encourage discipline, restraint, respect, cooperation and response to any social situation. This often leads to new friendships, ties and bonds as the group members come to appreciate one another.

Introducing and dramatizing stories, whether they are from the childrens' basal texts or classic stories often leads to a stimulation to other reading.

As a teacher, parent or educator, it is necessary not only to instruct the basic skills, but equally as important to provide an environment promoting that desire to independently work on his or her own. Readers Theatre is an excellent means for most children to encourage just this desire and interest toward individual autonomy resulting in satisfaction and enjoyment.

Finally, the distinct advantages and possibilities of using the Readers Theatre format in conjunction with the physically handicapped children, as a form of therapy, is very probable. Since there is little and in some cases no movement, it would especially be ideal for use in this area.

Readers Theatre is definitely an exciting means to vary and add to any reading program. However, it should by no means be totally substituted for a reading program or implemented without considerable organization and fore-thought on part of the teacher. This fore-preparation, as in all subjects, would greatly avoid much confusion and chaos in the classroom.

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are integrated in teaching through Readers Theatre with the higher levels of comprehension as a

natural development.

It is hopeful that this project will stimulate and enliven language arts teaching as well as offer practices that are useful, and also allow the joy and excitement associated with "Readers Theatre in the classroom".

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of Readers Theatre in the classroom reading program are to:

- 1.) Provide the application of reading skills in a meaningful context.
- 2.) Motivate children to read, re-read, and think.
- 3.) Reinforce the basic sight vocabulary.
- 4.) Teach comprehension and listening skills.
- 5.) Develop an appreciation and love of literature.
- 6.) Develop the ability to use effective oral language for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- 7.) Promote creative writing.
- 8.) Develop a positive self image as well as to promote personal and social growth.
- 9.) Develop an awareness of the very close interrelationships of listening, speaking, reading and writing as facets of the total language process.

The student objectives of Readers Theatre in the classroom reading program include the following:

- 1.) Students will be able to summarize narrative prose and story elements including the structural elements of the main idea and supporting details.
- 2.) Students will be able to identify and describe all of the characters in a performed story script.
- 3.) Students will be able to re-tell narrative story lines including structural elements of the setting, problem, episode and solution in sequence.
- 4.) Students will be able to relate information acquired by listening attentively.
- 5.) Students will be able to use their voices with control and expression especially emphasizing pitch, stress, and duration.
- 6.) Students will be able to adapt stories taken from basal texts and other sources into Readers Theatre scripts.

- 7.) Students will be able to direct, produce, and or present their own "adapted" scripts in front of an audience.
- 8.) Students will be able to make at least three oral presentations to primary students or in front of an audience per month.
- 9.) Students will be able to create and write their own Readers Theatre scripts.
- 10.) Students will be able to direct, produce and or present their "own" Readers Theatre scripts in front of an audience.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Definition

According to Keith Brooks, Readers Theatre is a group activity in which the best of literature is communicated from manuscript, with or without the presence of a narrator, to an audience through the oral interpretation approach of vocal and physical suggestion. (24, 5)

Readers Theatre is often called the "theatre of the mind". (7, 9)

Several definitions primarily by people who operate in the field of educational theatre have been consolidated and summarized: "Readers Theatre is the oral presentation of literature to an audience by two or more readers, utilizing primarily the techniques of oral interpretation, in a manner that locates the scene in the imaginations of the audience members, thus stimulating them to use their own imaginative facility in the re-creation of the literary work". (24, 5)

There are many definitions of Readers Theatre but it is basically an oral interpretation of a script developed from one of many kinds of literature, such as books, novels, short stories, poems and folk tales. It differs from other forms of dramatic presentations in that a script is usually carried and read or glanced at even though the performer may have memorized the lines. It requires no costumes, props or special lighting effects. It can be rehearsed and performed in the classroom. (6, 130)

Each character in a script is portrayed by a reader. A narrator's part (or parts) fills in details of the plot or setting. In many instances, narrators are assigned to particular characters in the script describing the thoughts and feelings of the characters and

providing the necessary transitions and explanations. Thus, there may be more than one narrator in a script. Action is minimal or non-existent; emotion and characterization are portrayed by the readers' voices. Facial expressions and body movements are restricted and suggestive. "The key note in staging Readers Theatre is simplicity." (7, 87)

History

The oral interpretation of literature, choral reading and choral recitation, are ancient arts dating back to the dramatic practices of fifth century Greece. (7, 10). Some authorities trace the use of what is now called Readers Theatre back to 1806. However, even as late as 1966, Readers Theatre was still being called "experimental group reading", a form of multiple reading "still in experimental stages". (10)

It is surmised that since 1945 many elementary school teachers have used and conducted some activities similar to the present Readers Theatre and format. (7). Imaginative teachers have involved children in activities known as multiple reading, concert reading, group reading, dramatic reading, library playreading, and interpretive reading. (15, 16) Those teachers using variations of Readers Theatre with children have been enthusiastic about its many values.

Advantages

As a form of drama, Readers Theatre or interpretive dramatics can be easily integrated in the elementary classroom. Readers Theatre avoids the burdens of an acted play. The script is practiced but not memorized eliminating many long and frustrating hours of preparation. The readers are free from the anxiety of forgetting lines or action and

the burden of scenery and props. Because one major purpose of Readers Theatre is to strengthen children's oral reading abilities, children are asked to read aloud rather than to memorize their parts. This stipulation is appropriate because it is less difficult and less time consuming to read a script aloud than to memorize it. The physical presence of the script is a psychological comfort for children, reducing any anxiety they may have about forgetting their lines or about not knowing when to speak. Organized in this way, Readers Theatre is less likely to be threatening or demanding for children than involvement in conventional children's theatre. (15, 17)

Most children by second grade respond with considerable dramatic spontaneity, forgetting about their bodies and concentrating on their voices. And to the surprise of many teachers, elementary school audiences become as deeply involved with a well staged Readers Theatre presentation as with an acted or conventional play. (4, 331)

Instructional Potential of Readers Theatre

Readers Theatre has been described as a great motivational device for children stirring children's interest in literature, developing their insight, self confidence and academic skills. (15, 15). It makes especially strong contributions to the growth of children's communication effectiveness offering valuable skills such as: social awareness, group cooperation, the learning concepts and associated vocabulary, reading, and written discourse. (4, 330)

In "expansion of social awareness", Nellie McCaslin writes, "By trying on characters, a child learns about other people. Playing a variety of parts in Readers Theatre helps him to think and feel like

people different from himself. By the time a player has decided who a character is, why he behaves as he does, how he relates to others and the way he handles his problems, he has come to know a great deal about him." (22, 218). Growth in thinking and feeling depend upon a good selection of scripts or adaptations. It is highly suggested that in order to prompt or promote social awareness that a script should raise questions about human lives at a level suitable for the children working with it. Scripts should build on and extend the children's present awareness. A program of experience with interpretive drama or Readers Theatre throughout the elementary grades should expose children to a wide variety of literature at increasingly higher levels of cognitive and emotional complexity. (7, 78-79)

Readers Theatre can be an appropriate activity promoting and requiring "cooperation in heterogeneous groups". Children with a wide range of reading levels can work together successfully. Using a script with parts of different levels of difficulty, the teacher can assign children to an easier or harder part as needed. Each child, no matter what his or her academic ability, can make a worthy contribution. Children of all levels of ability can work together happily and learn from each other. Feelings of group unity and solidarity build as the cast prepares for a performance. Discussions of alternatives or changes to the original script also contribute to a cooperative spirit and effort.

Readers Theatre is an excellent means for "concept and vocabulary learning". Children use new words and experience new ideas as they interpret scripts. McCaslin notes, "The learning of abstractions often comes more readily when ideas are acted." (22). Distinctions in meanings can be clarified as the group plans characterizations, and in

post-performance discussion.

In addition, the re-reading required to develop a Readers Theatre presentation encourages retention. New or difficult words introduced in scripts are often in context allowing children to re-create these experiences and form inward pictures. Thus, the new words and concepts become engrained or enmeshed in the network of their thinking. (4, 334)

Benefit for Weaker Readers

When children have a personal reason for reading, they will do so. In Readers Theatre reading is connected to feelings and active social interaction. Although Readers Theatre is appropriate for all students, it makes a strong contribution to programs for weaker readers. The lure of the performance turns reluctant readers into readers energetically pursuing meaning. Students are stimulated in Readers Theatre to use word attack strategies often lacking on standard instructional reading material. Readers Theatre creates a purpose for several re-readings, thereby providing for repeated exposure to new words. This meaningful repetition is an excellent means of helping poor readers master the material at hand and make progress to more difficult material.

Rather than just reading through a script, the benefits of Readers Theatre for slow readers, as well as all students, are most fully realized when students prepare scripts to present to an audience. The audience may be either another group of students in the classroom or a larger audience on a stage or specialized area. These social rewards help students overcome their reading frustrations.

For these students as well as all students, it is important to remember that the primary values of Readers Theatre are derived from

the practice in reading aloud as well as the selection and interpretation of the material. Readers Theatre for children is more concerned with the process of this activity and their effects on individual children than with a finished product. (15, 21)

Preparation for Writing

Another instructional potential of Readers Theatre is "preparation for writing". Readers Theatre experiences can make a strong impact on children's writing. To a greater extent than reading or listening to stories, it provides emotional involvement, repetition, and actual use of the language. It stretches children beyond their present language capacities into new and more mature words and situations.

The style of Readers Theatre is often mastered easily. Students in the upper grades can make direct tie-ins with writing by adapting their own Readers Theatre scripts from basal texts and stories. They can be encouraged to create their own Readers Theatre scripts mixing fiction, non-fiction, and their own writing if they wish.

Readers Theatre experiences promote children's writing resulting in immediate and long-term rewards often with the thought in mind of producing their efforts in front of an audience. Readers Theatre emphasizes narration and exposition of characters' thoughts and feelings rather than merely action. It is this type of emphasis which can be especially helpful to children trying to create and master their own style in writing. Readers Theatre experiences often ease this normally and traditionally difficult skill.

Whole Language Approach

Another major advantage of Readers Theatre is that it promotes and stimulates the "whole language" approach to reading. The significant strategies needed to obtain meaning in the "whole language" reading process involve predicting, confirming and integrating large units of language. (11, 3). In Readers Theatre, these are the same total interacting strategies emphasized and implemented on a silent and oral basis. It also provides the application of reading skills in a meaningful context. Through the combined use of the three language cueing systems: graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic, students use and select the most significant cues according to their educational background and specific purpose in reading. (11, 6). (The graphophonic cueing system here refers to the sound-symbol relationship; syntax to the word order; and semantic to the meaning.)

Students predict as they read orally what they believe subsequent graphophonic, syntactic and semantic structures are going to be. Since the reader in Readers Theatre has a definite and immediate purpose of bringing meaning to him/her self, and orally bearing meaning to the audience, the interaction of these three cueing systems within the reading process occurs so rapidly it appears simultaneous. (11, 6). Because the readers are orally interacting, the cueing systems are used along with an emphasis on pitch, stress, and duration of the voice. The left and right brain hemispheres are involved enacting the reading processes of silently decoding and orally encoding. Readers Theatre thereby provides excellent motivation, purpose and practice in the total "whole language" approach to reading, emphasizing oral fluency as well as comprehension.

Adaptation To Other Grade Levels

It has been mentioned earlier that within their reading capabilities, most children by second grade can respond with considerable dramatic spontaneity and concentrate on their voices. It should be noted that a major advantage of Readers Theatre includes the adaptation ability to all grade levels from second grade through high school and including all higher education levels. While the format remains virtually consistent in the Readers Theatre procedure, the major differences involve basically the varied grade-level materials, abilities, and interests.

Many high school and college language arts programs as well as those at the elementary level, have developed the technique of Readers Theatre as part of their over-all curriculum approach. The form is also used in many colleges and universities as a teaching device in theatre, speech, history, English and foreign language classes. (20, 70)

The values and results remain the same across all grade levels and ages. Sharing meaningful literature through Readers Theatre enhances an education for language and life, and brings to light deep, joyous, and wide-ranging experiences with quality literature.

Space, Cost, and Materials

Simple Readers Theatre can be easily adapted within a variety of school environments. Few materials are actually required and can usually be located within the classroom or school environment. This makes the actual cost factor ideally low or minimal. Some suggested and optional materials would include: (23)

- 1.) Scripts (type written, dittoed or copied)
 - a) may be taken from any story and divided into parts

- b) can be adapted from students' own basal texts
 - c) any fable, fairy tale, or poem could be used
- 2.) Classroom chairs or stools
 - a) for participants or as props
 - 3.) Music stands (optional)
 - a) for holding the scripts (laps may also be used)
 - 4.) Props (optional) a few would be used if any
 - a) could be made in an art lesson
 - b) students could make their own props
 - c) use only small hand props
 - 5.) Costumes (optional) include hints of suggestions such as hats, scarves, pipes, feathers, branches, etc.
 - 6.) Folders (optional) for the scripts
 - a) three ring binder
 - b) paper fasteners
 - c) same color

A simple Readers Theatre program can be rehearsed and performed in an ordinary classroom which eliminates the often frustrating problem of finding and scheduling rehearsal space. The school auditorium or stage is an ideal place to perform but is not necessary.

Minimal costuming and scenery are needed if at all which makes simple Readers Theatre productions far less expensive and complicated to coordinate, schedule and stage than conventional or standard plays.

Support Services

The use of reliable students within the classroom as director-helpers or assistants of groups greatly aids the teacher as working groups engage in the preliminary reading-interpreting stage of Readers Theatre. Some teachers may consider the over-lap of voices and the possible confusion of groups within the confines of the classroom uncomfortable. In this instance, possible teacher aides, parents, or other volunteers may be enlisted to help supervise rehearsals of

separate groups of children in Readers Theatre as the groups move into school hallways, assembly rooms or the outside premises. It is merely a management procedure which can be worked out satisfactorily with or without the use of adult supervisors depending upon teacher-discretion and availability of support services. The positive end results far outweigh the possible preliminary and momentary inconveniences some teachers may experience while organizing a Readers Theatre approach into their language arts curriculum.

Time Schedule

The Readers Theatre script can take about the same time to prepare, practice, and perform as the average basal story takes to cover in class. This is another good reason Readers Theatre can be easily integrated into the classroom reading program.

With a one-week plan as an average, the week can be divided into: preparing the students for the background of the story, parts chosen, readings practiced, optional sets, lighting and costumes arranged for, and all details covered. (9, 9). If the class has begun on Monday, by Friday, or the fifth day, the reading can be presented, and then possibly reviewed and discussed. (9, 9)

Materials

Readers Theatre is a minimally staged interpretation of a script developed from many kinds of literature such as poems, plays, stories, themes, etc. The script can be adapted or cut from a single work, or it can be compiled from various sources and organized to illustrate a point, tell a story, or explore a mood. (20, 70)

Traditional Readers Theatre programs are recognized by the presence of scripts, reading stands, stools or chairs, and a narrator or narrators. Generally, performers hold scripts in their hands even though they have memorized their lines. Staging is simple, yet imaginative with little attempt at realism. Costumes, scenery or specialized lighting are again minimal and or non-existent. Usually a narrator (or narrators) provides the necessary transitions and explanations in a script describing essential aspects of the material not covered by the dialogue and relating to the physical action of the play. In traditional Readers Theatre, movement of the performers is often restricted.

Traditional Readers Theatre performers normally do not look at each other but project the reading into or beyond the audience. A character talking to another character sees the listener not "on stage" but in the imagination in what is called "off-stage focus". The readers can pretend there is a mirror in the classroom at the back. Instead of looking at each other as people do in regular conversation, they look at the pretend mirror and talk to each other's reflection. Looking at each other is "on stage focus" and can be used by choice to achieve a particular or special dramatic effect. (9, 5-6)

Readers Theatre format and style can vary from the traditional procedure often depending upon the type of material being presented as

well as teacher-discretion and purpose. Readers Theatre programs may be presented with or without scripts, and may be staged or not staged.

In staged productions, the readers would probably use "on stage focus" and incorporate movements and actions including any called for physical contact. Memorization of lines would probably be best here as books could hamper the physical flow. The selection(s) being performed as well as where they are being performed also help determine whether to use a nontraditional or a more traditional Readers Theatre approach. (27, 266). It is this flexibility of format and style in Readers Theatre productions which makes it so adaptable and suitable in the classroom.

Any literature appropriate for students' grade level is considered good Readers Theatre material. Audience-appeal is also an important factor to consider especially, as an example, when an intermediate class intends to perform for a primary group. The stories and scripts should contain clear characterization and a taut story line that will help hold the audience's attention. (20, 71)

Children's books and reading textbooks are a rich source for scripts in the elementary grades, often with little adaptations. All types of books such as folk tales, myths, fantasy, poetry, plays, stories, biography, as well as informational or nonfiction have also been found to be effective Readers Theatre material. (4, 335). Guidelines include the use of material that has a logical plot and actions that the readers and their audience can easily interpret. The best scripts exemplify authentic, familiar, and humorous drama. (15, 19)

The finished script should read as a definable unit with a clear beginning and definite ending. The audience should never have to guess when the performance is over. (15, 19). Simple staging hints such as

having the performers bow or turn their backs to the audience is a solution to this and will be discussed more in depth later in "staging".

Readers Theatre Styles

There are four basic types or categorical styles of Readers Theatre. They include: a) Simple Reading, b) Staged Reading, c) Chamber Theatre, and d) Story Theatre. (29). All are classified under the "interpretive theatre" category but do range in differences including complexity, format, performance skills and procedure.

The appropriateness of each style depends upon material, teacher-goals, space, facilities, time, and student abilities. It is not uncommon to borrow from each style resulting in an effective and unique type of performance. There is no single correct approach to using Readers Theatre in the classroom which again adds to its flexibility.

The major differences of each style include a focus on procedure: "Simple Readers Theatre" includes no or few props. The scripts are present and read, and there is little movement or gesturing. There are slightly more gestures and movement in "Staged Readers Theatre" including the optional use of some props, and just a "hint" of costume. The scripts are still present and read; sometimes they are used to suggest props. Both "Simple" and "Staged" Readers Theatre use narrators.

"Chamber Theatre" is a more active performance and usually incorporates the full stage movement as in conventional theatre. The use of all or some physical resources are used such as lights, sets, costumes, makeup, props, and sound. There is often a narrator for each character. The scripts are not ordinarily used in Chamber Theatre other than by the narrators, and the lines are memorized. Often "simultaneous staging"

occurs during narration. (29)

In "Story Theatre" there are usually no narrators. The characters speak their own narrations as well as dialogue and perform actions as in full conventional theatre. The scripts are not present and lines are memorized as in "Chamber Theatre".

A more complete description of each Readers Theatre style has been included and the characteristics formally itemized. (29). Following each style's definition is an adapted script compiled by this author. The same original story, "The Elves and The Shoes", by the Brothers Grimm is used for each Readers Theatre style, but has been adapted to meet the particular style's description:

SIMPLE READING

- DEFINITION: Formal oral reading of literature with each "actor" portraying one or more roles with little movement or gesturing.
- SETTING: Stools and music stands are used in a formal setup.
- COSTUMES: None are used.
- SCRIPT: Scripts are present and are read.
- NARRATOR(S): Present
- FOCUS: Use offstage focus for character dialogue.
Use audience focus for narrator(s).
- ACTIONS: No overt gestures are used other than:
1. entrances and exits are indicated by looking up and down from scripts.
 2. internal responses to the script are shown in subtle physical ways, such as vividness and energy of reading and facial expressions.

SIMPLE READING may be more appropriate if:

1. the teacher wishes to focus on reading rather than on performance skills.
2. the students are "beginners".
3. space and time are extremely limited.

THE ELVES AND THE SHOES

by the Brothers Grimm

(from Scott, Foresman "Kick Up Your Heels")

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

Narrator 1: N1

Narrator 2: N2

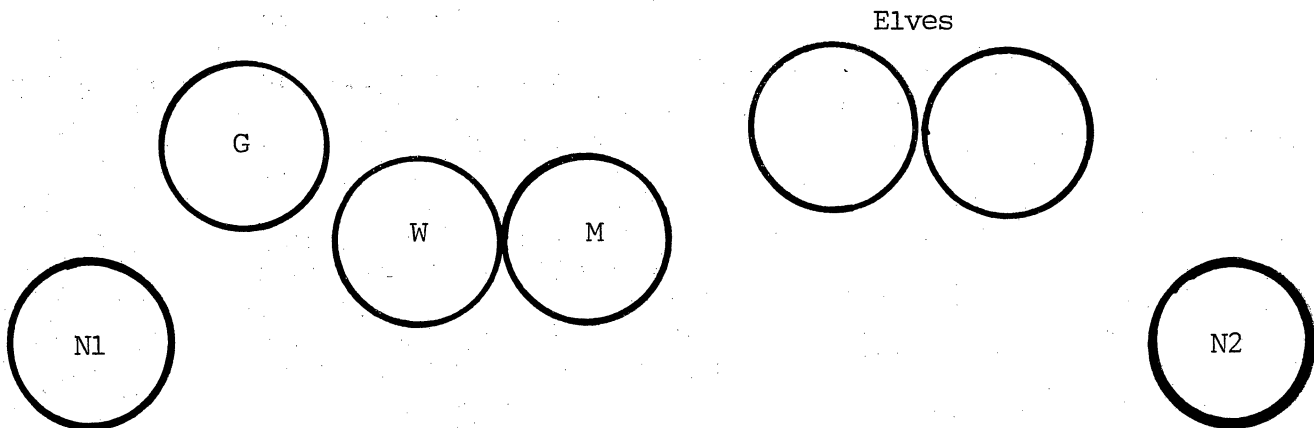
Woman: W

Man: M

Elves: E

Girl: G

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Elves and the Shoes", by the Brothers Grimm.

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time a man and a woman lived in a little old house. They worked and worked all day. The man would stand at his table and make shoes.

NARRATOR 1: First he made lines on the leather. Next, he cut out the shapes and made new shoes.

NARRATOR 2: The woman would show the shoes to people. But not many people came in to buy. One day the woman said,

WOMAN: We work and work. But we don't even have things to eat. We are cold. But we don't have sweaters to put on.

NARRATOR 1: The man put his hands over his eyes.

MAN: I know. We need so many things. But more people must buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night they worked very late. There was not much light in the room.

WOMAN: It is already time to go to sleep.

NARRATOR 1: The man looked at his table. There was very little on it. There was just some leather for two more shoes.

MAN: First I want to cut out these last two shapes.

NARRATOR 1: The man worked as fast as he could. He picked up the shapes and said,

MAN: After I make these into shoes, I will have no more leather. What will I do?

NARRATOR 2: He put the shapes down and walked out of the room. There was not a sound in the house. But that night there would be magic at his work table.

NARRATOR 1: Two elves came into the room. They were very small and funny. Up they jumped on the table. They picked up the leather shapes. Their little hands began to work. Soon they looked down and laughed. There were two new shoes.

ELVES: We come and we go.

NARRATOR 2: They called. And they were off.

NARRATOR 1: The next day the man saw the shoes.

MAN: Look here! I could never find better shoes. Who could have made these for us?

NARRATOR 2: Just then a girl came in.

GIRL: (Head up) How Pretty! I would like to buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 1: So the girl took the shoes. (back to audience, BTA)

WOMAN: Now we can buy more leather.

NARRATOR 2: Said the woman and she went to buy leather for four shoes.

NARRATOR 1: It was already very late that night, but the Man made lines on the leather. Next he cut out four shapes. He went to sleep.

NARRATOR 2: Again the elves came into the room. Again their little hands began to work. There were four new shoes! The elves laughed together. They called,

ELVES: We come and we go.

NARRATOR 1: And they were off.

NARRATOR 2: The next day a number of people came in. They wanted to buy the new shoes. The man and the woman were happy because now they could buy leather for eight shoes.

Narrator 1: Things began to get even better. More and more people wanted shoes. The man made more and more shapes. The elves came night after night. They always made the shapes into shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night the woman and the man wanted to see what went on. It was very late. They made no sound at all. They looked into the workroom. There they saw the elves on the table.

MAN: They are so good to us.

NARRATOR 1: Thought the man and the woman.

MAN AND WOMAN: We should make something for these two elves.

NARRATOR 1: So they made two pretty little sweaters.

NARRATOR 2:

The next night they put out the sweaters.
Soon the elves came. The elves put on the sweaters.

ELVES:

Thank you!

NARRATOR 1:

They called into the air. They laughed and ran away. They never came again.
(elves BTA)

NARRATOR 2:

The two people began to laugh also.

MAN AND WOMAN:

You helped us get the things we needed.
So we thank you too!

(All heads down)

STAGED READING

- DEFINITION: Formal oral reading of literature with each "actor" portraying one or more roles with suggested actions.
- SETTING: Stools and music stands are used in formal setup.
- COSTUMES: Necessary items are suggested; use just a "hint" of costume.
- SCRIPTS: Scripts are present and are read; sometimes they are used to suggest props.
- NARRATOR(S): present
- FOCUS: Use offstage focus for character dialogue.
Use audience focus for narrator(s). The narrator is also aware of performers onstage.
- ACTIONS: Entrances and exits are indicated by turning front and back to audience. (ie BTA)
Selective gesture and mime are employed to suggest action of the text and are performed with offstage focus. Actions must be synchronized.

STAGED READING may be more appropriate if:

- 1.) The teacher wishes to introduce simple physicalization of characters in addition to developing reading skills,
- 2.) The students are acquainted with "Simple Reading",
- 3.) Space and time are somewhat limited.

THE ELVES AND THE SHOES

by the Brothers Grimm

(from Scott, Foresman "Kick Up Your Heels")

Adapted for Staged Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

Narrator 1: N1

Narrator 2: N2

Woman: W

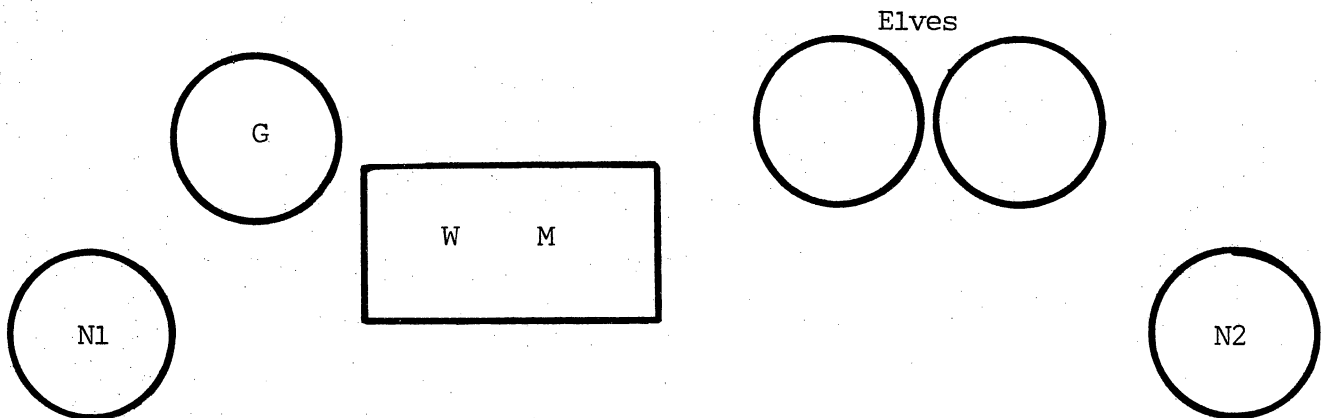
Man: M

Elves: E

Girl: G

SUGGESTED STAGING:

The narrators, woman, and man face the audience.
The elves and the girl are BTA.



NARRATOR 1: "The Elves and the Shoes" by the Brothers Grimm.

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time a man and a woman lived in a little old house. They worked and worked all day. The man would stand at his table and make shoes. (scripts are used to mime actions)

NARRATOR 1: First he made lines on the leather. Next, he cut out the shapes and made new shoes. (mime making lines, cutting out shapes, and sewing)

NARRATOR 2: The woman would show the shoes to the people But not many people came in to buy. One day the woman said,

WOMAN: We work and work. But we don't even have things to eat. We are cold. But we don't have sweaters to put on. (hold shoulders as though cold)

NARRATOR 1: The man put his hands over his eyes. (mime)

MAN: I know. We need so many things. But more people must buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night they worked very late. There was not much light in the room.

WOMAN: It is already time to go to sleep.

NARRATOR 1: The man looked at his table. There was very little on it. There was just some leather for two more shoes.

MAN: First I want to cut out these last two shapes.

NARRATOR 1: The man worked as fast as he could. He picked up the shapes and said, (use scripts to mime)

MAN: After I make these into shoes, I will have no more leather. What will I do?

NARRATOR 2: He put the shapes down and walked out of the room. There was not a sound in the house. But that night there would be magic at his work table. (man mimes putting script down, man and woman BTA)
(elves face audience, mime making shoes)

NARRATOR 1: Two elves came into the room. They were very small and funny. Up they jumped on the table they picked up the leather shapes. Their little hands began to work. Soon they

looked down and laughed. There were two new shoes.

ELVES: We come and we go.

NARRATOR 2: They called, and they were off. (elves BTA)

NARRATOR 1: The next day the man saw the shoes. (man & woman face audience)

MAN: Look here! I could never find better shoes. Who could have made these for us? (mime looking at shoes)

NARRATOR 2: Just then a girl came in. (girl faces audience)

GIRL: I would like to buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 1: So the girl took the shoes. (girl BTA)

WOMAN: Now we can buy more leather.

NARRATOR 2: Said the woman and she went to buy leather for four shoes. (woman BTA)

NARRATOR 1: It was already very late that night. But the man made lines on the leather. Next he cut out four shapes. He went to sleep. (man mimes actions using script, then BTA)

NARRATOR 2: Again the elves came into the room. (elves face audience and mime actions) Again their little hands began to work. There were four new shoes! The elves laughed together. They called,

ELVES: We come and we go.

NARRATOR 1: And they were off. (elves BTA)

NARRATOR 2: The next day a number of people came in. They wanted to buy the new shoes. The man and the woman were happy because now they could buy leather for eight shoes. (man and woman face audience)

NARRATOR 1: Things began to get even better. More and more people wanted shoes. The man made more and more shapes. The elves came night after night. They always made the shapes into shoes. (elves face audience and mime actions)

NARRATOR 2: One night the woman and the man wanted to see what went on. It was very late. They made no sound at all. They looked into the workroom. There they saw the elves on the table.

MAN: They are so good to us.

MAN AND WOMAN: We should make something for these two elves.

NARRATOR 1: So they made two pretty little sweaters.

NARRATOR 2: The next night they put out the sweaters.
Soon the elves came. (elves face audience)
The elves put on the sweaters.

ELVES: Thank you!

NARRATOR 1: They called into the air. They laughed
and ran away. They never came again.
(elves giggle and turn BTA)

NARRATOR 2: The two people began to laugh also. (mime)

MAN AND WOMAN: You helped us get the things we needed, so
we thank you too!

(All heads down)

CHAMBER THEATRE

DEFINITION: A theatrical method of performing narrative literature.

SETTING AND COSTUMES:

The full physical resources of theatre (lights, sets, costumes, makeup, props, sound, etc.) may be incorporated, but are not necessary. The goal is to seek maximum communication of the text by the simplest means.

SCRIPTS:

Scripts are not ordinarily used; the lines are memorized. Scripts may be used to suggest props. The narrator(s) may use scripts as a reminder of the literary basis of production and relationship to Readers Theatre, such as a "storyteller".

NARRATOR(S):

There is usually a narrator for each character reading from a script.

FOCUS:

Audience focus is used by the narrator(s), except where involved in the onstage action. Avoid constantly shunting the narrator to the side as the impartial storyteller; involving the narrator directly in the action can provide additional excitement and often solve staging problems. Onstage focus is used by the characters.

ACTIONS:

All actions are completely performed with full stage movement as in conventional theatre, with the following considerations:

1. Allow for abrupt changes in time and locale.
2. Often time is telescoped.
3. "Real time" stops during narrative comments. Consider the possibility of "simultaneous staging" during narration.
4. Movement may be compressed.

CHAMBER THEATRE may be more appropriate if:

1. The teacher wants a more active performance, and there is time for development,
2. The narration is complex with much description, philosophical or psychological elements.

THE ELVES AND THE SHOES

by the Brothers Grimm

(from Scott, Foresman "Kick Up Your Heels")

Adapted for Chamber Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST

Narrator 1: N1

Narrator 2: N2

Narrator 3: N3

Narrator 4: N4

Man: M

Elves: E

Girl: G

PROPS:

table, chairs

pairs of shoes (optional)

sweaters (optional)

SUGGESTED STAGING:

The narrators are standing downstage right and left.
The man and woman are sitting at a table, center stage, working on shoe patterns and shapes.

M W

N4

N2

N1

N3

NARRATOR 1: "The Elves and the Shoes by the Brothers Grimm.

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time a man and a woman lived in a little old house. They worked and worked all day. They would sit at the table and make shoes. (mime actions)

NARRATOR 1: First the man made lines on the leather. Next he cut out the shapes and made new shoes. (mimic making lines, cutting out shapes and sewing)

NARRATOR 2: The woman would show the shoes to people. But not many people came in to buy. One day the woman said,

WOMAN: We work and work. But we don't even have things to eat. We are cold. But we don't have sweaters to put on. (holds shoulders as though cold)

NARRATOR 1: The man put his hands over his eyes. (man mimes)

MAN: I know. We need so many things. But more people must buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night they worked very late. There was not much light in the room.

WOMAN: It is already time to go to sleep.

NARRATOR 1: The man looked at his table. There was very little on it. There was just some leather for two more shoes.

MAN: First I want to cut out these last two shapes.

NARRATOR 1: The man worked as fast as he could. He picked up the shapes and said, (mime)

MAN: After I make these into shoes, I will have no more leather. What will I do?

NARRATOR 2: He put the shapes down and they walked out of the room. (man and woman exit upstage right) There was not a sound in the house. But that night there would be magic at his work table.

NARRATOR 3: Two elves came into the room. They were very small and funny. Up they jumped on the table. They picked up the leather shapes. Their little hands began to work. Soon they looked down and laughed. There were two new shoes. (elves enter upstage left giggling and hopping; they move toward the table, mime actions, and leave two pairs of shoes)

ELVES: We come and we go. (elves exit upstage left giggling and hopping)

NARRATOR 3: They called, and they were off.
(man and woman enter upstage right moving toward the table and sit down; man holds up shoes)

NARRATOR 2: The next day the man saw the shoes.

MAN: Look here! I could never find better shoes. Who could have made these for us?

NARRATOR 4: Just then a girl came in. (girl enters stage left and moves toward table)

GIRL: How pretty!

NARRATOR 4: She said.

Girl: I would like to buy these shoes. (mimes exchanging momey from her purse for the shoes)

NARRATOR 4: So the girl took the shoes and left. (girl exits stage left)

WOMAN: Now we can buy more leather.

NARRATOR 2: And she bought leather for four shoes.

NARRATOR 1: It was already very late that night. But the man made lines on the leather and the woman helped. Next they cut out four shapes and went to sleep. (man and woman exit upstage right)

NARRATOR 3: Again the elves came into the room. Again their little hands began to work. There were four new shoes! The elves laughed together.
(enter elves upstage left giggling and hopping; they mime making shoes and leave four pair)

ELVES: We come and we go. (elves exit upstage left giggling and hopping)

NARRATOR 3: And they were off.

NARRATOR 2: The next day a number of people came in. They wanted to buy the new shoes. The man and the woman were happy because now they could buy leather for eight shoes.

NARRATOR 1: Things began to get even better. More and more people wanted shoes. The man made more and more shapes.

NARRATOR 3: The elves came night after night. They always made the shapes into shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night the woman and the man wanted to see what went on. It was very late. They made no sound at all. They looked into the workroom.

ELVES: There they saw the elves on the table.
(man and woman enter upstage right , stand, and look at the table; the man looks as though he's talking to the woman)

MAN: They are so good to us.

MAN AND WOMAN: We should make something for these two elves.
(man and woman sit at the table and mime knitting sweaters)

NARRATOR 2: So they made two pretty little sweaters, and the next night they put the sweaters out for the elves.

NARRATOR 3: Soon the elves came. The elves put on the sweaters. (elves enter upstage left giggling and hopping, mime putting on sweaters)

ELVES: Thank you!

NARRATOR 3: They called into the air. They laughed and ran away. They never came again. (elves exit hopping and giggling upstage left)

NARRATOR 2: The two people began to laugh also. (mime)

MAN AND WOMAN: You helped us get the things we needed. So we thank you too!

(All heads down)

STORY THEATRE

DEFINITION: A technique for arranging literary text, so that the characters speak their own narrations as well as dialogue and perform actions as in conventional theatre.

SETTING AND COSTUMES: The full physical resources of theatre may be incorporated such as lights, sets, costume, makeup, props, and sound. The goal is to seek maximum communication of the text by the simplest means.

SCRIPTS: Scripts are not used; the lines are memorized.

NARRATOR(S): None

FOCUS: Characters use onstage focus for dialogue, audience focus for narrative elements. In some cases, narration can be spoken to the characters (onstage focus) as if it were dialogue.

ACTIONS: All actions are completely performed with full stage movement as in conventional theatre, with the following considerations:

1. Allow for abrupt changes in time and locale.
2. Often, time is telescoped.
3. Movement may be compressed.
4. Improvisation is used.

STORY THEATRE may be more appropriate if:

1. The teacher wants a more active performance, and there is time for development.
2. The narration is plain (stage directions) rather than philosophical.
3. The form of the story is simple with no subplots.
4. There is an overt feeling of sensory or physical action.
5. The literature was written to be performed orally.

THE ELVES AND THE SHOES

by the Brothers Grimm

(from Scott, Foresman "Kick Up Your Heels")

Adapted for Story Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

Woman

Man

Elves

Girl

Several People (optional)

PROPS:

table and two chairs

scissors

cloth patterns of shoes

several pairs of shoes

two sweaters

(Optional)

kerosene lamp

eye glasses for man and woman

"Cobbler" sign with "open" on one
side and "closed" on the other

knitting needles

SUGGESTED STAGING AND SETTING:

A table and two chairs are located center stage. The man and woman are dressed in plain, old-fashioned clothes. The woman has on an apron. Both are sitting at the table cutting shoe patterns and sewing together shapes. The room is bare except for a "Cobbler" sign which says "closed".

Scene I

WOMAN: We work and work, but we don't have anything to eat. We are cold. (shudders and holds arms)
But we don't have sweaters to put on.

MAN: (putting hand over eyes and drooping head)
I know. We need so many things. But more people must buy these shoes.

WOMAN: It's late and our light is going out. It's already time to go to sleep.

MAN: First I want to cut out these last two shapes.
(man cuts out shapes, woman exits upstage right after putting "cobbler" sign on "closed")
After I make these into shoes, I will have no more leather. What am I going to do? (He puts the shapes down, adjusts the kerosene lamp and exits upstage right.)

(Enter upstage left two little elves giggling. They look at the shoe patterns and pretend to sew together the shapes. They put two pairs of shoes on the table and hop around the room saying:)

ELVES: We come and we go! (elves exit upstage left giggling and hopping)

SCENE II [THE NEXT DAY...]

(Man enters upstage right yawning and stretching arms)
MAN: Another day! (He looks at the table.)
Look here!

(Woman enters upstage right, puts "cobbler" sign on "open".)
WOMAN: What's that you say?

MAN: Look here! (goes over to the table and picks up the two pairs of shoes)
I could never find better shoes, Who could have made these for us?

(man and woman sit at the table)
(Girl enters downstage left and looks at the shoes)

GIRL: How pretty! I would like to buy these shoes.
(Girl pretends to get money from her purse and exchanges it for the shoes. She exits downstage left.)

WOMAN: Now we can buy more leather for four shoes.
(woman exits stage left after putting sign on closed)

SCENE III [THAT NIGHT...]

(The man is sitting at the table working on shoe patterns. He yawns several times.)

MAN:

It is very late. I must go to sleep.

(He puts his head down and falls asleep)

(Enter elves stage upstage left giggling and hopping in the room. They pretend to make shoes and produce four pair on the table. They laugh and call out:

ELVES:

We come and we go! (elves exit upstage left giggling)

SCENE IV [THE NEXT MORNING...]

(The man wakes up slowly from sleeping and sees the four pairs of shoes on the table.)

MAN:

What? What's this? Four more pair of shoes!

(He picks up a pair and looks at them. He calls to the woman.)

Look! Come here! We've got four more pair of shoes!

(Woman enters upstage right putting the "cobbler" sign on "open".)

WOMAN:

Who could have been so kind to do this?

(Several people enter downstage left and look at the shoes. They buy the shoes and exit downstage left.)

SCENE V [SEVERAL NIGHTS LATER...]

(The man and the woman are sitting at the table working on shoe patterns and sewing. The eight pairs of shoes are in a neat row on the table. The "cobbler" sign says "closed".)

WOMAN:

It is late and time to go to sleep. Let's pretend to go to bed and then sneak in to see who it is that is making our shoes.

MAN: That's a good idea.
(Both get up and exit upstage right.
Elves enter upstage left giggling and working
around the table.
The man and woman are seen looking in from
upstage right.
The elves leave more shoes on the table.)

ELVES: We come and we go! (giggling, they hop out of
the room upstage left)
(The man and woman enter from upstage right
talking to each other.)

MAN: They are so good to us!

WOMAN: We should make them two pretty little sweaters.

SCENE VI [SEVERAL NIGHTS LATER...]

(The man and woman are sitting at the table
finishing the sweaters using knitting needles.
The woman puts the sign on "closed".)

WOMAN: There, we are finished. Let's leave these
sweaters and see if they come tonight.
(Both exit upstage right peering back looking
at the workroom.)
(The elves enter upstage left hopping and giggling.
They find the sweaters and put them on saying:)

ELVES: Thank you! Thank you!
(Giggling, the elves exit upstage left wearing
the sweaters.
The man and woman watch from upstage right. They
enter into the room as the elves leave.)

Woman: You helped us get the things we needed.

MAN: So we thank you too!

(END)

CURRICULUM FEATURES

Compiling and Adapting Material

It has been mentioned that any literature appropriate for students' grade level will make good Readers Theatre material. The audience and "audience-appeal" is also a key factor and guide-line to keep in mind in selecting appropriate material. Stories taken from students' own basal texts are a good place to begin and offer meaningful enrichment to the existing classroom reading material. Most stories in basal texts contain a high percentage of dialogue which facilitates adapting them to scripts for readers' parts.

The simplest way to adapt or "cut" literature for ensemble reading is to leave the original intact but to divide it so that one or more readers are assigned the narration while the other readers handle the dialogue of each of the characters.

It is important to keep in mind that narration must provide smooth transitions between sections of the written script. The narrator usually introduces an activity using a story-telling manner. The narrator is also necessary to describe essential aspects of the material not covered by the dialogue, and to relate the physical action of the play since there is generally little movement in simple Readers Theatre.

When the script is adapted from a story, the narrator can read passages in the adaption that reveal the characters' thoughts. Here is an example read by a narrator: "said Alice, who always took a great interest in questions of eating and drinking." (15, 17)

The narrator makes clear any complicated twist in the plot, sets scenes, introduces characters, or interprets or reflects on anything

otherwise impossible to include in the dialogue. The narrator speaks as if what is being said is not intended for the readers to hear.

It is possible to adapt and cut the basal stories right in class as a preliminary step to making scripts. An overhead projector can simplify this task if available. Or the students can even follow the teacher's reading and suggestions by using pencils when crossing out and adding parts in their own books. Students will soon catch on to the format and it will help them to adapt and write their own scripts later on. The final adapted script can be typed by the teacher or printed by a student on a ditto master. One double-spaced type written page equals approximately two minutes of dramatization. This is an ideal time to use a problem student or lower achiever. He/she could write or print the script on a duplicating master. It would not only (hopefully) save the teacher time, but help to promote class unity as well as help to motivate and instill a more positive self-image on that student's part.

Included in the following pages are examples of "turning texts into scripts" by this author. The first is a story taken from a second grade text entitled "The Garden" by Arnold Lobel. (19). "The Serpent" by Theodore Roethke gives an example of adapting a poem. (28). And "The Dragon in the Clock Box" by M. Jean Craig, represents a third grade anthology with a few more adaptation examples: (8)

THE GARDEN, by Arnold Lobel

CAST

Narrator 1: N1
Narrator 2: N2
Toad: T
Frog: F



NARRATOR 1: The Garden, by Arnold Lobel

NARRATOR 2: Frog was in his garden. Toad came walking by.

TOAD: What a fine garden you have, Frog. Said-Toad.

FROG: Yes, it is very nice. But it was hard work.
Frog-said.

TOAD: I wish I had a garden, Toad-replied.

FROG: Here are some flower seeds. Plant them in the ground, and soon you will have a garden.

TOAD: How soon? Toad-asked.

FROG: Very soon.

NARRATOR 1: Toad ran home. He planted the flower seeds.

TOAD: Now seeds, start growing. He-said-impatiently.

NARRATOR 2: Toad walked up and down a few times. The seeds did not start to grow.

NARRATOR 1: Toad put his head close to the ground.

TOAD: (Crying) Now seeds, start growing!

NARRATOR 2: The seeds did not start to grow.



NARRATOR 1: The toad put his head very close to the ground and shouted,

TOAD: NOW SEEDS, START GROWING!

NARRATOR 2: Frog ran up the path and-asked,

FROG: What is going on?

TOAD: My seeds will not grow, replied-Toad-sadly.

FROG: You are shouting too much. These poor seeds are afraid to grow.

TOAD: My seeds are afraid to grow? He-asked.

FROG: Yes, leave them alone for a few days. Let the sun shine on them, let the rain fall on them. Soon your seeds will start to grow.

NARRATOR 1: That night Toad looked out his window.

TOAD: Oh, no! My seeds have not started to grow. They must be afraid of the dark.



NARRATOR 2:

Toad went out to his garden.

TOAD:

I will read the seeds a story, Toad-thought.

NARRATOR 1:

Toad read a long story to his seeds.

NARRATOR 2:

All the next day Toad sang songs to his seeds.

NARRATOR 1:

And all the next day Toad read poems to his seeds.



NARRATOR 2:

And all the next day Toad played music for his seeds.

NARRATOR 1:

Toad looked at the ground. The seeds still did not start to grow.

TOAD:

What shall I do? These seeds must be very frightened, Toad-thought.

NARRATOR 2: Then Toad became very tired, and he fell asleep.

FROG: Toad, Toad, wake up. Look at your garden! Cried-Frog.

NARRATOR 1: Toad looked at his garden. Little green plants were growing up out of the ground.

TOAD: (happily) At last, my seeds have stopped being afraid to grow! Toad-was-very-happy.





FROG: And now you will have a nice garden too, said-Frog.

TOAD: Yes, but you were right, Frog. It was very
(MIME)
hard work, [said-Toad-as-he-wiped-his-face.]

The Serpent

by Theodore Roethke

N There was a Serpent who had to sing.

B1 There was. (*B2*) There was.

N He simply gave up Serpentine

B1 Because. (*B2*) Because.

S He didn't like his Kind of Life;

N He couldn't find a proper Wife;

S He was a Serpent with a Soul;

N He got no Pleasure down his Hole.

And so, of course, he had to Sing

B1 & B2 And sing he did, like Anything!

N The Birds, (*B1*) they were, (*B2*) they were Astounded;

N And various Measures Propounded

To stop the Serpent's awful Racket:

They bought a Drum. (*B1 & 2*) He wouldn't Whack it.

N They sent (*B1 & 2*) ---you always send (*N*) --to Cuba

And got a Most Commodius Tuba;

They got a Horn, they got a Flute,

B1 & 2 But Nothing would suit.

N He said, (*S*) "Look, Birds, all this is futile:

I do not like to Bang or Tootle."

N And then he cut loose with a Horrible Note

That practically split the Top of his Throat.

S "You see," (*N*) he said, with a Serpent's Leer,

S I'm Serious about my Singing Career!"

N And the Woods Resounded with many a Shriek

As the Birds flew off to the End of Next Week.

CAST

NARRATOR:	<i>N</i>
BIRD 1:	<i>B1</i>
BIRD 2:	<i>B2</i>
SERPENT:	<i>S</i>

The Dragon in the Clock Box

by M. Jean Craig

NARRATOR: On Thursday, at Breakfast time, ^{the family gathered at the} ~~Joshua's-Father-asked~~
~~kitchen table.~~ FATHER:
him, "How is your dragon's egg doing this morning,

Josh?"

JOSHUA: "It isn't doing. It's just waiting."

SISTER: "What on earth is it waiting for?" Asked-Joshua's
big-sister.

JOSHUA: "For it to be time," answered-Joshua. "I would like
some toast, please."

SISTER: (giggling) "Time to hatch, I suppose?" Joshua's-sister-giggled
[as-she ^{MIME} passed-him-the-toast.]

JOSHUA: (seriously) "Yes, time to hatch," [said-Joshua, without-smiling
even-a-little-bit.] I would like some jam on it, please."

BROTHER: "I hear you have a dragon's egg in that box of yours,"

NARRATOR: said Joshua's big brother when-he came home from high school
late in the afternoon. BROTHER: "How did it get there?"

JOSHUA: "The mother dragon laid it there," said-Joshua.
"Before."

BROTHER: "Before? What do you mean, before? Before what?"
Asked-Joshua's-big-brother.

JOSHUA: "Before I sealed it up, of course." Joshua-explained

NARRATOR:
to-him, and he picked up the clock box and went out of
the room with it.

CAST:

NARRATOR
FATHER
JOSHUA
SISTER
BROTHER

Depending upon teacher-purpose, there is no one exact way to adapt material for Readers Theatre. There are some general guidelines and principles, however, which have proven to be effective and meaningful. Here are eight basic principles for cutting and adapting material: (18)

Eight principles for cutting:

1. Cut line that repeats who said it"said the elves."
2. Cut out lines that the readers can do on stage by mime ..."putting his hands on his head."
3. Cut out lines that are redundant"without smiling even a little bit."
4. Cut out lines that are almost impossible to give imagery or are not necessary to the plot.
5. Cut the lines about characters that they can express for themselves... facial expressions, gestures, gimmicks.
6. Cut necessary plot lines, add a narrator or more. And/or
7. Cut necessary plot lines, assign to a character as a spoken line.
8. Change a line when necessary.

Classroom Procedure and Production Tips

Planning The lesson

An excellent way to begin Readers Theatre with children is to show a lot of enthusiasm! Whole group and choral reading is a good introduction and helps "break the ice". No one is singled out or asked to stand, sit, or read alone. Included in the appendix is an animated cowboy story which promotes group practice, fun, and is a good example of where to begin.

Generally speaking, when beginning simple or staged Readers Theatre in the classroom, the script should be read to the children first as a class. It is suggested that the teacher ask questions about the story while the children visualize and verbalize their ideas about: scenery, location, character, plot, and theme. The following guideline includes a good procedure to follow when introducing Readers Theatre in the classroom as well as initial introductions to different and subsequent scripts: (23)

1. Ask for volunteer readers. Have volunteers choose their parts, then have them read to the class again.
2. Break up the class into groups:
 - a. Explain that scripts do not have to be memorized. (The script is always in front of the reader.)
 - b. Have students choose own parts
 - c. practice may begin on their own Readers Theatre production
 - d. Students can practice by themselves as the teacher goes from group to group
3. Once students have learned their parts, have them discuss small props and movements.

4. A formal entrance can be planned.
 - a. walk together in a straight line, face audience
 - b. sit down together
 - c. simultaneously place the scripts on music stands or on laps in front of them and open the folders
 - d. put heads down
 - e. begin
5. Students should eventually have a place to perform their production.
 - a. other classes
 - b. student assembly

The processes of reading, writing, listening and speaking are integrated and reinforced in teaching through Readers Theatre. The teacher can plan the lesson(s) with emphasis on all four areas of language and/or concentrate on a particular area of need at one time.

Oral and silent reading practice occur continuously with emphasis on many critical reading skills such as: vocabulary, pronunciation of words, comprehension, and sequence of events, to name just a few. Reading and practiced reading is the main goal. Scripts are generally read and not memorized in order to attain this.

Readers Theatre experiences can make a strong impact on children's writing. The writing fits naturally with the reading process in Readers Theatre. (9, 9). The style of Readers Theatre is often mastered easily and students can make direct correlations with writing by adapting their own Readers Theatre scripts from basal texts, stories, and poems. Eventually, students may wish to create and write their own scripts.

To provide motivation for writing, students could be given a potential conflict and asked to solve it dramatically. As an example, students

could select any three people in their families and script their reactions to a relative moving into their homes; or write a script concerning the questions adults keep asking them about their plans after high school. Mythology also provides a rich resource for imaginative play writing as well as radio plays. Another idea is to have a group put together several short pieces so that their presentation becomes a collage of different materials. These can include not only short stories and plays, but also poetry, diaries, letters, songs and themes from current events or social studies. (31, 219)

Listening is a skill not only taught but practiced through Readers Theatre. A play's script consisting mostly of dialogue, the sequence of events, and a limited description of the setting, stimulates children to pay close attention to textual details and helps them develop the listening skills basic to interpretive reading. Those students reading are not just waiting their turn to read, but are following a conversation as they would in daily activities.

Readers Theatre naturally enhances speaking practice. Script reading promotes children to be sensitive to language styles and usage. By focusing on the dialogue and sharing their suggestions on reading the lines, they discover that there are alternate ways of saying the same thing, each dependent on the context as well as the speaker's motivation and intention.

Readers Theatre expands children's language through a combination of reading, writing, listening and speaking and offers a well-rounded experience to a whole language program.

Casting

There are many possibilities and variations in casting. It has been mentioned that using a whole class with choral reading is a good way to begin Readers Theatre. The scripts and readers' parts can be easily adapted to fit any purpose desired by the teacher. Some scripts contain four to five suggested parts. These could easily involve as many as thirty students by having the parts read in a choral manner. In turn, scripts suggesting many parts can be reduced by casting students in dual parts as long as they do not end up in the same part of the play or end up speaking to each other!

Because Readers Theatre often acts as a strong motivation for students with reading problems, it is important to include these students whenever possible by assigning them smaller parts or parts that challenge their abilities. Adding more narrators is a means used to accommodate more and smaller speaking parts such as in this case and when needed or desired.

Readers theatre in the classroom is more concerned with the processes of reading and their effects on individual children than with a finished product. (15, 21)

Management Hints

In the initial stages of Readers Theatre in the classroom, the teacher usually takes the role of director. Gradually, pupils can assume the duties and responsibilities of organizing and directing Readers Theatre as well as selecting and adapting materials. (15, 20)

To fulfill the responsibilities of a director, children need to know the general meaning of the script as well as understanding the attitudes

and motives of the characters they will orally interpret. Asking and answering the question, "Why does my character say what he/she does when he/she does," is a good way to promote critical reading.

The director needs to emphasize the importance of speaking slowly, clearly, and loudly. Emphasizing the verbs is a good way to improve children's enunciation and articulation. (15, 20). Tape-recording readings of individual children as well as group activities can aid greatly in this. Facial expressions and gestures are also key factors in Readers Theatre helping suggest illusion to the audience.

Eventually, the class can be divided into working groups with the aid of responsible student and assistant directors. The groups can be working on different versions of the same script or on different scripts. The over-lapping of voices in the classroom may cause some teachers to allow only one working group at a time in the classroom. Possible solutions to this include enlisting services from teacher's aides, parents, or other volunteers to help supervise separate groups of children outside the classroom. Whatever management system a teacher uses, the positive, long-term effects of implementing Readers Theatre in the classroom far outweigh any initial confusion.

Warm-up Activities

"Voice, diction, and interpretive reading activities help children develop skills useful in Readers Theatre as well as in their daily lives. These warming-up sessions include some suggested exercises in vocal projection, pronunciation, and theatre techniques helping the readers before rehearsals and performance." (30, 53)

Vocal Projection Exercises: (30, 53)

1. Stand up tall. Place hands flat on abdomen (under rib cage). Inhale and exhale slowly, each to the count of four. The abdomen should expand as one breathes in. The abdomen and chest should collapse as one breathes out.
2. In pairs. The characters are Alice and Grace. They hold the following conversation sitting opposite each other.

Alice: Where are you going?

Grace: I am going to market.

Alice: You're going to market?

Grace: I want to buy meat.

Alice: Please buy some for me.

The two then move further apart and repeat the performance until finally they are at opposite ends of the room. This would be good to practice outside. The words are never to be yelled, but heard in a clear and pleasant manner utilizing stored breath for more projection. (Script material could also be used.)

Diction

"Diction refers to the correctness and clearness of word pronunciation. It is important to pay attention to articulation of the words making sure the words are shaped properly with the teeth, lips, and tongue. Projection, too is aided by good diction." (30, 53-54)

Diction Exercises: (30, 54)

1. In pairs, try to speak the following lines distinctly. Then change partners:
 - A. I live in an ice house.
 - B. I live in a nice house.
 - A. I go to summer school.
 - B. I think the summer's cool.
 - A. I see your two eyes.
 - B. I know you are too wise.
 - A. It is five minutes to eight.
 - B. You have five minutes to wait.

- A. Give me some ice.
 - B. Give me some mice.
 - A. His acts are fun.
 - B. His axe is sharp.
2. Work on these pairs of words to be certain there is a difference between them:
1. pin-pen
 2. sit-set
 3. kin-ken
 4. big-beg
 5. tin-ten
 6. min-men
 7. him-hem
 8. minnie-many
3. The following sentences have problem vowels and diphthongs to which there is a temptation to add other sounds:
1. How now brown cow, browsing loudly in the mow?
 2. Sam sat in the class and waited for the man to stand.
 3. Ben sent a hen.
 4. The guide tried to get us to walk the mile-wide isle.

Words with alliteration would be good to add here such as the story, "Peter Piper Picked".

Responding on Cue

"A "cue" is a signal to say or do something planned in advance. Usually, cues are the last three words of a fellow reader's speech. Movement or facial expressions can also serve as cues and signal one to speak or move." (30, 55)

Exercises (30, 55)

The class should respond to the following cues:

1. Teacher: "Clapping is a good exercise."
Response: (Everyone claps.)
Teacher: "The King is dead!"
Response: "Long live the King!"
Teacher: "Everyone who wishes to leave, stand up."
Response: (All stand.)

Characterization

A good way to portray another person such as in Readers Theatre is to think of our own feelings in particular situations. (22)

The following suggested exercises can be used by the whole class and in pairs. Discussing as a class the emotions each character experienced after completing the exercises can also be very helpful.

Exercises (30, 56)

1. As a class, react to the following situations:
 - a. Your mother says you can have a party and invite your friends.
 - b. You must go to bed early tonight, no television.
 - c. Someone has stolen your bicycle.
 - d. The teacher is talking about something you find very boring.
 - e. Your dog was hit by a car.
 - f. You received an A+ on your composition.

2. Pair off. Here are short story lines, one for each couple. Finish, then reverse rolls:
 - a. Deb: I have a poodle.
Jane: Oh, how I would love to have a poodle.
Deb: My dog is about to have a litter; you can have your pick.
(Jane reacts.)

 - b. Two people in a car:
Bob: You're driving too fast.
Dan: Don't be silly, I'm only doing forty
Bob: But you're a new driver. Go more slowly!
Dan: Chicken! Just for that I'll go sixty!

Theatre Terminology

"In the course of preparing a Readers Theatre production the pupils will become familiar with some of the vocabulary of the theatre.

Consistent use of theatrical terms will add a dimension of "theatre reality" to the whole project. Many of the Following terms are indispensable for developing a Readers Theatre performance or production:" (30, 46-47)

Act: To read the role of a character in the script

Adaptation: A story rewritten into play form

Ad Lib: Lines not appearing in the script, but invented by the readers

Blocking: Determining the positions of readers within a scene on stage

BTA: Back to the audience

Casting: Selecting readers for their parts

Center stage: The middle area of the stage

Characterization: The reader's interpretation of a character

Cue: A verbal or nonverbal signal to say or do something

Dialogue: Conversation between characters on stage

Director: The person who supervises the entire production

Downstage: The area of the stage closest to the audience

Entrance: An indication of a reader's arrival on the stage

Exit: An indication of a reader's leaving the stage

Left stage: The position of the stage on the reader's left as he/she faces the audience

Offstage focus: To look up at a fixed spot out in the audience when reading

Onstage focus: To look up at the other characters when reading

Pantomime: Suggesting a story or an idea through bodily movements only

Plot: The story line of a script

Props: Objects or items needed in the performance

Rehearsal: Practice sessions to perfect the performance

Right stage: The portion of the stage on the reader's right as he or she faces the audience

Script: The book containing lines the players read

Scene: A single situation or unit of the script or play

Upstage: The area of the stage furthest from the audience

There are nine acting areas of a stage used in conventional theatre as well as Readers Theatre. The areas are especially helpful in entrances, exits, actor placement, and stage movement when necessary.

These demarcations apply wherever a performance takes place and always refer to the actors' right and left as they face the audience. (30, 47)

Nine Acting Areas of a Stage

UR (UPSTAGE RIGHT)	UC (UPSTAGE CENTER)	UL (UPSTAGE LEFT)
RC (RIGHT CENTER)	C (CENTER)	LC (LEFT CENTER)
DR (DOWNSTAGE RIGHT)	DC (DOWNSTAGE CENTER)	DL (DOWNSTAGE LEFT)

It makes it easier to remember that years ago stages were higher in the back so that audiences could see better. Thus, the square in front of

"center" or the one closest to the audience, is called "downstage center". The square in back of or behind the "center" square from the audience's view is called "upstage center". (30, 47-48)

Staging

The staging of Readers Theatre most often implemented in the classroom further distinguishes it from conventional drama or theatre. In simple and staged Readers Theatre, the reader stands, or sits on a chair or stool holding a script. Stools, music stands, chairs, folding chairs, and tables are often used and are usually available within the school.

Generally, a limited amount of stage technique is used. Children can step forward or stand when "entering" scenes. They can turn their backs to the audience when "exiting" scenes, (ie BTA). Raising and lowering their heads can also be effective for "entrance" and "exit" scenes including opening and closing the manuscript.

"Off stage" focus is most generally used in simple and staged Readers Theatre. Instead of looking at each other as people do in regular conversation, the readers look "off stage" at a fixed and imagined point just above and beyond the audience. It is helpful that all the readers imagine the same point when glancing up from their scripts so that there is group unity. "On stage" focus, or looking at each other when glancing up from a script, can be used by the narrators or as directed by the teacher in order to achieve a particular effect.

Background noise and action can also help spectators visualize the imaginary world that is being created for them. In a scene set in a factory, the performers can move their arms and legs with mechanical precision (up and down, in circles, etc.) to suggest a large and

complicated piece of machinery. A city scene can be given extra vividness when the students imitate the sounds of horns, automobiles, and trains. The same thing can be done with the rural sounds of birds, animals, the wind, and so on. (20, 72)

Once the idea of "suggested" verses "realistic" staging in Readers Theatre has been worked with, the solution to many so-called technical problems will be within grasp. With a few stools, or chairs and lots of imagination, the teacher and students can create any action at any place and time.

Costuming

As noted earlier, the readers in Readers Theatre are expected to use their voices, facial expressions and gestures to project and suggest the mental illusions of the characters being orally interpreted. The readers in general do not need to act like or look like a character being portrayed. Simple suggestions of costuming, however, can and do help establish characterization such as a hat, an apron, some feathers, or branches as some examples. Paper bag masks may be used, especially if the students are impersonating animals and the bags do not impair vision and voices. Appendages such as tails may also be made of paper or some other suitable material. Native costumes could add authenticity to programs centered around personages from other lands and cultures. A simple way of identifying characters is to have each one's name on a tag. Make-up can also add or suggest a touch of realism if desired.

Settings

Children's Readers Theatre can be enhanced through the use of

simple props but again these are optional. Drawings on the blackboard, or wrapping paper may help set the scene. Cardboard boxes may be used to construct parts of the scene. Printed signs could be used to label various parts of the room or stage to indicate the different locales of work. Real furniture and properties can be used. One property for each character is enough to suggest or establish identity such as a flute, a crown, or a pipe.

The purpose of simple and staged Readers Theatre is to suggest illusions to the audience rather than to present an elaborate and visual spectacle. (20, 71). As noted earlier, staging relies on the imaginative use of voice, movement, and a few simple props rather than elaborate costumes or scenery. A group of chairs placed in a straight line can suggest a bus, a subway car, or a classroom. A single chair can become a table, a platform, a mountain, a tall building, the branch of a tree or an airplane cockpit. The audience will believe it to be whatever the actors believe it to be.

Lighting

General classroom lighting is adequate for simple and staged Readers Theatre. (9, 7). Blackouts can be an effective way to signal the end of a scene and or may become the means for readers to get into and out of a scene. Some Readers Theatre spotlights readers who are in a scene through the use of a zoom lens or slide projector. The background or setting for a scene can also be effectively established through the use of a slide projector. The prime aim, however, should always be to allow the students to read satisfactorily without squinting or guessing.

Audience and Rehearsals

Working toward some kind of public performance is an excellent way to motivate interest and true involvement for elementary-school students. The audience can be other members in the same class, another class, the kindergarten, the principal, the PTA, or other parents' groups. There are many possibilities.

The first rehearsals are called "blocking rehearsals". (20, 72) In these sessions, students learn the basic movements of the show: who goes where and when. Work on the blocking continues until the last rehearsal and usually improves and becomes more detailed as everyone becomes more familiar with the characters, the major format, and the general flow of the production. This is also a good time to use the warm-up exercises mentioned earlier.

During the next few rehearsals, each student will try to understand his or her character's thoughts and motivations. This will help the child perform lines as well as develop greater sensitivity to what the other characters are saying and doing. During the final two or three rehearsals, or polishing sessions, fine points are worked out and everything is readied for performance. (20, 72)

Performance Time and Scripts

It is suggested that between ten and thirty minutes of playing time is most effective. (20, 71). The type of audience is an important factor to keep in consideration when planning length. Generally, a double-spaced script on standard 8½ X 11" paper is approximately two and one-half minutes of performance time per printed page.

Scripts put in the same color folders with a three-ring binder allow

them to be uniform and to open flat. The holes can be reinforced to keep the pages from ripping. Paper fasteners can also be used. The use of a highlighter or underlining one's part is helpful to the reader's keeping his/her place, especially if there are many stage directions included with the dialogue.

...And, it is highly suggested to have a spare script or two for misplaced or damaged ones! (9, 8)

EVALUATION PROCEDURES, RATING SCALES AND CHECKLISTS

The following rating scales and checklists are suggested as procedures to use in teacher evaluation and assessment of student experience in Readers Theatre. The scales and lists which evaluate student behavior, response, and performance can be used as reporting and evaluation procedures to be sent home to parents, if desired. It is also suggested that the more appropriate guidelines such as those evaluating the Readers Theatre script, staging, and performance be used by students to follow and keep in mind when adapting, creating, and presenting their own scripts.

The first scale records general impressions regarding changes in pupil attitudes, motivations, and skills as a result of the project. The second, to be filled out for each child, asks more specific questions about pupil response and progress made in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. And finally, the third set of checklists is suggested for those who are interested in judging the quality of the Readers Theatre script, staging, and performance. (30, 63)

Additional checklists, "B" and "C" have been added under the "scripts" category for further ideas of evaluation, while the "staging" and "performance" categories contain an additional "B" checklist. It is possible to combine many of the questions from each letter category of lists since many of the questions are similar or redundant. One can also devise his/her own checklist from the bank of questions listed in order to make a more appropriate and individualized evaluation.

(1.) Rating Scale of Changes
Resulting from the Readers Theatre Project (30, 63-64)

Directions: Place an "X" in the appropriate space below each question. In the space for comments, include anything that helps to clarify your rating.

1. Did those children who usually react negatively to a learning situation respond more readily to Readers Theatre activity?

no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

Comment:

2. Were shy and withdrawn children more willing to participate in the Readers Theatre experience than in other performance-oriented activities?

no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

Comment:

3. Were children noticeably more motivated to read material connected with Readers Theatre activity than with other available reading?

no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

Comment:

4. Were children more willing to write script materials than other writing assignments?

no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

Comment:

5. Were children more willing to engage in oral reading exercises relating to the performance of Readers Theatre than in the usual drills?

no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

Comment:

6. Were the children more respectful of each other's opinions in the decision-making process connected with the Readers Theatre performance than at other times?

no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

Comment:

7. Were children more motivated to produce creative ideas for the Readers Theatre project than on other occasions?

no change_____ some change_____ substantial change_____

Comment:

8. Did the children show greater comprehension and appreciation for the literature selected for the Readers Theatre project than in other reading situations?

no change_____ some change_____ substantial change_____

Comment:

9. Did the children enjoy working on the Readers Theatre project more than other projects in the language arts curriculum?

no change_____ some change_____ substantial change_____

Comment:

10. Did the children show greater interest in doing another Readers Theatre production than they usually exhibit for other projects?

no change_____ some change_____ substantial change_____

Comment:

(2.) Rating Scale of Pupil Response
to the Readers Theatre Project (30, 65)

Directions: Rate each item on the basis of 4 points for outstanding quality or performance, 3 points for better than average, 2 points for average, 1 point for inferior, and 0 for unsatisfactory. Encircle the appropriate number to indicate your rating, and enter the total of these numbers at the bottom of the sheet.

1. How would you rate this pupil's enthusiasm for the project? 0 1 2 3 4
2. To what extent did this pupil seem eager to seek out and read material for possible use in the project? 0 1 2 3 4
3. To what extent did this pupil seem eager to read a part in the group script? 0 1 2 3 4
4. To what extent did this pupil contribute ideas for the creation and staging of the script? 0 1 2 3 4
5. How would you rate this pupil's receptiveness to ideas generated by his or her classmates? 0 1 2 3 4
6. How would you judge this pupil's interest in listening to the readings delivered by his or her fellow classmates? 0 1 2 3 4
7. How would you evaluate this pupil's comprehension of the literature used in the project? 0 1 2 3 4
8. To what extent did this pupil appreciate the literature used in the project? 0 1 2 3 4
9. To what extent did this pupil respond to the voice, diction, and interpretive reading exercises? 0 1 2 3 4
10. To what extent did this pupil exhibit improvement in his or her oral reading skills? 0 1 2 3 4

(3.) Checklist for Evaluating the Readers Theatre

Script, Staging, and Performance

(30, 66) (7, 76-77)

SCRIPT

Script A

1. Does the material meet the criteria set down for a good Readers Theatre script?
2. Are the transitions prepared so the program flows intelligibly? Does the program have a beginning, middle, and end, giving it the unity of a complete and finished production?
3. Are the lines divided up meaningfully? Is there an understanding of who is saying what and why?

Script B

1. Does the material evoke a definite response from the audience? Is it likely to give the audience a "memorable experience"?
2. Does it have "wholeness"? Does it leave the audience with a sense of having participated in a complete experience?
3. Are the story line and characters clear?
4. Is the division of lines logical? Do the characters have lines that would have been more effective if given by the narrator? If a character speaks narration or description, is the material clearly from his point of view? Does the narrator have lines that would have been more effective if given by characters?

Script C (Evaluation of Script in Performance)

1. How would you rate the script? Very interesting____
Interesting____ Moderately interesting____ Dull____
Very dull____
2. What degree of response did it evoke from you? Very
strong____ Strong____ Medium strong____ Weak____
None____

STAGING

Staging A

1. Are the readers arranged to create an interesting stage picture?
2. Do pupils know how to enter and exit? Are these entrances and exits clear to the audience?
3. If stools, ladder, etc. are used, can they be moved on and off with dispatch?
4. Do pupils focus so that the audience understands where the described action is supposed to take place?
5. Are movements clear? Do they illuminate the text?
6. If sound effects are used, do they serve the purpose intended? Can they be performed and heard clearly?
7. Are all hats that are used easy to put on and take off? Do they stay on and in place throughout the performance?
8. Are the scripts in good shape? Are pages fastened in securely?

Staging B

1. Are the readers arranged so that all faces can be seen clearly?
2. Is the arrangement of the readers effective?
3. If music or other sounds are used, do they add to the total impact of the performance? Does the music interfere with audience-comprehension of the words?
4. Does the clothing of the readers help in unifying the production? Does it help in suggesting who the characters are?

PERFORMANCE

Performance A

1. Is the script smoothly performed without breakdowns and interruptions?
2. Is speech clear and distinct?
3. Do pupils show an understanding of what they are reading? Do they avoid word-by-word delivery?
4. Are interpretive skills employed to their fullest? Do readers create believable characters and good mental images?
5. Do the readers listen to each other and react meaningfully?
6. Do readers handle scripts unobtrusively and efficiently?
7. Does the performance come to a definite ending? Do all participants know how to bow and where to go at the close of the production?

Performance B

1. Does the performance have an overall unity?
2. Is the meaning of the script projected?
3. Does the performance have flow and effective pacing? Does it move from segment to segment with a sense of progression? Does it build to a high peak of interest?
4. Does the narrator use a storytelling manner, relating directly to the audience? Does the narrator seem to visualize the imaginary scene when he is not speaking?
5. Do the readers project distinct and believable characters?
6. Are the readers "thinking with the senses" and creating mental images as they speak the words?
7. Do the readers listen when they are in the scene? Do they react through facial expression and muscle tone?
8. Is it clear at all times which readers are in the scene?
9. Is there consistency in the focus of the readers? Do all the readers locate a given scene in the same area?

LIMITATIONS

This project proposes that the technique of Readers Theatre in the classroom can be developed as an integral part of an overall curriculum approach to the elementary language arts program.

While Readers Theatre experience can and does contribute to a well-rounded elementary reading program, it cannot be used solely or take the place of a total reading program. Readers Theatre is meant to enrich and enhance the existing reading program.

Readers Theatre in the classroom initially requires much teacher-preparation, pre-organization, time, and fore-thought. A great deal of time in class is also required especially with the initial class introduction, organization, blocking, and rehearsal requirements. Additionally, it may be difficult for a teacher to arrange groups of children working independently and successfully as well as smoothly at the same time.

Readers Theatre scripts and parts cannot accommodate all children who wish to participate at the same time. Some children may be disappointed or feel left out. Alternate strategies should be available by the teacher.

SCRIPTS

Contents:

Animated Cowboy Story (group activity)
(source unknown)

Scripted stories from the 1983 Scott, Foresman Reading Series

Purpose:

The writer of this project had adapted these stories for Simple Readers Theatre to be performed in class and for other classes as an enrichment to the existing reading program. They have been arranged in order by grade level beginning with the primer through the sixth grade.

It is hopeful that these adapted stories taken right from the basal texts will help stimulate students at the appropriated grade levels to follow along in their own books when possible. At the intermediate grades of 4th, 5th, and 6th, the scripts are especially long, but can be further "shortened" or "adapted" for out-of-class performance, and/or upon teacher discretion. More narrators can also be added accommodating more parts.

The enjoyment and learning associated with Readers Theatre can happen to both reader and listener alike.

ANIMATED COWBOY STORY

Sound Effects:

SHY LADIES	Oh, my!
COWBOYS	Hi, Partner
GUNS	Bang! Bang!
OUTLAWS	Stick'em up
HORSES	Clippity clop (on lap)
CATTLE	Moooooooooooooooooooo
TEXAS	"Deep in the Heart of Texas"
INDIANS	Woooooooooooooooooooo

Once upon a time there was a peaceful little city in TEXAS! In it lived many COWBOYS and SHY LADIES who had a great number of HORSES and large herds of CATTLE. Not far from the little city in TEXAS lived an INDIAN tribe. They had been very friendly to the COWBOYS and SHY LADIES, and had not once bothered them or their HORSES and CATTLE.

One day, the big chief of the tribe came to see the COWBOYS. He told them he had heard that there were OUTLAWS on the way to try to rustle all of their CATTLE and HORSES. They were very brave about the whole thing, but the SHY LADIES became afraid and the COWBOYS had to console them by telling them that they would see to it that the OUTLAWS would not harm them.

Meanwhile, the OUTLAWS had been planning to sneak up to the city and steal the CATTLE late at night. The little city in TEXAS looked as if it were asleep that night, but in reality the COWBOYS and SHY LADIES were wide awake, and waiting for the OUTLAWS to come. The INDIANS were waiting on the outskirts of the city. The OUTLAWS were now in the city, not knowing that they were expected. They quietly walked into the barn, where many of the HORSES and CATTLE were kept, and started to lead the animals out. The COWBOYS surprised the OUTLAWS, pointed their GUNS at them and told them, unless they stopped rustling people's HORSES and CATTLE, they would kill them. Of course the OUTLAWS didn't want to be killed, so they promised that they would never steal any CATTLE or HORSES again. They got on their HORSES and rode away. The COWBOYS put their GUNS away, and went back into their barn to quiet the HORSES and CATTLE, with the SHY LADIES, while the INDIANS mounted their HORSES and rode away.

THE THREE WISHES

A Spanish tale adapted by Megan Adams

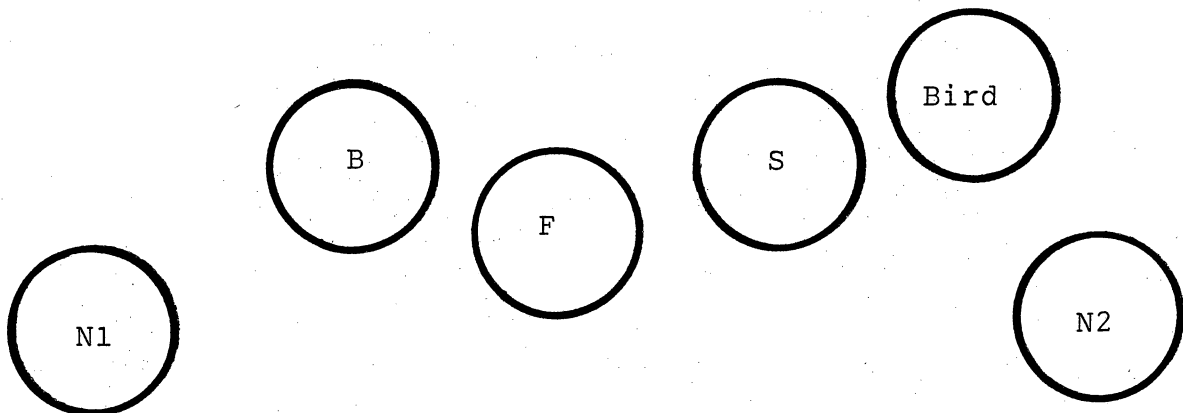
(from Scott, Foresman "Hang On To Your Hats") Primer

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>BILL:</u>	B
<u>SUE:</u>	S
<u>FATHER:</u>	F
<u>BIRD:</u>	Bird

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Three Wishes", a Spanish tale adapted by Megan Adams

BILL: I wish I had a big dog.

SUE: I wish I had a big boat.

FATHER: I wish we had a big house.

BILL: There are people who wish for something and they get it.

NARRATOR 2: Then a bird came. (Bird faces audience)
It had on a little blue coat. It had on a little yellow hat. The bird said:

BIRD: You can have three wishes.

BILL: Who said That?

BIRD: I did.

NARRATOR: Said the bird.

BIRD: All you have to do is wish for something. Then you can have it. You have three wishes.

NARRATOR 2: And the little Bird left. (BTA)

NARRATOR 1: They did not know what to wish for first.

BILL: How about wishing for a dog first?

FATHER: No, a big dog would jump all over the new house.

SUE: What new house?

FATHER: The new house we are going to wish for first.

SUE: But I want to wish for a big boat.

BILL: A big dog is a better wish.

SUE: A boat!

BILL: A dog!

SUE: Oh,

NARRATOR 1: Sue said to Bill.

SUE: I wish you would fly away!

NARRATOR 2: And Bill did! Bill was flying. Bill was flying away.

BILL: Help!

FATHER: Oh no! Bill, come down!

SUE: Oh no! Look what I did. I wish Bill would come down.

NARRATOR 2: And Bill did.

BILL: That was not a good thing to wish for.

SUE: I know. That is the last wish I will make.

NARRATOR 2: And then the bird came. (Bird faces audience)

BIRD: What do you want for your last wish?

FATHER: Not a thing. We have all we want.

SUE: And we like what we have!

BILL: Now we have one more wish to make. And we all have the same wish.

ALL: Go away!

NARRATOR 1: And the little bird did. (Bird BTA)

(HEADS DOWN)

THE THREE GOATS

A Scandinavian tale adapted by Regina Newman

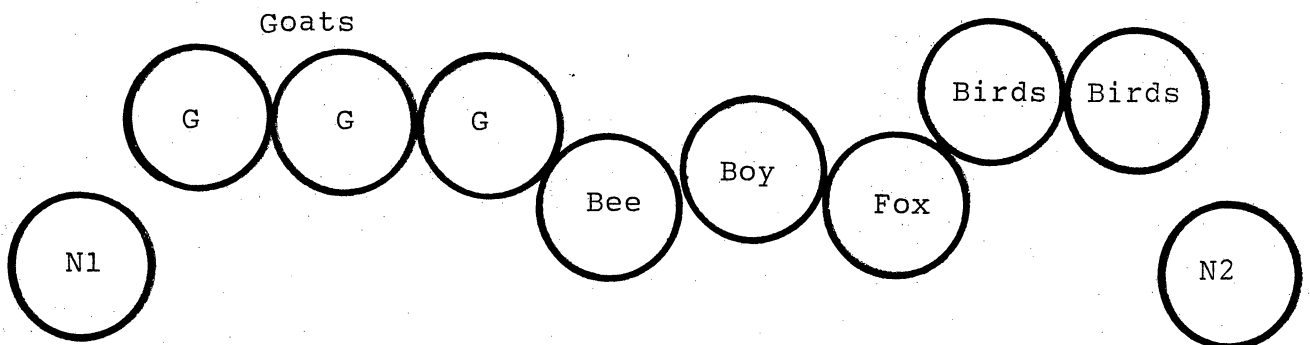
(from Scott, Foresman "Hang On To Your Hats") Primer

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
(two) <u>BIRDS:</u>	B
<u>BOY:</u>	Boy
<u>FOX:</u>	F
<u>BEE:</u>	Bee
(three) <u>GOATS:</u>	G

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Three Goats", a Scandinavian tale adapted by Regina Neuman

NARRATOR 2: In a place far away from here, there was a boy who had three goats. Day after day the boy would take his goats to a hill.

NARRATOR 1: At the end of the day, the boy would call out, and the goats would come down from the hill. Then the boy would take the goats home.

NARRATOR 2: One day the boy called to the goats. But the goats would not come. The boy began to cry.

NARRATOR 1: Soon two big birds came flying by.

BIRDS: What are you crying about?

BOY: I am crying because the goats will not come away from those flowers.

BIRDS: We will help you.

NARRATOR 1: And the two big birds did all they could to help the boy.

NARRATOR 2: But the goats would not come away from the flowers. So the birds began to cry too.

NARRATOR 1: Next a fox came by.

FOX: What are you crying about?

NARRATOR 2: Asked the fox.

BIRDS: We are crying because the goats will not come away from the flowers.

FOX: I'll get the goats to come away.

NARRATOR 1: Said the fox, and the fox did all it could to help the boy. But the goats would not come away from the flowers. So the fox began to cry too.

NARRATOR 2: Last of all a small bee came by.

BEE: What are you crying about?

NARRATOR 1: Asked the bee.

NARRATOR 2: The fox said,

FOX: I am crying because the birds are crying.
The birds are crying because the boy is crying.
And the boy is crying because the goats will
not come away from those flowers.

BEE: I will get those goats to come away.

NARRATOR 1: Said the bee.

BIRDS AND FOX: If we could not do it, a little bee like you
can't do it.

BEE: Look and see.

NARRATOR 1: Then the bee went flying over to the goats.

GOATS: Look out! Look out for the bee!

NARRATOR 1: The goats said.

NARRATOR 2: Soon after that the bee was on its way home.

NARRATORS 1&2: And so were the goats.

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

THE ELVES AND THE SHOES

by the Brothers Grimm

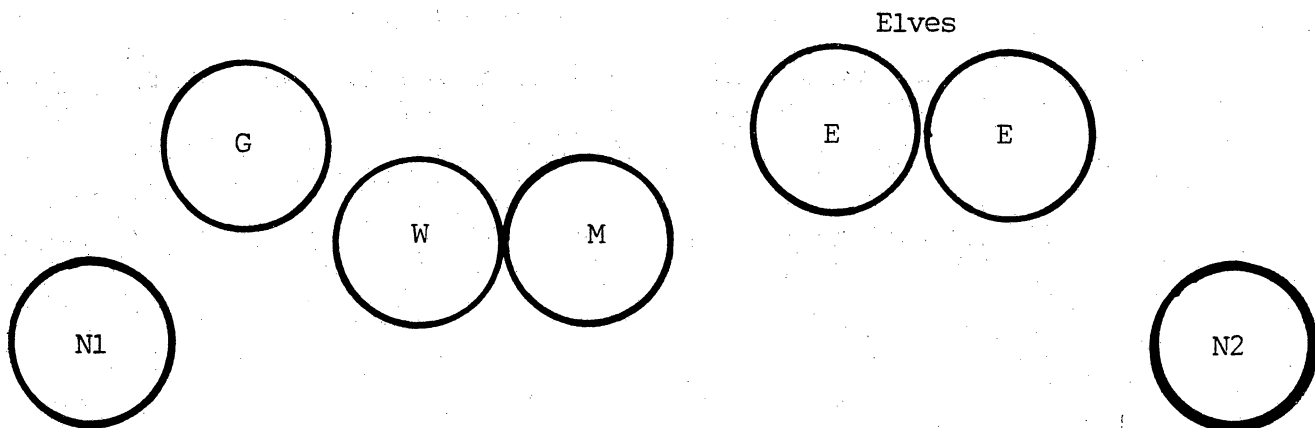
(from Scott, Foresman "Kick Up Your Heels") Grade 1

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>Narrator 1:</u>	N1
<u>Narrator 2:</u>	N2
<u>Woman:</u>	W
<u>Man:</u>	M
<u>Elves:</u>	E
<u>Girl:</u>	G

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Elves and the Shoes", by the Brothers Grimm.

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time a man and a woman lived in a little old house. They worked and worked all day. The man would stand at his table and make shoes.

NARRATOR 1: First he made lines on the leather. Next, he cut out the shapes and made new shoes.

NARRATOR 2: The woman would show the shoes to people. But not many people came in to buy. One day the woman said,

WOMAN: We work and work. But we don't even have things to eat. We are cold. But we don't have sweaters to put on.

NARRATOR 1: The man put his hands over his eyes.

MAN: I know. We need so many things. But more people must buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night they worked very late. There was not much light in the room.

WOMAN: It is already time to go to sleep.

NARRATOR 1: The man looked at his table. There was very little on it. There was just some leather for two more shoes.

MAN: First I want to cut out these last two shapes.

NARRATOR 1: The man worked as fast as he could. He picked up the shapes and said,

MAN: After I make these into shoes, I will have no more leather. What will I do?

NARRATOR 2: He put the shapes down and walked out of the room. There was not a sound in the house. But that night there would be magic at his work table.

NARRATOR 1: Two elves came into the room. They were very small and funny. Up they jumped on the table. They picked up the leather shapes. Their little hands began to work. Soon they looked down and laughed. There were two new shoes.

ELVES: We come and we go.

NARRATOR 2: They called. And they were off.

NARRATOR 1: The next day the man saw the shoes.

MAN: Look here! I could never find better shoes. Who could have made these for us?

NARRATOR 2: Just then a girl came in.

GIRL: (Head up) How Pretty! I would like to buy these shoes.

NARRATOR 1: So the girl took the shoes. (BTA)

WOMAN: Now we can buy more leather.

NARRATOR 2: Said the woman and she went to buy leather for four shoes.

NARRATOR 1: It was already very late that night, but the Man made lines on the leather. Next he cut out four shapes. He went to sleep.

NARRATOR 2: Again the elves came into the room. Again their little hands began to work. There were four new shoes! The elves laughed together. They called,

ELVES: We come and we go.

NARRATOR 1: And they were off.

NARRATOR 2: The next day a number of people came in. They wanted to buy the new shoes. The man and the woman were happy because now they could buy leather for eight shoes.

Narrator 1: Things began to get even better. More and more people wanted shoes. The man made more and more shapes. The elves came night after night. They always made the shapes into shoes.

NARRATOR 2: One night the woman and the man wanted to see what went on. It was very late. They made no sound at all. They looked into the workroom. There they saw the elves on the table.

MAN: They are so good to us.

NARRATOR 1: Thought the man and the woman.

MAN AND WOMAN: We should make something for these two elves.

NARRATOR 1: So they made two pretty little sweaters.

NARRATOR 2: The next night they put out the sweaters.
Soon the elves came. The elves put on the sweaters.

ELVES: Thank you!

NARRATOR 1: They called into the air. They laughed and ran away. They never came again.
(elves BTA)

NARRATOR 2: The two people began to laugh also.

MAN AND WOMAN: You helped us get the things we needed.
So we thank you too!

(All heads down)

THE GARDEN

by Arnold Lobel

(from Scott, Foresman "Rainbow Shower") 2/1

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

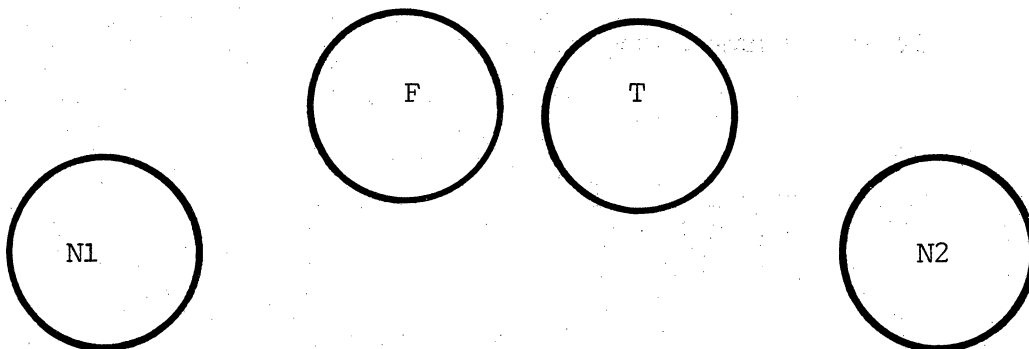
NARRATOR 1: N1

NARRATOR 2: N2

FROG: F

TOAD: T

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Garden", by Arnold Lobel

NARRATOR 2: Frog was in his garden. Toad came walking by. (Toad faces audience)

TOAD: What a fine garden you have, frog.

FROG: Yes, it is very nice, but it's hard work

TOAD: I wish I had a garden.

FROG: Here are some flower seeds. Plant them in the ground and soon you will have a garden.

TOAD: How soon?

FROG: Very soon.

NARRATOR 1: Toad ran home. He planted the flower seeds.

TOAD: Now seeds, start growing.

NARRATOR 2: Toad walked up and down a few times. The seeds did not start to grow. Toad put his head close to the ground and cried:

TOAD: Now seeds, start growing!

NARRATOR 1: The seeds did not start to grow. Toad put his head very close to the ground and shouted:

TOAD: NOW SEEDS, START GROWING!

NARRATOR 2: Frog ran up the path.

FROG: What is going on?

TOAD: My seeds will not grow.

FROG: You are shouting too much. These poor seeds are afraid to grow.

TOAD: My seeds are afraid to grow?

FROG: Yes. Leave them alone for a few days. Let the sun shine on them. Let the rain fall on them. Soon your seeds will start to grow.

NARRATOR 1: That night Toad looked out his window.

TOAD: Oh no! My seeds have not started to grow. They must be afraid of the dark.

NARRATOR 2: Toad went out to his garden.

TOAD: I will read the seeds a story.

NARRATOR 1: Toad read a long story to his seeds.

NARRATOR 2: All the next day Toad sang songs to his seeds.

NARRATOR 1: And all the next day Toad read poems to his seeds.

NARRATOR 2: And all the next day Toad played music for his seeds.

NARRATOR 1: Toad looked at the ground. The seeds still did not start to grow.

TOAD: What shall I do? These seeds must be very frightened.

NARRATOR 1: Then Toad became very tired, and he fell asleep. (puts head down)

FROG: Toad, Toad wake up! (Toad raises head)

NARRATOR 2: Toad looked at his garden. Little green plants were growing up out of the garden.

TOAD: At last, my seeds have stopped being afraid to grow!

FROG: And now you will have a nice garden too.

TOAD: Yes, but you were right, Frog. It was very hard work!

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

MILLICENT MAYBE

by Ellen Weiss

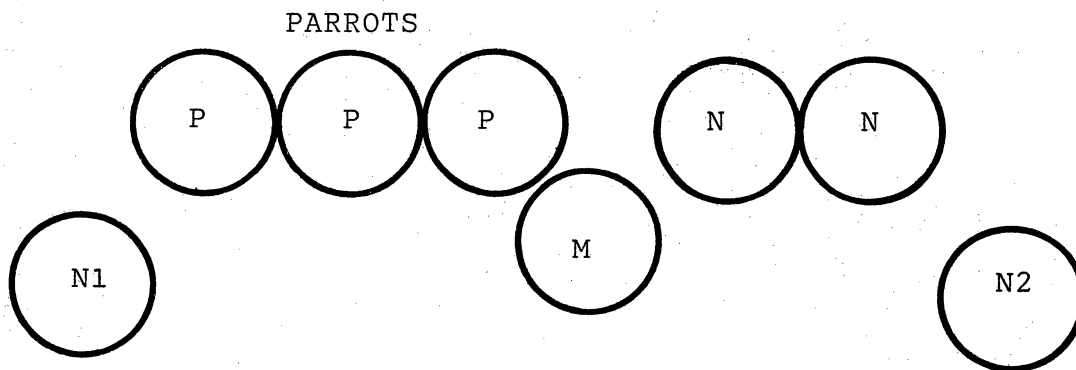
(from Scott, Foresman "Rainbow Shower") 2/1

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>MILLICENT:</u>	M
(three) <u>PARROTS:</u>	P
(optional) <u>NEIGHBORS:</u>	N

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "Millicent Maybe", by Ellen Weiss

NARRATOR 2: Millicent Maybe lived all alone. She could cook what she pleased, and buy what she pleased, and go where she pleased.

NARRATOR 1: But, she could never make up her mind.

MILLICENT: I wonder what I should eat.

NARRATOR 1: Said Millicent each morning.

MILLICENT: Maybe an orange,
Or maybe pancakes,
Or maybe some toast.

NARRATOR 2: Millicent could not decide.

NARRATOR 1: So, she ate a little of this and a little of that.

MILLICENT: I wonder what I should wear today?
Maybe it will rain.
Or, maybe the sun will shine.
Maybe it will be cold.
Or maybe it will be hot.

NARRATOR 2: Millicent could not decide.

NARRATOR 1: So she wore a little of this and a little of that.

NARRATOR 2: It was maybe this and maybe that at the bookstore. It was maybe this and maybe that at the shoe store. It was maybe this and maybe that at the food store.

NARRATOR 1: Soon Millicent had eaten too much of this and too much of that. She could not fit into anything.

NARRATOR 2: She had bought too much of this and too much of that. There was hardly enough room left for Millicent.

MILLICENT: If only I had somebody to tell me what to do!

NARRATOR 1: Just then she saw an ad in the morning newspaper. It read:
"ALL ALONE? NEED SOMEBODY TO TALK
TO YOU? BUY A PARROT!
PETE'S PET SHOP"

MILLICENT: That's it!

NARRATOR 2: Shouted Millicent as she put down the newspaper.

MILLICENT: That's just what I need!

NARRATOR 1: And she ran to the pet shop.

MILLICENT: I wonder what I should do.

NARRATOR 2: There were so many parrots, Millicent could not decide which one to buy. So she took them all.

MILLICENT: I'll never have to make up my mind again. Now I'll have somebody to talk to. These parrots will tell me what to do.

NARRATOR 1: And they did. As soon as she got home the yellow parrot flew to Millicent and began to cry: (Yellow parrot faces audience)

YELLOW PARROT: Take a bath! Take a bath!

MILLICENT: Whatever you say!

NARRATOR 2: Said Millicent, and she ran upstairs to take a bath.

NARRATOR 1: Then the green parrot flew over and shouted: (Green parrot faces audience)

GREEN PARROT: Make some popcorn! Popcorn! Popcorn!

MILLICENT: Whatever you say!

NARRATOR 2: And she ran back down to make some popcorn. (Blue parrot faces audience)

BLUE PARROT: Stand on your head!

NARRATOR 1: Said the blue parrot.

MILLICENT: Whatever you say!

NARRATOR 2: And she turned upside down.

NARRATOR 1: And then she heard it! Splash! Splash! Splash!

NARRATOR 2: Pop! Pop! Pop!

MILLICENT: Oh no! My bath! My popcorn! Help! What should I do?

YELLOW
PARROT:

Go to sleep!

GREEN
PARROT:

Chirp like a bird!

BLUE
PARROT:

Cook pancakes!

MILLICENT:

Stop it! I can't stand it anymore!

NARRATOR 1:

Then, for the very first time, Millicent made up her mind. She opened the window. The parrots flew out, and Millicent said: (Parrots BTA)

MILLICENT:

Good-bye parrots! I can think for myself!

NARRATOR 2:

She opened the front door. All the tables and chairs floated out of the house. And all the popcorn and other food floated after them.

NARRATOR 1:

Then Millicent floated out too. Her neighbors ran to help.

NEIGHBORS:

(The narrators could say this.)
Shall we carry it all back inside?

MILLICENT:

No thank you. I don't need a little of this and a little of that. I'll decide what I like best.

NARRATOR 2:

Millicent decided what to keep and what to give away.

NARRATOR 1:

Then Millicent went indoors and sat down in her best chair.

NARRATOR 2:

She wore her very best dress and her very best hat.

NARRATOR 1:

She thought of all the things she used to have.

NARRATORS 1&2:

And she did not miss them at all!

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

MR. EGBERT NOSH

by Paul Groves

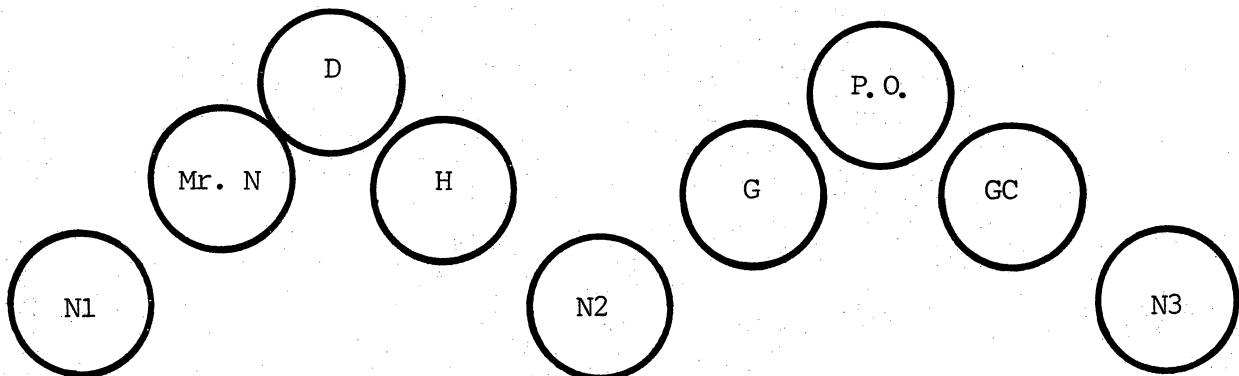
(from Scott, Foresman "Crystal Kingdom") 2/2

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>NARRATOR 3:</u>	N3
<u>MR. EGBERT NOSH:</u>	Mr. N
<u>HOUSE:</u>	H
<u>DRIVER:</u>	D
<u>POLICE OFFICER:</u>	P.O.
<u>GARAGE:</u>	G
<u>GARBAGE CAN:</u>	GC

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "Mr. Egbert Nosh", by Paul Groves.

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time, there was a man called Egbert Nosh. Mr. Egbert Nosh! Mr. Egbert Nosh lived in a house. His house was on a pretty street. It looked just like other houses. But Egbert liked his house best.

NARRATOR 3: It was strong and it had a beautiful blue door. All around it were green bushes. Egbert loved coming home to his own house. That is, until one day when Egbert Nosh went out for a walk.

NARRATOR 1: Suddenly, he heard footsteps behind him. VERY HEAVY FOOTSTEPS. Egbert looked back to see who was following him. What do you think he saw?

NARRATORS 1, 2, & 3: His house was walking down the sidewalk!

EGBERT: Stop!

NARRATOR 1: Egbert shouted.

EGBERT: This is silly.

HOUSE: Why?

NARRATOR 2: Asked the House.

EGBERT: Houses can't walk.

HOUSE: I can.

NARRATOR 3: Explained the House, moving right beside him.

HOUSE: I want to come with you. I am lonely.

EGBERT: You can't come with me. You're a house. You're not a dog. Go home, house.

HOUSE: No. Not until you do.

EGBERT: I'm not going back!

HOUSE: Then I'm not either.

EGBERT: This is silly!

NARRATOR 2: Egbert felt silly standing in the middle of the sidewalk talking to a house. What would he do if somebody saw him? So he went back home. The House followed.

NARRATOR 3: When they got home, the House dusted off its shoes and sat down. Egbert opened the front door and went inside. He was very, very angry. But what could he do?

NARRATOR 1: Suddenly, he had a great idea. Quietly, he opened the front door. Even more quietly, he shut it. Then he ran down the street as fast as he could.

NARRATOR 2: Just around the corner was a bus stop. If he could get on a bus, he would be okay. But what do you think he found when he got to the bus stop? Yes...his House.

EGBERT: What are you doing here?

HOUSE: Waiting for a bus.

EGBERT: Houses don't go on buses.

HOUSE: I do.

NARRATOR 1: Just then a bus stopped. (Driver faces audience)

DRIVER: Is this your house, sir?

EGBERT: Yes, but it's not with me.

DRIVER: Well, I'm afraid it's much too big. It can't get on the bus.

NARRATOR 2: Before Egbert could say another thing, a police officer walked up to him.
(driver BTA, police officer faces audience)

POLICE OFFICER: Is the house standing beside you yours?

EGBERT: I'm afraid it is, officer.

POLICE OFFICER: Well sir, you can't park houses here. Take it away at once, please.
(police officer BTA)

NARRATOR 3: Egbert opened the front door and went inside. The House turned around and walked home.

NARRATOR 1: Egbert was very, very angry. How could he make his House stay home? What could he do? He had to go out sometime. He had to visit friends.

NARRATOR 2: Suddenly, he had an idea. He put on an old coat and a funny hat. Then he added dark sunglasses. He found a beard he had once worn in a play. He put that on too.

NARRATOR 3: Egbert was very pleased with himself. The House would never know him now. He pulled his hat down. He made sure his beard was on right. Then he ran outside.

NARRATOR 1: Egbert had reached the corner when a voice said:

HOUSE: It must be fun dressing up.

NARRATOR 1: Yes, it was the House.

NARRATOR 2: Egbert was VERY, VERY, VERY angry. He stormed back home. The House followed close behind.

NARRATOR 3: Egbert walked into the House and pulled the door shut. He decided to go to bed. He lay down on his back. He tossed and turned and turned and tossed. But no matter how he turned and tossed he could not fall asleep.

NARRATOR 1: Then suddenly, he had another great idea. If he went out now it would be dark. The House would never be able to see him in the dark.

NARRATOR 2: Quietly, Egbert opened the front door. Quietly, he shut it. On his hands and knees, he crawled around some bushes. Then he stopped and listened. Not a sound.

NARRATOR 3: He crawled some more. Then all of a sudden he heard a noise. It sounded like footsteps. He looked back through the bushes. In the dark, he could just make out his House!

EGBERT: This is silly!

HOUSE: Shhhhh! It's late. Don't shout. You'll wake up everybody on the street.

NARRATOR 1: Just then there was another noise.

EGBERT: Who's there? There's somebody with you.
(Garage faces audience)

GARAGE: It's me.

NARRATOR 2: Said the Garage.

GARAGE: I got lonely.

EGBERT: Oh no!

NARRATOR 3: Then there was another noise. A kind of clattering noise.

EGBERT: There's somebody else there. (Garbage Can faces audience)

GARBAGE CAN: It's me.

NARRATOR 1: Said the Garbage Can.

GARBAGE CAN: I got lonely too.

NARRATOR 1: The House, the Garage, and the Garbage Can stood on the sidewalk.

NARRATOR 2: The House sat down. Egbert opened the front door.

NARRATOR 3: He went inside. He had no more ideas.

EGBERT: House,

NARRATOR 1: Egbert finally said.

EGBERT: We must come to an agreement.

HOUSE: I thought you would see it my way.

EGBERT: If I take you out on Sundays, will you stop following me for the rest of the week?

HOUSE: May we go to the park on Sundays? And may we take the Garage and the Garbage Can?

EGBERT: If we must.

HOUSE: Great! It's a deal!

NARRATOR 1: So, if you ever go to call on Egbert Nosh, don't go on a Sunday. He won't be there.

NARRATOR 2: His House won't be there.

NARRATOR 3: Nor will his Garage.

NARRATOR 1: Nor will his Garbage Can.

NARRATORS 1, 2, & 3: But you'll know where they are, won't you?

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

author unknown

(from Scott, Foresman "Hidden Wonders") 3/1

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

NARRATOR 1: N1

NARRATOR 2: N2

JACK: J

MAN: M

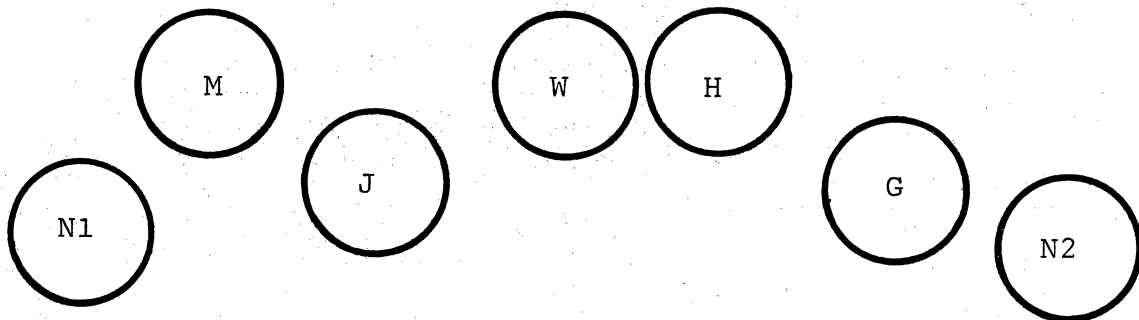
WOMAN: W

GIANT: G

HARP: H

*More Narrators may be added

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "Jack and the Beanstalk".
Once upon a time, there lived a woman who had a son named Jack. The woman and her son were very poor. All they had was a small house and a cow. Jack and his mother worked long hours in their garden to grow food. But they never had enough to eat.

NARRATOR 2: Jack's mother needed money to buy food and warm clothes. So one day she told Jack to take their cow to town and sell it. Jack went off to town with the cow. On the way Jack met a man. The man said:

MAN: Good morning. Where are you going this fine day?

JACK: I'm going to town to sell this cow.

MAN: I'll trade you some magic beans for your cow.

NARRATOR 2: The man held out his hand. He showed Jack some brightly colored beans. (Man mimes)

NARRATOR 1: The colors of the beans seemed to grow brighter as Jack looked at them. Jack really wanted the beans. So he gave away the cow and took the beans home. (Man BTA)

NARRATOR 2: When Jack's mother saw the beans she was very angry. She threw the beans out the window and sent Jack to bed without his supper.

NARRATOR 1: The next morning, Jack saw something growing outside his window. The magic beans had grown overnight into a huge beanstalk! It was so tall that Jack could not see the top of it.

NARRATOR 2: Jack went out and started to climb the beanstalk. He climbed and climbed until he got to the top. And there before him, Jack saw a strange new land. Jack started walking. Soon he came to a castle and knocked on the door. A woman opened the door. (Woman faces audience)

JACK: I'm hungry. May I have some bread?

WOMAN: Yes, but you must eat quickly. My husband is a mean giant. If he comes home and finds you, he'll eat you for dinner.

NARRATOR 1: While Jack was eating, he heard a loud noise. The giant was coming home! Jack ran and hid in a basket. And just in time, for the giant was at the door! (Giant faces audience)

NARRATOR 2: As the giant came in, he sniffed and roared:

GIANT: Fee, fi, fo, fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman!

WOMAN: That's just your dinner you smell. Sit down and eat.

NARRATOR 2: So the giant ate his dinner. Then he got out a bag of gold coins and began to count them. After a while the giant fell asleep. (Giant BTA)

NARRATOR 1: Jack had been watching the giant through a hole in the basket. Now Jack crawled out of the basket. He took the gold and quickly climbed down the beanstalk.

NARRATOR 2: Jack's mother was very happy when she saw the gold. Now they would have money for food and clothes. For the next week Jack helped his mother in the garden. Then he decided to climb the beanstalk again.

NARRATOR 1: As before, Jack asked the woman for food. And, as before, she gave him something to eat. Jack ate the food quickly and hid in the basket. Soon the giant came in and sniffed and roared: (Giant faces audience)

GIANT: Fee, fi, fo, fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman.

WOMAN: That's just your dinner you smell. Sit down and eat.

NARRATOR 2: After the giant ate his dinner, he brought out a hen. He put the hen on the table and it laid a golden egg. After a while, the giant fell asleep. (Giant BTA)
Jack crawled out of the basket, took the hen, and climbed down the beanstalk.

NARRATOR 1: Jack's mother was happy when she saw the hen lay golden eggs. Now they had enough gold for the rest of their lives.

NARRATOR 2: Once again Jack worked in the garden for a week. Then he decided to climb the beanstalk again. When he reached the top, the woman fed him again. Jack ate quickly and hid in the basket.

NARRATOR 1: As soon as Jack had hidden, the giant came in the door. (Giant faces audience)
The giant sniffed and roared:

GIANT: Fee, fi, fo, fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman!

WOMAN: That's just your dinner you smell. Sit down and eat.

NARRATOR 2: After the giant had eaten his dinner, he took out a beautiful harp. He put it on the table.

GIANT: Play.

NARRATOR 2: The magic harp played a beautiful song, and soon the giant fell asleep. (head down)

NARRATOR 1: Jack crawled out of the basket. He took the harp and started for the beanstalk. But suddenly the harp shouted:

HARP: Master! Master!

NARRATOR 1: The giant woke up and saw Jack. He ran after Jack. But just as he reached out to grab Jack, the giant tripped. Jack climbed down the beanstalk as fast as he could yelling:

JACK: Mother! Mother! Bring the ax!

NARRATOR 1: Jack could hear the giant coming down the beanstalk after him.

NARRATOR 2: When Jack reached the bottom, his mother gave him an ax. Quickly Jack chopped down the beanstalk. It crashed to the ground. And that was the end of the giant.

NARRATOR 1: Now Jack and his mother had everything they would ever need. They had their house and their garden. They had gold to buy food and clothes, a hen to lay golden eggs, and a harp to play songs for them.

NARRATORS 1&2: And so they lived happily ever after.

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

by Hans Christian Anderson

(from Scott, Foresman "Golden Secrets") 3/2

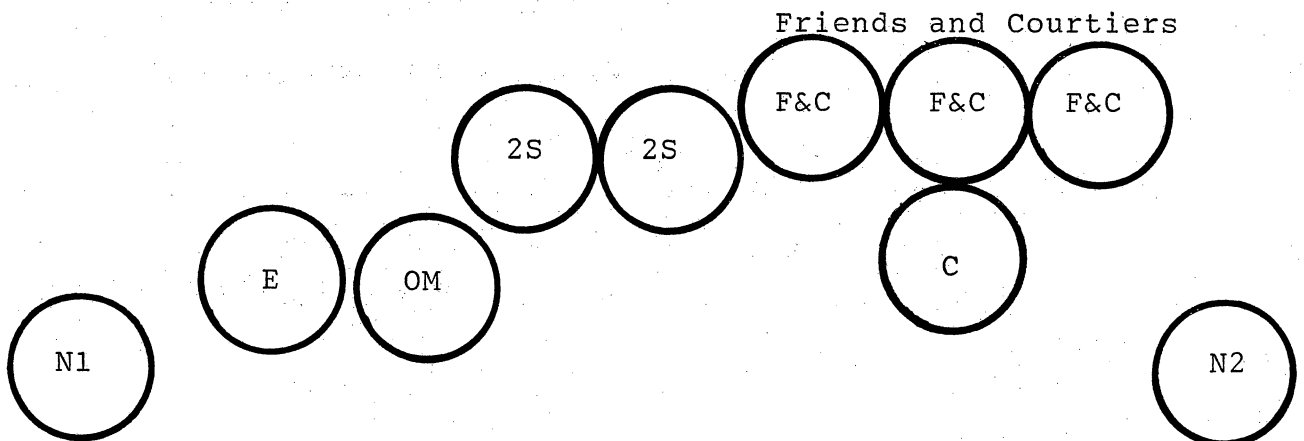
Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>EMPEROR:</u>	E
<u>OLD MINISTER:</u>	OM
<u>TWO SWINDLERS:</u>	2S
(3 or 4) <u>FRIENDS AND COURTIER:</u>	F & C
<u>CHILD:</u>	C

*More Narrators may be added

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Emperor's New Clothes", by Hans Christian Anderson.
Once upon a time there was an emperor who loved new clothes. He didn't care about his army. He didn't like to go to the theater, and he wouldn't even take a ride in the park unless he had a new costume to show off. He had a different suit for every hour of the day.

NARRATOR 2: The emperor lived in a big, busy city; many strangers passed through there. One day, two swindlers came to town who told everyone that they could weave the most beautiful cloth in the world. And what was more, they said that the cloth had a magical power. It was invisible to anyone who was stupid or unfit for office.

EMPEROR: That cloth would be very useful to me. If I had some of it, I could find out which of my people are clever and which are fools. I think I'll have those weavers make me some.

NARRATOR 1: The weavers set up their looms upon the emperor's command. They asked for the finest silk thread and the most expensive gold. They said they needed it to make the cloth. But really they hid it in their suitcases. Then they sat down at the empty looms and pretended to weave.

NARRATOR 2: After a while the emperor wondered how they were getting on.

EMPEROR: I'd like to know how much of the cloth is ready.

NARRATOR 2: The emperor also thought about the fact that a stupid or foolish person wouldn't be able to see the cloth. He was sure that he would be able to see it, but he didn't want to take any chances. So he asked himself:

EMPEROR: Who can I send to look at the cloth?

NARRATOR 2: The emperor had an idea.

EMPEROR: I know. I'll send my old chief minister. He's very clever and full of common sense. So he'll be able to tell me what the cloth is like.

NARRATOR 1: So the old minister went to see the cloth. He entered the workroom where the two weavers were pretending to work.

OLD MINISTER: Oh, my goodness!

NARRATOR 1: The minister thought when he saw the looms.

OLD MINISTER: I can't see a thing!

NARRATOR 1: When he peered harder through his spectacles, he still couldn't see anything, but of course he didn't say so.

TWO SWINDLERS: Come closer.

NARRATOR 1: The two swindlers said.

TWO SWINDLERS: Isn't this cloth beautiful?

NARRATOR 1: The old minister looked as hard as he could, but he still couldn't see anything, which was not surprising, because there was nothing to see.

OLD MINISTER: This is terrible. This must mean that I'm a fool! I'd better not let anybody know that I can't see the cloth.

NARRATOR 1: So the old minister nodded his head and said:

OLD MINISTER: It's beautiful. What a wonderful pattern and what marvelous colors! I shall be sure to tell this to the emperor.

NARRATOR 2: Soon everyone in town was talking about the wonderful cloth that the weavers were making. And the emperor decided that he wanted to go and see it for himself. So with a large group of friends and courtiers, he went to the workroom where the weavers sat at their empty looms.

EMPEROR: What's this? I can't see anything! How awful! Am I a fool, or am I not fit to be emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen to me!

NARRATOR 1: But aloud he said:

EMPEROR: Oh, it's marvelous, it's beautiful! It's the most wonderful cloth I've ever seen, and I must have a suit made from it right away to wear in the court procession next week!

NARRATOR 2: All the emperor's friends and courtiers stared at the looms and nodded. Not one of them would admit that there was nothing to be seen. Each one of them thought that everyone else could see the beautiful cloth.

FRIENDS AND COURTIERS: How marvelous!

NARRATOR 2: They echoed the emperor.

FRIENDS AND COURTIER: How beautiful!

NARRATOR 1: So that night the swindlers set to work to make the emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll out the cloth. They cut through the air with big scissors, and they sewed all night with no thread at all in their needles. Finally, they said that the suit was finished.

TWO SWINDLERS: Look how beautiful it is. And the cloth is so light. When you wear this suit, it will feel like you're wearing nothing at all. Come, your Majesty, and try it on.

NARRATOR 2: The swindlers helped the emperor take off his old clothes. Then, with great care, they helped him put on the new suit. They pretended to put a pin in here and take a tuck in there. Then they pretended to fasten on the long train. The emperor turned this way and that in front of the mirror, pretending to admire the new suit.

FRIENDS AND COURTIER: How beautiful it is!

NARRATOR 1: All his friends and courtiers said.

FRIENDS AND COURTIER: How well it fits! You look marvelous, your Majesty!

NARRATOR 1: Soon it was time for the court procession to begin. The two attendants who were to carry the train bent down and pretended to pick it up. They held their hands high as if they didn't want the train to touch the floor.

NARRATOR 2: And so the procession started down the main street of the city. All the people lined the sidewalks, waiting to see the emperor's new clothes. As the procession went by, they all clapped and cheered and cried:

ALL: WHAT BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES!

NARRATOR 1: They wouldn't admit to anyone that they couldn't see the clothes.

NARRATOR 2: The emperor was very happy. Nothing he had ever worn had met with such approval. He held his head up high. Then a little child's voice was heard in the crowd:

CHILD: But the emperor has nothing on!

NARRATOR 2: At first no one else said anything. Then all the people began to whisper:

ALL: (high whispering) The emperor has nothing on!

NARRATOR 1: The emperor felt a chill go down his spine. It suddenly seemed to him that the people were right. He was a fool, after all.

EMPEROR: But this procession has started, and it must finish.

NARRATOR 1: He held his head even higher and marched on down the street, and the attendants behind him held on even tighter to the train that wasn't there.

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

by E.B. White

(from Scott, Foresman "Sea Treasures") Grade 4

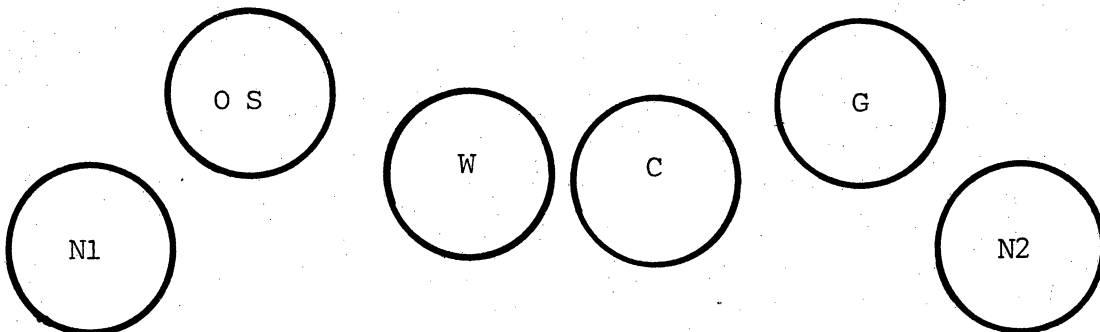
Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>WILBUR:</u>	W
<u>CHARLOTTE:</u>	C
<u>GOOSE:</u>	G
<u>OLDEST SHEEP:</u>	O S

*More Narrators may be added

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1:

"Charlotte's Web", by E. B. White.
Wilbur the pig is very lonely living in the barn, even though he has many neighbors. The goose is too busy sitting on her eggs to bother with Wilbur. The lamb looks down on him, and won't play either. Templeton, the rat, won't do anything for anybody unless there is something in it for him. Wilbur is sobbing in despair when a small voice asks: "Do you want to be my friend, Wilbur? I'll be a friend to you. Go to sleep. You'll see me in the morning."
And that is how Charlotte came into Wilbur's life.

NARRATOR 2:

The night seemed long. Wilbur's stomach was empty. And when your stomach is empty it's always hard to sleep. A dozen times during the night, Wilbur woke trying to figure out what time it was. In a barn even at midnight there is usually something stirring.

NARRATOR 1:

The first time Wilbur woke, he heard Templeton gnawing a hole in the grain bin. Templeton's teeth scraped loudly against the wood and made quite a racket.

WILBUR:

That crazy rat! Why does he have to stay up all night, grinding his clashers and destroying people's property? Why can't he go to sleep like any decent animal?

NARRATOR 1:

The second time Wilbur woke, he heard the goose turning on her nest and chuckling to herself.

WILBUR:

(whispering) What time is it?

GOOSE:

Probably-obably-obably about half-past seven. Why aren't you asleep, Wilbur?

WILBUR:

Too many things on my mind.

GOOSE:

Well, that's not my trouble. I have nothing at all on my mind. But I've too many things under my behind. Have you ever tried to sleep while sitting on eight eggs?

WILBUR:

No. I suppose it is uncomfortable. How long does it take a goose egg to hatch?

GOOSE:

Approximately-oximately thirty days, all told. But I cheat a little. On warm afternoons, I just pull a little straw over the eggs and go out for a walk.

NARRATOR 1: Wilbur yawned and went back to sleep. In his dreams he heard again the voice saying, "I'll be a friend to you. Go to sleep. You'll see me in the morning."

NARRATOR 2: About half an hour before dawn, Wilbur woke and listened. The barn was still dark. The sheep lay motionless. Even the goose was quiet. Overhead, on the main floor, nothing stirred: The cows were resting, the horses dozed. Templeton had quit work and gone off somewhere on an errand. The only sound was a slight scraping noise from the rooftop, where the weather vane swung back and forth. Wilbur loved the barn when it was like this, calm and quiet, waiting for light.

WILBUR: Day is almost here.

NARRATOR 1: Through a small window, a faint gleam appeared. One by one the stars went out. Wilbur could see the goose a few feet away. She sat with head tucked under a wing. Then he could see the sheep and the lambs. The sky lightened.

WILBUR: Oh beautiful day, it is here at last! Today I shall find my friend.

NARRATOR 2: Wilbur looked everywhere. He searched his pen thoroughly. But he saw nothing new. Finally he decided he would have to speak up. So Wilbur cleared his throat.

WILBUR: Attention, please! Will the party who addressed me at bedtime last night kindly make himself or herself known by giving an appropriate sign or signal!

NARRATOR 1: Wilbur paused and listened. All the other animals lifted their heads and stared at him. Wilbur blushed. But he was determined to get in touch with his unknown friend.

WILBUR: Attention, please! I will repeat the message. Will the party who addressed me at bedtime last night kindly speak up. Please tell me where you are, if you are my friend!

NARRATOR 2: The sheep looked at each other in disgust.

OLDEST SHEEP: Stop your nonsense, Wilbur! If you have a new friend here, you are probably disturbing his rest; and the quickest way to spoil a friendship is to wake somebody up in the morning before he is ready. How can you be sure your friend is an early riser?

WILBUR: I beg everyone's pardon. I didn't mean to be objectionable.

NARRATOR 1: He lay down meekly in the manure, facing the door. He did not know it, but his friend was very near. And the old sheep was right, the friend was still asleep.

NARRATOR 2: Soon Lurvy appeared with slops for breakfast. Wilbur rushed out, ate everything in a hurry, and licked the trough. The sheep moved off down the lane, the gander waddled along behind them, pulling grass. And then, just as Wilbur was settling down for his morning nap, he heard again the thin voice that had addressed him the night before.

CHARLOTTE: Salutations!

NARRATOR 1: Wilbur jumped to his feet.

WILBUR: Salu-What?

CHARLOTTE: Salutations!

WILBUR: What are they and where are you? Please, please tell me where you are. And what are salutations?

CHARLOTTE: Salutations are greetings. When I say "Salutations", it's just my fancy way of saying hello or good morning. Actually, it's a silly expression, and I am surprised that I used it at all. As for my whereabouts, that's easy. Look up here in the corner of the doorway! Here I am. Look, I'm waving!

NARRATOR 2: At last Wilbur saw the creature that had spoken to him in such a kindly way. Stretched across the upper part of the doorway was a big spiderweb, and hanging from the top of the web, head down, was a large gray spider. She was about the size of a gumdrop. She had eight legs, and she was waving one of them at Wilbur in friendly greeting.

CHARLOTTE: See me now?

WILBUR: Oh, yes indeed. Yes, indeed! How are you? Good morning! Salutations! Very pleased to meet you. What is your name, please? May I have your name?

CHARLOTTE: My name is Charlotte.

WILBUR: Charlotte what?

CHARLOTTE: Charlotte A. Cavatica. But just call me Charlotte.

WILBUR: I think you're beautiful

CHARLOTTE: Well, I am pretty. There's no denying that. Almost all spiders are rather nice-looking. I'm not as flashy as some, but I'll do. I wish I could see you, Wilbur, as clearly as you can see me.

WILBUR: Why can't you? I'm right here.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, but I'm near-sighted. I've always been dreadfully near-sighted. It's good in some ways, not so good in others. Watch me wrap up this fly.

NARRATOR 1: A fly that had been crawling along Wilbur's trough had flown up and blundered into the lower part of Charlotte's web and was tangled in the sticky threads. The fly was beating its wings furiously, trying to break loose and free itself.

CHARLOTTE: First, I dive at him.

NARRATOR 2: She plunged headfirst toward the fly. As she dropped, a tiny silken thread unwound from her rear end.

CHARLOTTE: Next, I wrap him up.

NARRATOR 2: She grabbed the fly, threw a few jets of silk around it, and rolled it over and over, wrapping it so it couldn't move.

NARRATOR 1: Wilbur watched in horror. He could hardly believe what he was seeing, and although he detested flies, he was sorry for this one.

CHARLOTTE: There! Now I knock him out so he'll be more comfortable.

NARRATOR 1: She bit the fly.

CHARLOTTE: He can't feel a thing now. He'll make a perfect breakfast for me.

WILBUR: (gasping) You mean you eat flies?

CHARLOTTE: Certainly, flies, bugs, grasshoppers, choice beetles, moths, butterflies, tasty cockroaches, gnats, midges, daddy-longlegs, centipedes, mosquitoes, crickets...anything that is careless enough to get caught in my web. I have to live, don't I?

WILBUR: Why, yes, of course. Do they taste good?

CHARLOTTE: Delicious. Of course, I don't really eat them. I drink them, drink their blood. I love blood.

WILBUR: (groaning) Don't say that! Please don't say things like that!

CHARLOTTE: Why not? It's true, and I have to say what is true. I am not entirely happy about my diet of flies and bugs, but it's the way I'm made. A spider has to pick up a living somehow or other, and I happen to be a trapper. I just naturally build a web and trap flies and other insects. My mother was a trapper before me. Her mother was a trapper before her. All our family have been trappers. Way back for thousands and thousands of years we spiders have been laying for flies and bugs.

WILBUR: (gloomily) It's a miserable inheritance.

NARRATOR 2: He was sad because his new friend was so blood-thirsty.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, it is. But I can't help it. I don't know how the first spider in the early days of the world happened to think up this fancy idea of spinning a web, but she did, and it was clever of her too. And since then, all of us spiders have had to work the same trick. It's not a bad pitch, on the whole.

WILBUR: It's cruel.

CHARLOTTE: Well, you can't talk, you have your meals brought to you in a pail. Nobody feeds me. I have to get my own living. I live by my wits. I have to be sharp and clever, lest I go hungry. I have to think things out, catch what I can, take what comes. And it just so happens, my friend, that what comes are flies and insects and bugs. And furthermore, do you realize that if I didn't catch bugs and eat them, bugs would increase and multiply and get so numerous that they'd destroy the earth, wipe out everything.

WILBUR: Really? I wouldn't want that to happen. Perhaps your web is a good thing after all.

NARRATOR 1: The goose had been listening to this conversation and chuckling to herself.

GOOSE: There are a lot of things Wilbur doesn't know about life. He's really a very innocent little pig.

(Goose cont'd) He doesn't even know what's going to happen to him around Christmas time; he has no idea that Mr. Zuckerman and Lurvy are plotting to kill him.

NARRATOR 2: And the goose raised herself a bit and poked her eggs a little further under her so that they would receive the full heat from her warm body and soft feathers.

NARRATOR 1: Charlotte stood quietly over the fly, preparing to eat it. Wilbur lay down and closed his eyes. He was tired from the wakeful night and from the excitement of meeting someone for the first time. A breeze brought him the smell of clover, the sweet-smelling world beyond his fence.

WILBUR: Well, I've got a new friend all right. But what a gamble friendship it is! Charlotte is fierce, brutal, scheming, bloodthirsty, everything I don't like. How can I learn to like her, even though she is pretty and, of course, clever?

NARRATOR 2: Wilbur was merely suffering the doubts and fears that often go with finding a new friend. In good time he was to discover that he was mistaken about Charlotte. Underneath her rather bold and cruel exterior, she had a kind heart, and she was to prove loyal and true to the very end.

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

THE PRINCESS AND THE ADMIRAL

by Charlotte Pomerantz

(from Scott, Foresman "Sky Climbers") Grade 5

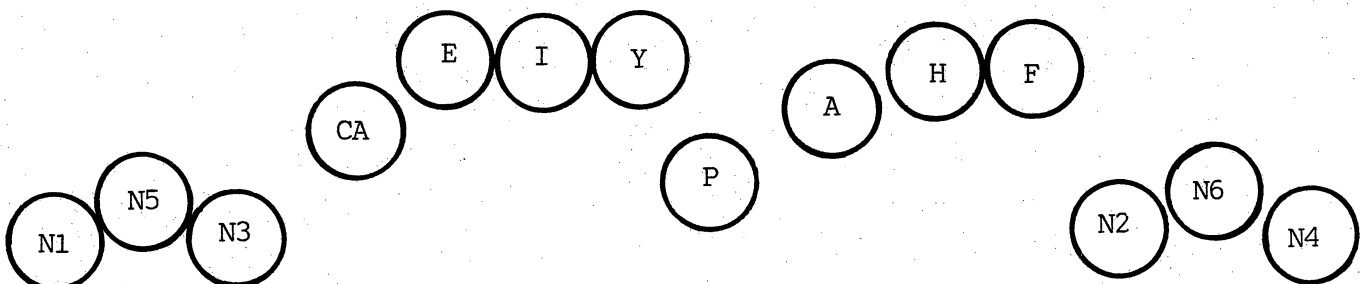
Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Laphan-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>NARRATOR 3:</u>	N3
<u>NARRATOR 4:</u>	N4
<u>NARRATOR 5:</u>	N5
<u>NARRATOR 6:</u>	N6
<u>PRINCESS:</u>	P
<u>ELDER:</u>	E
<u>YOUNGER:</u>	Y
<u>IN-BETWEEN:</u>	I
<u>COURT ASTROLOGER:</u>	C A
<u>ADMIRAL:</u>	A
<u>HELMSMAN:</u>	H
<u>FISHERMAN:</u>	F

SUGGESTED STAGING:

Three Advisors:



NARRATOR 1: "The Princess and the Admiral", by Charlotte Pomerantz.

NARRATOR 2: A very long time ago, there was a small patch of dry land called the Tiny Kingdom. Most of its people were poor farmers or fisherfolk. Their bodies were lean and brown and strong from working long hours in the sun. They built the thatched mud huts in which they lived. They wove the simple earth-colored clothing they wore. And everyone, even the children, helped to plow the fields, harvest the rice, and catch the fish that they ate.

NARRATOR 3: The land of the Tiny Kingdom was as poor as its people. The soil had neither gold nor silver, which was why no country, in the memory of the oldest man or woman, had ever made war against them. The people were good-humored about the poverty of the land. It had given them a hundred years of peace.

NARRATOR 4: The ruler of the Tiny Kingdom was Mat Mat, a dark-eyed young princess, as lean and brown as her people. One night, almost a thousand years ago, the Princess looked out the window at the fishing boats in the harbor below, then up at the pale sliver of a moon. Sometimes, when the Princess was wakeful, she would follow the moon's silent journey upwards across the sky into morning.

NARRATOR 5: Tonight the young Princess was too excited to sleep. For this month marked the anniversary of One Hundred Years of great events, with a Carnival and Fireworks Display. Tomorrow morning, at the Council of Three Advisors, the Princess would choose the date.

NARRATOR 6: There would be all kinds of firecrackers - flares, petards, and pinwheels that burst into flowers and waterfalls and fishes. Birds and butterflies would flit among trees of green fire. Then, at midnight, one, no--three---fantastic red red dragons would slither and writhe across the night sky.

PRINCESS: Beautiful!

NARRATOR 1: Murmured the Princess, her dark eyes shining. The next morning, the Princess was the first to arrive at the Council Chamber. The three advisors followed. First, the Elder, a man of ninety years. Then, the Younger, a man of eighty years. And finally, In-Between, who was exactly eighty-five. The Princess greeted them.

(the three advisors face the audience as introduced)

PRINCESS: Joyful tidings, advisors. This month marks the anniversary of One Hundred Years of Peace in the Tiny Kingdom. I think you will agree that this calls for a very special Carnival and Fireworks display.

NARRATOR 2: The three advisors were strangely silent. The Elder broke the silence.

ELDER: Excuse, Your Highness, but there can be no celebration.

PRINCESS: Why not?

YOUNGER: There are rumors of invasion.

IN-BETWEEN: It looks like war.

PRINCESS: But we have no enemies.

ELDER: I fear we do. We have just had a report from our fishing boats that a large fleet of warships is sailing toward our kingdom.

PRINCESS: How terrible! How many ships are coming?

IN-BETWEEN: Our fishing boats report twenty ships of war, including the flagship of the Admiral.

PRINCESS: How large are the ships?

ELDER: I would judge each to be about five times the size of the Royal Swanboat.

YOUNGER: More like four times the size of the largest fishing boat.

IN-BETWEEN: Mmmmm, I'd say the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

PRINCESS: Never mind, how long will it be before the enemy fleet reaches the harbor of the Tiny Kingdom?

ADVISORS: Two days, more or less.

PRINCESS: Let us review our capabilities and make some contingency plans.

ELDER: We have no ships-of-war.

YOUNGER: We have no men or women under arms.

IN-BETWEEN: We do have an inexhaustible supply of fire-crackers. Totally useless in the present emergency.

NARRATOR 6: The Princess stepped down from her throne, walked to the window, and looked at the harbor below.

PRINCESS: No forts, no soldiers, no weapons. Clearly, we shall have to rely on....other things. Call in the Court Astrologer.
(Court Astrologer faces audience)

NARRATOR 1: An ancient and withered old woman tottered into the Council Chamber.

COURT
ASTROLOGER: Your Highness wants me?

PRINCESS: I seek information about the position of the sun and the moon.

COURT
ASTROLOGER: With pleasure. When the moon is in its first or third quarter, it's as if it were a stranger to the sun. But when it is a new moon or a full moon, there is a special, rather remarkable attraction. We feel it on earth, in plants and oceans. I often feel it in my bones.

PRINCESS: And what of the moon tonight?

COURT
ASTROLOGER: Tonight it is a new moon which hangs its fragile lantern over your Tiny Kingdom.

PRINCESS: Interesting, you may return to your tower.
(Court Astrologer BTA)
The course is clear.

NARRATOR 2: The four of them huddled together while the Princess whispered her plan.

PRINCESS: And so, the first order of business is to send out a dozen of our fishing boats to tease the enemy. Their ships are bound to chase ours, and the enemy ships should get here at the right time.

NARRATOR 3: The next day, upon orders of Princess Mat, Mat, hundreds of farmers, fisherfolk, and children gathered in a nearby forest to cut down the tallest trees. The strongest men and woman sawed through the trunks. The less strong sharpened both ends of the fallen trees, and the children stripped off the branches.

NARRATOR 4: Then everyone helped haul the tree poles to the riverbed.

(Nar 4
cont'd)

When the tide had gone down enough for them to drag the poles into the water, they hammered them - dozens and dozens of them, into the muddy bottom of the riverbed.

NARRATOR 5: The Princess watched from the window of her royal bedchamber. When she had counted two hundred fifty-three poles jutting out of the water like a crazy, staggered picket fence, she gave orders for the people to return to their huts.

NARRATOR 1: The next morning, when the Princess and her advisors stood on the Royal Balcony, not a single pole was visible.

ELDER: I thought the tide would be higher.

YOUNGER: I thought it would be lower.

IN-BETWEEN: Your Highness, I think you guessed just right.

PRINCESS: It was no guess. Not after I talked to the Court Astrologer. We know the tides are caused by the attraction of the sun and the moon. Therefore, when I learned that these two celestial bodies are especially close at this time, I knew that the tides would be exceptionally high. High enough to cover the tree poles. (smiling) The moon is a faithful ally.

NARRATOR 6: Just then, the first ships of the enemy fleet were sighted approaching the mouth of the riverbed. They were in full chase of the twelve fishing boats that had been sent out to tease them.

NARRATOR 1: The enemy fleet sailed up the middle of the river. As they faced the village, fifty more fishing boats appeared from all directions and surrounded them.

NARRATOR 2: Aboard the flagship of the enemy fleet, the Admiral gave the command: (Admiral faces audience)

ADMIRAL: Furl sails and drop anchor! Get ready to fight!

NARRATOR 3: From the Royal Balcony the Princess looked down at the enemy ships and clapped her hands.

PRINCESS: He did it! The Admiral did just what I hoped he would do!

ELDER: Your plan is working perfectly.

NARRATOR 4: On the river, the Admiral peered uneasily at all the fishing boats.
(Helmsman faces audience)

ADMIRAL: It looks as if they are going to climb aboard.

HELMSMAN: But sir, they don't seem to have any weapons.

NARRATOR 5: As he spoke, the fisherfolk began to hurl cooking pots, soup ladles, coconuts, mangoes, melons, chickens,---whatever they had been able to lay hold of, at the enemy fleet

NARRATOR 6: One tall fisherman, in his enthusiasm, took a whole pail of eels and threw it aboard the Admiral's flagship.

NARRATOR 1: Then the little fishing boats turned around and quickly sailed past the harbor, leaving the Admiral and his warships in full command of the river.

ADMIRAL: Did they really think they could conquer our mighty armada with coconuts and cooking pots?

HELMSMAN: It would seem they are a rather primitive people, sir.

NARRATOR 2: The Admiral surveyed the village.

ADMIRAL: No trouble here, the fishing boats have disappeared behind a bend in the river. Not a living soul is on the streets. It's clear everyone is terrified.

NARRATOR 3: He looked at the water.

ADMIRAL: The tide is going out, but there's still plenty of depth here in the middle of the river. We'll wait for low tide to make sure we can dock.

NARRATOR 4: Settling comfortably into his deck chair, he said:

ADMIRAL: Tomorrow, first thing, we'll surround the palace, search and destroy the arsenal, and seize the crown jewels.

NARRATOR 5: An hour later, as the Admiral was napping in his deck chair, a tremendous shout came from below deck:

NARRATOR 6: SHIPPING WATER!

ADMIRAL: What's that supposed to mean?

HELMSMAN: It means there's a leak.

NARRATOR 1: From all over the fleet came the cry:

NARRATOR 2: SHIPPING WATER! WE'RE SHIPPING WATER!

NARRATOR 3: The Admiral dashed down to the hold. There, an extraordinary sight greeted his eyes. What appeared to be the trunk of a tree was poking through the bottom of the ship!

NARRATOR 4: Even as the Admiral watched, the tree top was slowly coming upward. Then another tree....and another....and another.

NARRATOR 5: Why, more than a dozen were coming through the bottom! And where the wood had splintered around the tree trunks, the water was seeping in, slowly but steadily.

ADMIRAL: Start bailing and saw off those crazy trees.

HELMSMAN: Beg pardon, sir, but if you get rid of the trees, the water will rush through. The trees are like corks, and we'll all drown in the onrushing waters.

ADMIRAL: Never mind. Send a message to the fleet. All ships to continue bailing. All ships' captains to report to my cabin for a Council of War.

NARRATOR 6: Some two hours later, when the captains were all assembled aboard the Admiral's flagship, the Helmsman stuck his head in the cabin door.

HELMSMAN: Sorry to interrupt, sir, but the water is draining out of the ships.

ADMIRAL: Naturally, you blockhead. The men are bailing.

HELMSMAN: No, no! It's happening all by itself.

ADMIRAL: (gasping) What! Are you sure! I'd better have a look.

NARRATOR 1: He strode out on deck, stumbled on a coconut, then stopped and stared at the astounding spectacle. All around, his whole fleet was stuck up on tree poles!

(Helmsman BTA)

NARRATOR 2: The air resounded with loud crackings and bangings coming from the bottoms of all the ships as they settled firmly onto the tree trunks. And, of course, the seawater was dripping out of all the elevated ships' bottoms.

NARRATOR 3: Suddenly everything became clear to the Admiral. He had been trapped. These fisherfolk had used the tide against him.

NARRATOR 4: They had put in poles at low tide. He had come in with his ships at high tide. Then, when the tide went out, he was left stuck up on the poles.

NARRATOR 5: Now he could hear a muted roar of laughter from the farmers, fisherfolk, and children who crowded the riverbank and docks.
(Fisherman faces audience)

FISHERMAN: Ahoy, Mate! Ready to surrender?

ADMIRAL: (shaking fist) Never! You just wait till we come ashore.

FISHERMAN: (grinning) If you're thinking of sending your men swimming or wading to shore, think again. Because any man found in the water will be whacked on the head with an oar.

ADMIRAL: Who are you?

FISHERMAN: I'm a fisherman. In fact, I'm the best fisherman around. Because I sacrificed a whole pail of eels for the Tiny Kingdom, our ruler, Princess Mat Mat, has bestowed on me the honor of taking you to shore to negotiate the terms of peace.

ADMIRAL: No! I will go down with my ship.

FISHERMAN: Your ship isn't going to go down. It will stay stuck up there on the tree poles until the ebb and flow of the tides break the fleet to smithereens.

NARRATOR 6: The Admiral sighed, climbed down, and settled gloomily into the stern of the Royal Swanboat. The tall fisherman rowed him to shore.
(Fisherman BTA)

NARRATOR 1: After the Admiral had changed into dry socks, he was summoned to the Council Chamber to face Princess Mat Mat and her three advisors.

NARRATOR 2: The Princess led the Admiral to the window overlooking the harbor.

PRINCESS: It's a quaint sight, isn't it?

ADMIRAL: Quaint! It's a nightmare.

PRINCESS: Try to get hold of yourself.

ADMIRAL: What humiliation! To be defeated by a woman. Not even a woman. A slip of a girl. What's the difference. I shall be beheaded at dawn.

ADVISORS: Certainly we will behead you.

NARRATOR 3: The Princess clucked her tongue in disapproval.

PRINCESS: Are you such old men that you have forgotten the story of the widow and her chickens?

ELDER: Your Highness, every child in this kingdom knows it by heart.

PRINCESS: Perhaps it is time to tell it again.

NARRATOR 4: She faced them all and commenced her tale:

PRINCESS: "Once upon a time, there was a poor old widow who saw a young man sneak into her yard and steal two chickens. She knew who the young man was, but she did not report him to the authorities. Instead, that evening, when everyone, including the young man had gathered in the village to watch a carnival and fireworks display, the widow called out: 'What king of person steals chickens from a poor old woman? I'll tell you, a no-good thief with a heart of stone. Shame on this person. Shame! Shame!'"

NARRATOR 5: The Princess continued the tale:

PRINCESS: "The young man listened and was indeed ashamed. That very night, he sneaked into the widow's yard and returned one of the chickens. (he had, alas, cooked and eaten the other one.) The widow saw him and hid. 'It is good,' she said. 'I got back one of my chickens, and the young man did not lose face in the village.'"

NARRATOR 6: When the Princess had finished her tale, she turned to the Admiral and said:

PRINCESS: So you see, sir, revenge is not our way. We do not believe that those who have wronged us should be punished or humiliated beyond what is necessary.

ADMIRAL: You are not going to behead me?

PRINCESS: Ugh! How distasteful.

ADMIRAL: What are you going to do?

PRINCESS: Simple, I shall supply you with two guides to take you and your men through the harsh mountainous terrain that leads back to your country and your emperor. I shall also provide you with a two-week supply of food and water, as well as five water buffaloes to help carry your provisions. Of course, we would appreciate your returning the water buffaloes.

NARRATOR 1: The Admiral knelt down before the Princess and kissed her hand.

ADMIRAL: Be assured, your animals shall be returned. Your Highness, I shall never forget you nor the kind and gentle ways of your Kingdom. If there is anything I can ever do for you...

PRINCESS: As a matter of fact, there is.

ADMIRAL: Anything.

PRINCESS: I would ask you not to make unkind remarks about women and girls, especially princesses.

NARRATOR 2: That evening, from the Royal Balcony, Princess Mat Mat and her three advisors watched the long winding caravan of enemy soldiers and sailors.
(Admiral BTA)

PRINCESS: It is good. We won the battle, and since the Admiral is returning home with all his men, he will not lose too much face with the Emperor. How close we came to celebrating One Hundred Years of Peace.

ELDER: Dear Princess, what happened this morning could hardly be called a battle. The only injury was a sailor who got bonged on the toe with a mango!

IN-BETWEEN: That's odd, I was sure it was a coconut.

PRINCESS: My dear advisors, do I understand you to mean that we can go ahead with the celebration?

elder: If the poor widow could forget about one of her chickens, surely we can forget one small incident in a hundred years of peace.

YOUNGER: For the first time, the three of us are in agreement about the number of firecrackers, flares, torches, Bengal lights, petards, Roman candles, and pinwheels for the celebration. One thousand!

PRINCESS: Why, that's more than I ever dreamed of! And will there be three dragons?

ELDER: Concerning dragons, we don't think three is the right number.

PRINCESS: Alas, how many then?

IN-BETWEEN: We shall see.

NARRATOR 3: Thus it came to pass that within the week the Tiny Kingdom celebrated One Hundred Years of Peace---well, almost, with the biggest Carnival and Fireworks Display in its history.

NARRATOR 4: Not one,

NARRATOR 5: Not three,

NARRATOR 6: but twelve fantastic red dragons slithered and writhed across the night sky.

NARRATOR 1: And of all the happy farmers, fisherfolk, and children in the Tiny Kingdom, not one was happier than Princess Mat Mat.

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

from THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

by Kenneth Grahame

(from Scott, Foresman "Star Flight") Grade 6

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, June, 1986

CAST:

NARRATOR 1: N1

NARRATOR 2: N2

NARRATOR 3: N3

NARRATOR 4: N4

NARRATOR 5: N5

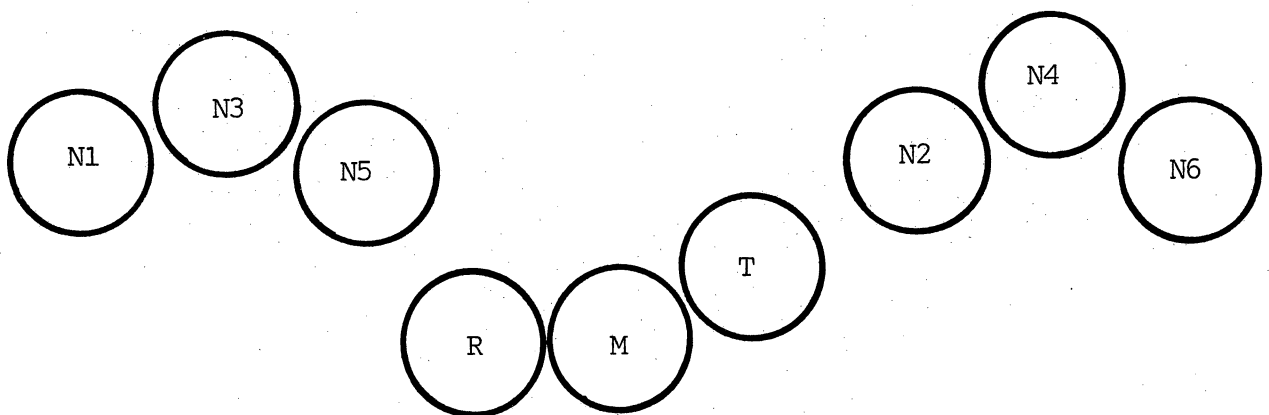
NARRATOR 6: N6

MOLE: M

RAT: R

TOAD: T

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: From "The Wind in the Willows", by Kenneth Grahame.

NARRATOR 2: The story takes place in the English countryside. Mole has been busy with spring-cleaning in his house in the meadow. He meets Ratty, who invites him to go on a boat trip down the river, which is near Ratty's home. Mole loves his first day on the river, and Ratty invites Mole to stay as his guest to learn more about river life.

MOLE: Ratty,

NARRATOR 3: Said the Mole to his host one bright summer morning.

MOLE: If you please, I want to ask you a favor. Won't you take me to call on Mr. Toad? I've heard so much about him, and I do so want to make his acquaintance.

RAT: Why, certainly. Get the boat out, and we'll paddle up to Toad Hall at once. It's never the wrong time to call on Toad. Early or late he's always the same fellow. Always good-tempered, always glad to see you, always sorry when you go!

MOLE: He must be a very nice animal.

RAT: He is indeed the best of animals. So simple, so good-natured and so affectionate. Perhaps he's not very clever, ---we can't all be geniuses. And it may be that he is both boastful and conceited, but he has got some great qualities, has Toady.

NARRATOR 1: Rounding a bend in the river, they came in sight of a handsome, dignified old house of mellowed red brick, with well-kept lawns reaching down to the water's edge.

RAT: There's Toad Hall. That creek on the left, where the notice says, "Private, No Landing Allowed", leads to his boathouse. We'll leave our boat there. The stables are over to the right. That's the banquetting hall you're looking at now, very old it is. Toad is rather rich, you know, and this is really one of the nicest houses in these parts. But we never admit as much to Toad.

NARRATOR 3: They glided up the creek and passed into the shadow of a large boathouse. Here they saw many handsome boats, hung from the crossbeams or hauled up on the shore, but none in the water. The place had an unused and deserted air.

RAT: I understand, boating is played out. Toad is tired of it. I wonder what new fad he has taken up now? Come along and let's look him up. We shall hear about it quite soon enough.

NARRATOR 5: They strolled across the colorful flower-decked lawns in search of Toad, and soon happened upon him resting in a wicker garden chair. With a preoccupied expression on his face, he was regarding a large map spread out on his knees.

TOAD: (facing audience) Hooray! This is splendid!

NARRATOR 4: He shook the paws of both of them warmly, never waiting for an introduction to the Mole.

TOAD: How kind of you! Ratty, I was just going to send a boat down the river for you, with strict orders that you were to be fetched up here at once. I want you badly, both of you. You don't know how lucky it is, your turning up just now!

RAT: Let's sit quiet a bit, Toady!

NARRATOR 6: The Rat threw himself into an easy chair while the Mole took another and made a polite remark about Toad's "delightful residence".

TOAD: Finest house on the whole river, or anywhere else, for that matter.

NARRATOR 1: Here the Rat nudged the Mole. Unfortunately the Toad saw him do it, and turned very red. There was a moment's painful silence. Then Toad burst out laughing.

TOAD: (laughing) All right, Ratty, it's only my way, you know. Now, let's be friends. You are the very animals I wanted. You've got to help me. It's most important!

RAT: It's about your learning how to row, I suppose. You're getting on fairly well, though you splash a good bit still. With a great deal of patience and a considerable quantity of coaching, you may---

TOAD: (interrupting) Oh, pooh! Boating! Silly boyish amusement. I've given that up long ago. Sheer waste of time, that's what it is. It makes me down right sorry to see you fellows, who ought to know better, spending all your energies in that aimless manner. No, I've discovered the only genuine occupation for a lifetime. I propose to devote the remainder of my days to it. Come with me, dear Ratty, and your amiable friend also, just as far as the stable yard. There you shall see what you shall see!

NARRATOR 4: Toad led the way over to the stable yard, with the Rat and the Mole following accordingly. There, drawn out of the coach house into the open, they saw a gypsy cart, shining with newness, painted a canary yellow, with green and red wheels.

TOAD: There you are! There's real life for you, embodied in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs! Camps, villages, towns, cities! Here today, somewhere else tomorrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you; a horizon that's always changing! And mind, this is the very finest cart of its sort that was ever built. Come inside and look at its furnishings. Planned 'em all myself, I did!

NARRATOR 1: The Mole was tremendously interested and excited, and followed Toad eagerly into the interior of the cart. The Rat only snorted and thrust his hands deep into his pockets, remaining where he was.

NARRATOR 2: The gypsy cart was indeed very compact and comfortable. Little sleeping bunks, a little table that folded up against the wall, a cookstove, lockers, bookshelves, a bird cage with a bird in it, and pots, pans, jugs, and kettles of every size and variety.

TOAD: All complete! You see, biscuits, potted lobster, sardines, everything you can possibly want. Soda water here, letter paper there, bacon, jam, cards, and dominoes you'll find. You'll find that nothing has been forgotten, when we make our start this afternoon.

RAT: I beg your pardon, but did I hear you say something about we and start this afternoon?

TOAD: Now, you dear good old Ratty, don't begin talking in that stiff and sniffy sort of way, because you know you've got to come. I can't possibly manage without you, so please don't argue. It's the one thing I can't stand. You surely don't mean to stick to your dull fusty old river all your life, and just live in a hole in a bank, and boat? I want to show you the world! I'm going to make an animal of you, my boy!

RAT: I don't care. I'm not coming, and that's flat. And I am going to stick to my old river, and live in a hole, and boat, as I've always done. And what's more, Mole's going to stick with me. Aren't you, Mole?

MOLE: Of course I am. I'll always stick to you, Rat, and what you say is to be--has got to be. All the same, it sounds as if it might have been rather fun, you know!

NARRATOR 6: Poor Mole! The Life Adventurous was so new a thing to him, and so thrilling; and this fresh aspect of it was so tempting. He had fallen in love at first sight with the canary-colored cart and all its furnishings.

NARRATOR 1: The Rat saw what was passing in Mole's mind, and wavered. He was fond of the Mole, and would do almost anything to oblige him. Toad was watching both of them closely and said:

TOAD: Come along in and have some lunch, and we'll talk things over. We needn't decide in a hurry. Of course, I don't really care. I only want to give pleasure to you fellows. Live for others! That's my motto in life.

NARRATOR 2: During lunch the Toad simply let himself go. Disregarding the Rat, he proceeded to play upon the inexperienced Mole as upon a harp. Always mastered by his imagination, Toad painted the joys of the open road in such glowing colors that the Mole could hardly sit in his chair for excitement.

NARRATOR 3: Somehow it soon seemed taken for granted by all three that the trip was a settled thing. And the Rat, though still unconvinced in his own mind, allowed his good nature to override his personal objections. He could not bear to disappoint his two friends, who were already deep in plans for each day's separate occupations for several weeks ahead.

NARRATOR 4: When they were quite ready, the now triumphant Toad led his companions to the paddock and set them to capturing the old gray horse. That animal, without having been consulted, was to be given the dustiest job in this dusty expedition. Frankly, he preferred the paddock and took a deal of catching.

NARRATOR 5: Meantime, Toad packed the lockers still tighter with necessaries, and hung nose bags, nets of onions, bundles of hay, and baskets from the bottom of the cart.

NARRATOR 6: At last the horse was caught and harnessed. They set off, all talking at once, each animal either trudging by the side of the cart or riding as the fancy took him. It was a golden afternoon. The smell of the dust they kicked up was rich and satisfying.

NARRATOR 1: Out of thick orchards on either side of the road, birds called and whistled to them cheerily. Good-natured wayfarers passing them, gave them "Good Day", or stopped to say nice things about their beautiful cart. And rabbits, sitting in the hedgerows, held up their forepaws and said, "Oh, my! Oh, my!"

NARRATOR 2: Late in the evening, tired and happy and miles from home, the little party drew up on a remote common far from any dwellings. They turned the horse loose, and ate their simple supper sitting on the grass by the side of the cart.

NARRATOR 3: Toad talked big about all he was going to do in the days to come, while the stars grew fuller and larger all around them, and a yellow moon suddenly and silently appeared from nowhere.

NARRATOR 4: At last they turned into their little bunks in the cart. Toad, kicking out his legs, sleepily said:

TOAD: Well, good night, you fellows. This is the real life! Talk about your old river!

RAT: I don't talk about my river, you know I don't, Toad. But I think about it. (lower tone) I think about it all the time!

NARRATOR 6: The Mole reached out from under his blanket, felt for the Rat's paw, and gave it a squeeze.

MOLE: I'll do whatever you like, Ratty. Shall we run away tomorrow morning and go back to our dear old hole on the river?

RAT: No, we'll see it out. Thanks awfully, but I ought to stick by Toad till this trip is ended. It wouldn't be safe for him to be left by himself. This won't take long. His fads never do. Good night!

NARRATOR 1: After so much open air and excitement, the Toad slept very soundly, and the next morning no amount of shaking could rouse him out of bed. So the Mole and Rat turned to, quietly. While the Rat saw to the horse, and lit a fire, and cleaned last night's cups and plates, and got things ready for breakfast, the Mole trudged off to the nearest village.

NARRATOR 2: There he got the milk and eggs and various necessaries that the Toad had, of course, forgotten to provide. The hard work had all been done, and the two animals were resting, thoroughly exhausted, by the time Toad appeared on the scene.

NARRATOR 3: Fresh and happy, he remarked on what a pleasant easy life it was they were all leading now, after the cares and worries and fatigues of housekeeping at home.

NARRATOR 4: That day they had a pleasant ramble over grassy downs and along narrow lanes. At night they camped, as before, on a common, only this time the two guests took care that Toad should do his fair share of work.

NARRATOR 5: In consequence, when the time came for starting the next morning, Toad was by no means so rapturous about the joys of outdoor life. Indeed, he attempted to resume his place in his bunk, from which he was hauled by force.

NARRATOR 6: As before, their way lay across country and by narrow lanes. It was not until afternoon that they came out on their first highway. There disaster, fleet and unforeseen, sprang out upon them!

NARRATOR 1: They were strolling along the highway easily, with the Mole by the horse's head, the Toad and the Rat walking behind the cart together. Toad was talking, and Rat was saying at intervals:

RAT: Yes, precisely; and what did you say to him? (YAWN)

NARRATOR 1: ...And thinking all the time of something very different. From far behind, they heard a faint humming, like the drone of a distant bee.

NARRATOR 2: Glancing back, the two saw a small cloud of dust with a dark center of energy advancing on them at an incredible speed. From out of the cloud of dust came a faint "Poop-Poop!", like the wail of an animal in pain. Considering this to be of little importance, they resumed their conversation.

NARRATOR 3: But in an instant, or so it seemed, the peaceful scene was changed. With a blast of wind and a whirl of sound that made them jump for the ditch, the Thing was on them!

NARRATOR 4: The "Poop-Poop" rang with a brazen shout in their ears, and they had a moment's glimpse of an interior of glittering plate glass and rich morocco. The magnificent motor car, immense, breath-snatching, vibrant, with its pilot tense at the wheel, possessed all earth and air for a fraction of a second.

(Nar 4
cont'd)

Then it dwindled to a speck in the far distance,
and changed back into a droning bee once more.

NARRATOR 5: The old gray horse abandoned himself to his natural emotions. Rearing, plunging, backing steadily, he drove the cart backward toward the deep ditch at the side of the road. There was a heart-rending CRASH and the canary-colored cart, their pride and joy, lay on its side in the ditch, an irredeemable wreck.

NARRATOR 6: The Rat danced up and down in the road, nearly beside himself with anger.

RAT: (Shaking his fists) You Villains! You scoundrels! You highwaymen! You--you road hogs! I'll have the law on you! I'll take through all the Courts!

NARRATOR 1: Toad sat straight down in the middle of the dusty road and stared after the disappearing motor car. His face wore a placid, satisfied expression, and at intervals he was heard to murmur:

TOAD: Poop-Poop!

NARRATOR 2: After a time the Mole succeeded in quieting the horse; then he went to look at the cart. It was indeed a sorry sight. Panels and windows were smashed, the axles hopelessly bent, one wheel off, and sardine cans scattered over the wide world. The bird in the cage sobbed pitifully and called to be let out.

NARRATOR 3: The Rat came to help the Mole, but their united efforts were not sufficient to right the cart.

RAT & MOLE: Hi, Toad! Come and lend a hand, won't you?

NARRATOR 4: The toad never budged from his seat in the road; so they went to see what the matter was with him. They found him in a sort of trance, a happy smile on his face, his eyes still fixed on the dusty cloud in the distance. The Rat shook him by the shoulder.

RAT: Are you coming to help us, Toad?

TOAD: Glorious, stirring sight! The poetry of motion! The Real way to travel! Villages skipped, towns and cities jumped, always a new horizon! Oh, bliss! Oh, poop-poop! Oh, my! Oh, my!

MOLE: Oh, stop being a fool, Toad!

TOAD: And to think I never knew! But now that I fully realize! Oh, what a flowery track lies spread before me! What dust clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way! What carts I shall fling carelessly into the ditch! Horrid little carts, common carts, canary-colored carts!

MOLE: What are we to do with him?

RAT: Nothing at all. There is nothing to be done. I know him of old. He is now possessed. He has got a new craze, and it always takes him that way in its first stage. He'll continue this way for days. Never mind him. Let's go see what can be done about the cart.

NARRATOR 2: A careful inspection showed them that, even if they succeeded in righting it, the cart would travel no longer. The axles were in a hopeless state, and the missing wheel was shattered into pieces.

NARRATOR 3: Leading the horse by the reins and carrying the bird cage with its hysterical occupant, the Rat started down the road.

RAT: Come on! It's five or six miles to the nearest town, and we shall just have to walk it. The sooner we make a start the better.

MOLE: But what about Toad? We can't leave him in the distracted state he's in. It's not safe.

RAT: Oh, bother Toad! I've done with him!

NARRATOR 4: They had not gone very far, however, before there was a pattering of feet behind them. As Toad caught up with them and thrust a paw inside the elbow of each animal, he breathed heavily and stared into vacancy.

RAT: Now look here, Toad! As soon as we get to town, you'll have to go to the police station and see if they know anything about the owner of that motor car. You'll have to make a complaint against him. And then you'll have to go to a blacksmith's and arrange for the cart to be brought in and mended. Meanwhile, the Mole and I will go to an inn and find comfortable rooms where we can stay until the cart's ready, and until your nerves have recovered from their shock.

TOAD: Police station! Complaint! Me complain of that beautiful, heavenly vision! Mend the cart?

(Toad
cont'd)

I've done with carts forever. I never want to hear of one again. Oh, Ratty! You can't think how obliged I am to you for consenting to come on this trip! Without you I might never have seen that--that swan, that sunbeam, that thunderbolt! I owe it all to you, my best friends!

RAT: You see what it is? He is quite hopeless. When we get to the town, we'll go to the railway station, and with luck we may get a train that'll take us back to River Bank tonight. And if ever you catch me going out on a trip with this provoking animal again...

NARRATOR 5: The Rat snorted, and during the rest of the weary trip he trudged in silence.

NARRATOR 6: On reaching the town, they went straight to the station. There they deposited Toad in the waiting room, and gave a porter twopence to keep a strict eye on him. (Toad BTA)

NARRATOR 1: They then left the horse at an inn stable, and gave what directions they could about the cart and its contents.

NARRATOR 2: Eventually, a slow train carried them to a railway station, not very far from Toad Hall. They escorted the spellbound Toad to his door, put him inside it, and instructed his housekeeper to see that he was fed and put to bed.

NARRATOR 3: Then they got their boat from the boathouse, sculled down the river to the Rat's home, and at a very late hour sat down to supper in his cozy riverside parlor.

NARRATOR 4: The following evening, the Mole, who had risen late and had taken things easy all day, was sitting on the bank fishing. The Rat, who had been visiting his friends and exchanging gossip, came strolling along.

RAT: Heard the news? There's nothing else being talked about all along the river bank. Toad went up to town by an early train this morning. And he has ordered a large and very expensive motor car!

(Both Rat and Mole groan.)

(ALL HEADS DOWN)

THE TRUTHFUL HARP

by Lloyd Alexander

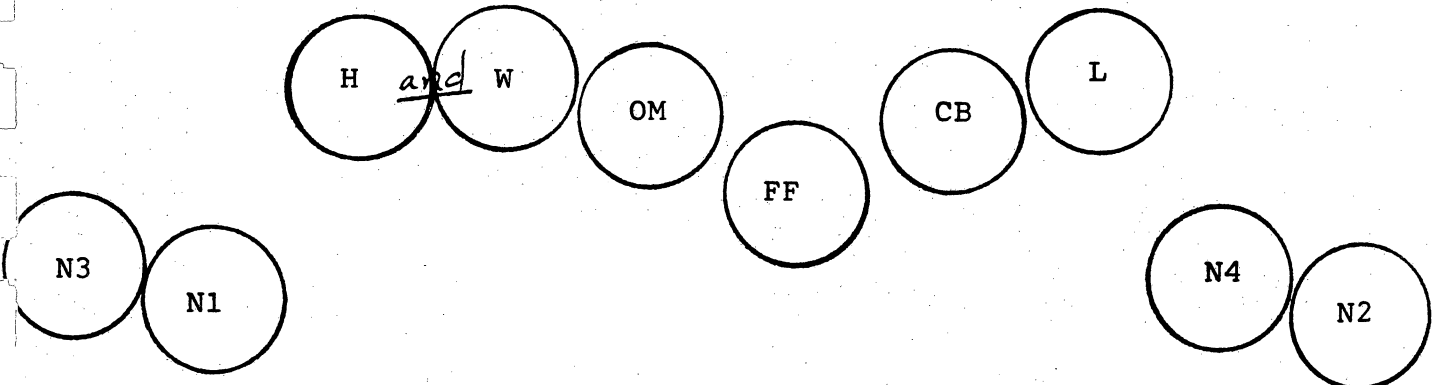
(from Scott, Foresman "Star Flight") Grade 6

Adapted for Simple Readers Theatre by Linda Lapham-Pilgrim, March, 1987

CAST:

<u>NARRATOR 1:</u>	N1
<u>NARRATOR 2:</u>	N2
<u>NARRATOR 3:</u>	N3
<u>NARRATOR 4:</u>	N4
<u>KING FFLEUDDUR FFLAM:</u>	FF
<u>CHIEF BARD:</u>	CB
<u>OLD MAN:</u>	OM
<u>HUSBANDMAN AND WIFE:</u>	H & W
<u>LORD:</u>	L

SUGGESTED STAGING:



NARRATOR 1: "The Truthful Harp", by Lloyd Alexander

NARRATOR 2: This is the tale of King Fflewddur Fflam and his truthful harp, as the bards tell it in the Land of Prydain. And this is the beginning of it.

NARRATOR 3: Fflewddur Fflam ruled a kingdom so small he could almost stride across it between midday and high noon. The fields and pastures grew so near his castle that sheep and cows ambled up to gaze into his bed chamber.

FFLEWDDUR: My crown's a grievous burden! That is, it would be if I ever wore it. But a Fflam is dutiful! My subjects need me to rule this vast kingdom with a firm hand and a watchful eye!

NARRATOR 4: Nevertheless, one secret wish lay closest to his heart. He yearned to adventure as a wandering bard.

FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam is eager! I'll be as great a bard as I am king!

NARRATOR 1: So he puzzled over tomes of ancient lore, striving to gain the wisdom every true bard must have. And he strained and struggled with his harp until his fingers blistered.

FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam is clever! I'll soon have the knack of it and play my harp as well as I rule my kingdom!

NARRATOR 2: At last he fancied himself ready to stand before the High Council of Bards and ask to be ranked among their number.

FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam goes forth! Gird on my sword! Saddle my charger! But have a care, she's wild and mettlesome!

NARRATOR 3: All his subjects who could spare the time gathered to cheer him on, to wave farewell, and to wish him good speed.

FFLEWDDUR: It saddens them to see me go. (sighing) But a Fflam is faithful! Even as a famous bard, I'll do my kingly duty as carefully as ever.

NARRATOR 4: And so he journeyed to golden-towered Caer Dathyl and eagerly hastened to the Council Chamber. (Chief Bard faces audience)

FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam is quick-witted! Prove me as you please! I've got every morsel of learning on the tip of my tongue, and every harp-tune at my fingers' ends!

NARRATOR 1: However, when the Council and the Chief Bard questioned him deeply, all that Fflewddur had learned flew out of his head like a flock of sparrows.

NARRATOR 2: He gave the right answers to the wrong questions, the wrong answers to the right questions; and worst of all, when he fumbled to strike a tune on his harp it slipped from his grasp and shattered in a thousand splinters on the flagstones.

NARRATOR 3: Then Fflewddur bowed his head and stared wretchedly at his boots, knowing he had failed.

CHIEF BARD: Alas, you are not ready to be one of us.

NARRATOR 4: But then, with all his poet's wisdom and compassion, the Chief Bard pitied the hapless king, and spoke apart with a servant, desiring him to bring a certain harp which he put in Fflewddur's hands.

CHIEF BARD: You still have much to learn. Perhaps this may help you.

NARRATOR 1: Seeing the harp, Fflewddur's dismay vanished in that instant, and his face beamed with delight. The beautiful instrument seemed to play of itself. He needed only to touch his fingers to the strings and melodies poured forth in a golden tide.

FFLEWDDUR: Good riddance to my old pot! Here's a harp that shows my true skill. A Fflam is grateful!

CHIEF BARD: May you ever be as grateful as you are now. Come back when it pleases you to tell us how you have fared.

NARRATOR 2: High-hearted, Fflewddur set out from Caer Dathyl. His new harp gladdened him as much as if he were in fact a bard, and he rode along playing merrily and singing at the top of his voice.

NARRATOR 4: Nearing a river he came upon an old man pitifully gathering twigs for a fire. (Old Man faces audience) Winter had hardly ended, and a chill wind still bit sharply, and the old man's threadbare garments gave no comfort against the cold. He shivered in the gale, his lips were bitter blue, and his fingers were so numb he could scarcely pick up his twigs.
(Old man mimes as narrator speaks.)

FFLEWDDUR: A good greeting, friend. Brisk weather may be good for the blood, but it seems to me you're ill-garbed for a day like his.

OLD MAN: No warmer clothing do I have. Would that I did, for I'm frozen to the marrow of my bones.

FFLEWDDUR: Then take my cloak. (hands over to the old man)

OLD MAN: My thanks to you, but I cannot take what you yourself need.

FFLEWDDUR: Need? Not at all. (mime shivering) Take it and welcome. For the truth of the matter, I find the day uncomfortably hot!

NARRATOR 1: No sooner had he spoken these words than the harp shuddered as if it were alive, bent like an over-drawn bow, and a string snapped in two with a loud twang.

FFLEWDDUR: Drat that string! The weather's got into it somehow. (Old Man BTA)

NARRATOR 2: Knotting up the string, he set out on his way again, shivering, shaking, and playing for all he was worth to keep himself warm.

NARRATOR 3: He wandered on, following the swiftly flowing river. Suddenly he heard a child's voice crying in distress and terror. Clapping heels to his horse's flanks he galloped down the riverbank. A small girl had tumbled into the water and the hapless child struggled vainly against the current already sweeping her away.

NARRATOR 4: Fflewddur leaped from his mount and plunged with a great splash into the river, flailing his arms, thrashing his legs, striving with all his might to reach the drowning child.

FFLEWDDUR: This would be an easy task, (gasping) if only I could swim!

NARRATOR 1: Nonetheless, he pressed on, choking and sputtering, until he caught up with the child. Keeping afloat as best he could he finally bore the girl to safety to dry land.

NARRATOR 2: Comforting her all the while, though water streamed from his nose, ears, and mouth, he made his way to the cottage from which she had strayed. There, the husbandman and his wife joyously threw their arms about their daughter and the bedraggled Fflewddur as well. (Husband and wife face audience)

FARM WIFE: Poor folk are we. What reward can we give? All we have is yours, and small payment for saving our greatest treasure.

FFLEWDDUR: Don't give it a thought. Why, to begin with, it was in my mind to have a dip in the river. As for the rest--a trifle! A Fflam swims like a fish! With only a few powerful strokes--

NARRATOR 3: The harp twitched violently and a pair of strings gave way with an ear-splitting crack.

FFLEWDDUR: Drat and blast! What ails these beastly strings? The dampness. I'll be bound. (H & W BTA)

NARRATOR 4: Taking his leave of the family, for some days he wandered happily to his heart's content, finding himself at last before the stronghold of a noble lord.

NARRATOR 1: To the guards at the gate, Fflewddur called out that a bard had come with music and merriment, whereupon they welcomed him and led him to the lord's Great Hall. (Lord faces audience)

NARRATOR 2: No sooner had Fflewddur begun to play than the lord leaped angrily from his throne.

LORD: Have done! You yelp like a dog with its tail trodden

LORD: (cont'd) and your harp rattles worse than a kettle of stones!
Away with you!

NARRATOR 3: Before Fflewddur could collect his wits, the lord
snatched up a cudgel, collared the harper, and
began drubbing him with all his strength.

FFLEWDDUR: Ai! Ow! A king am I! Of the mightiest realm of
Prydain! You'll rue this day when you see my battle
host at your gates! A thousand warriors. Spearmen!
Bowmen! A Fflam at their head!

NARRATOR 4: While the harp strings broke right and left, the
lord seized Fflewddur by the scruff of the neck
and flung him out the gate, where he landed
headlong in the mire.

FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam humiliated! Affronted! Beaten like a
knave! (mime aching shoulders and back)
Yes, well, it's clear, (sighing) some people have
no ear for music.

NARRATOR 1: His bones too sore for the saddle, he made the best
of his way afoot, with his horse jogging after
him. He had trudged a little distance when the
selfsame lord and his train of servants galloped
by.

LORD: What? Are you still in my domain? Begone, you
spindle-shanked scarecrow! If once again I see
that long nose of yours, you'll have a drubbing
better than the first!

NARRATOR 2: Fflewddur held his tongue as the horsemen rode past,
fearing more for his harp than his skin.

FFLEWDDUR: Stone-eared clot! A Fflam is forgiving, but this
is more than any man can bear.

NARRATOR 2: And he consoled himself with delicious dreams of how
he would even the score--should he ever have a host
of warriors at his command.

NARRATOR 3: Suddenly he realized the clash of arms and noise of
battle came not from his imaginings but from a
short way down the road. A band of robbers, lying
in ambush, had set upon the riders. The servants
had fled bawling in terror and the lord himself
was hard pressed and sorely in danger of losing his
head and purse as well.

NARRATOR 4: Snatching out his sword and shouting his battle cry,
FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam! A Fflam!

NARRATOR 4: Fflewddur rushed into the fray, and laid about him
so fiercely and ferociously the robbers turned and
fled as if a whole army of long-legged madmen were
at their heels.

NARRATOR 1: Shamefaced, the lord knelt humbly before him.

LORD: Alas, I gave you a cudgel to your back, but you gave
me a bold sword at my side.

FFLEWDDUR: Ah---yes, well, for the matter of that, the truth is a Fflam is hotblooded! I'd been itching for a good fight all day. But had I known it was you, believe me, I'd have kept on my way-----Oh, not again! Drat and blast those wretched strings! (Lord BTA)

NARRATOR 1: Three harpstrings broke one after the other, and the instrument jangled as if it would fall to bits.

NARRATOR 2: More than ever dismayed at the state of his harp strings, Fflewddur left the lord's domain and turned back toward Caer Dathyl, journeying to stand once again before the Chief Bard. (Chief Bard faces audience)

FFLEWDDUR: A Fflam is thankful, and not one to look a gift horse-- in this case, harp--in the mouth. But the strings are weak and worn. As for my wanderings, I was dined and feasted, welcomed and treated royally wherever I went. But the strings--there, you see? They're at it again! I've only to take a breath! Why, the wretched things break at every word---. It would almost seem, but it can't be! (groaning) But it is!

NARRATOR 3: The Chief Bard was watching him closely and Fflewddur glanced at him.

FFLEWDDUR: Ah---the truth of it is, I nearly froze to death in the wind, nearly drowned in the river; and my royal welcome was a royal cudgeling. Those beastly strings, (sighing) yes, they do break whenever I, ah, shall we say, adjust the facts.

CHIEF BARD: I have heard more of your wanderings than you might think. Have you indeed spoken all the truth? What of the old man you warmed with your cloak? The child you saved from the river? The lord at whose side you fought?

FFLEWDDUR: Ah, yes, --well, the truth of it is: it never occurred to me to mention them. They were much too dull and drab for any presentable tale at all.

CHIEF BARD: Yet those deeds were far more worthy than all your gallant fancies. For a good truth is purest gold that needs no gilding. You have the modest heart of the truly brave; but your tongue, alas, gallops faster than your head can rein it.

FFLEWDDUR: No longer! Never again will I stretch the truth!

NARRATOR 4: The harp strings tightened as if ready to break all at once.

FFLEWDDUR: That is to say, never beyond what it can bear. A Fflam has learned his lesson. Forever!

NARRATOR 1: At this, a string snapped loudly. But it was only a small one.

NARRATOR 2: Such is the tale of Fflewddur Fflam, the breaking of strings, and the harp he carried in all his wanderings from that day forward. And such is the end of it.

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