Readers theatre: Part of the elementary reading program

Caren Ann Toruño

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Part of the Education Commons, and the Reading and Language Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/1826

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
READERS THEATRE: PART OF THE ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAM

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Elementary

by
Caren Ann Toruño
December 1998
READERS THEATRE: PART OF THE ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAM

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Caren Ann Toruño
December 1998
Approved by:

Dr. Adria Klein, First Reader
12-4-98
Date
Dr. Ellen Verdries, Second Reader
Copyright 1998 Caren A. Toruño
ABSTRACT

In this action research project, Readers Theatre was researched and used in a fourth grade classroom during an eight week period. The purpose was to find a way to motivate students to read, and at the same time improve reading fluency, emotion, and comprehension. The results were positive in the areas of reading fluency and emotion. In the area of comprehension, it is felt that more research needs to be done.
This book is dedicated to
Mayo, for all his confidence in me, and
to Sara and Joseph, for their warmth, understanding,
and help during my many stressed-out times.

Thank you for being there for me.
I also dedicate this book to my parents,
Ivan and Mary Miller,
for raising me in a warm, loving, accepting family.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Fluency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Expression</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Benefits</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers Theatre Scripts</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-Ups</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: Action Research Design</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Sample</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Activities from Teacher's Log</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Measure</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: Findings</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Procedure</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Findings</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1: Percentage of Students in Class Who Improved in Reading Fluency and Emotion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2: Results of Comprehension Tests</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5: Summary</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications .................................................. 35
Other Research .............................................. 35

APPENDIX A: Readers Theatre Scripts ..................... 36
  Beware the Dragons! ....................................... 36
  Frog and Toad Together .................................... 42
  Superfudge .................................................. 45
  The Drinking Gourd ......................................... 53
  The Velveteen Rabbit ....................................... 59
  A Million Fish ... More or Less ......................... 68
  Knots on a Counting Rope ................................. 75
  Stone Fox .................................................. 82
  Molly's Pilgrim ............................................ 86
  The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body .......... 93
  The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks ............... 101
  The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System ...... 106

APPENDIX B: Comprehension Tests .......................... 114
  The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks ............... 114
  The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth ................. 115
  The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System ...... 116
  Magic School Bus Tests' Answer Keys .................. 117

REFERENCES ................................................. 118
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The purpose of this Action Research project is to find an effective technique in motivating students to read, and at the same time increase their reading fluency, expression, and comprehension. I chose to do this project because it was an activity in which I had no experience. I wanted to see, firsthand, what the benefits were. I was hoping to see positive evidence that my students' reading fluency, ability to show emotion in their voices, and reading comprehension improved during the course of the project.

Definition of Terms

Readers Theatre is an oral presentation of a book, or a piece of literature, in a group setting. During the performance, readers read from scripts, using their voices and body tension to depict their interpretation of the setting, characters, and action of the piece of literature (Laughlin, Black, Loberg, 1991). Originally, movements were minimal or nonexistent. However "it has evolved to include elements of stage theatre, including interaction between players, expanded gestures, sets, and costumes" (Wolf, 1993, p. 541). Hill (1995) suggests that props be used only as a way to define a character, such as "a paper crown for a king" (p. 2). Prewritten Readers Theatre scripts for children are available, but are not numerous. Teachers can elect to write their own scripts, or can teach the students to write them.

Motivating children to read can be met by four
principles (May, 1986). First, a child must have their basic needs met before they can be motivated to read. According to Maslow's "theory of motivation," these needs consist of physiological comfort, physical and psychological safety, belonging and love, esteem from self and others, self-actualization, and knowledge and appreciation. The second principle in motivating students to read, is the importance of providing reading material at the appropriate level of difficulty. If the book is too easy, the child may become bored. If it's too hard, the child may not want to read at all. The third principle concerns the provision of frequent and specific feedback. This feedback should be provided in the manner of positive reinforcement, and should result in an increased motivation to read. The fourth principle is the idea of 'novelty.' Presenting something 'new' in your reading program can excite students who are suffering from the same daily routines normally provided.

Successful reading fluency consists of reading material in a smooth and expressive manner, which should indicate that the reader understands what the author is saying. During this process, they are learning new words and their meanings.

In Readers Theatre, it is crucial for the students to read with expression, to alter their style of speaking and their tone of voice, when considering the motives of the character, in order to portray the character as authentically as possible.

Successful reading comprehension is achieved when a
child understands the significance of what is being read. Comprehension comes from the mind of the reader, and is dependent on the reader’s ability to relate it to his/her past knowledge and experience.

Reading fluency, expressive reading, and reading comprehension can be thought of as being dependent on each other. In order to comprehend what is being read, one must be able to read fluently, and in order to be able to show appropriate emotion while reading, one must first be able to comprehend what is being read.

Conclusion

In undertaking this project involving Readers Theatre, I am hoping to not only find ways to motivate my students to read, but to increase their reading fluency, expression, and comprehension.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In researching the subject of Readers Theatre in the elementary classroom, I found most of the research occurring within the last ten years, with a few going back to twenty years. Any literature before that time dealt with Readers Theatre in the college setting. According to Groff (1978), Readers Theatre has not been widely recommended by authorities on elementary-school English as a technique to use with children. In the past it has mostly been utilized by adults. In use with children it was mostly seen as experimental. Groff states that it may not have been widely recommended in the past because of an "aversion that experts in elementary-school language arts have for formal drama" (p.16). It may have been felt there was no benefit to using it in the language arts area. It belonged, if anywhere, in the drama class.

There may also have been a perception by teachers, that it was more work than it was worth. In introducing children to the process of Readers Theatre, teachers either have to find prewritten scripts (which are not widely available), or write the scripts themselves. This can be quite time-consuming. The process of teaching the children to write scripts is even more time-consuming.

There is also the issue of measurement. Sloyer's and Robertson's studies indicate that "most discussions of readers theatre focus on its possibilities for enhancing
comprehension and appreciation of literature as well as its emphasis on oral interpretation, but few claims are substantiated by research" (as cited in Wolf, 1994, p.8). Not knowing for sure whether a teaching technique you are using is really helping students to improve their reading fluency, comprehension, or critical thinking, may be another reason Readers Theatre isn’t used more widely. The above mentioned skills are not easily measured over short periods of time. Numerous long-term studies would have to be done in order to be able to perceive any benefits from using Readers Theatre in a reading program. During my research into this area, I found a lack of these kinds of studies.

More recent research on Readers Theatre, however, suggests that there are some benefits to using it in an elementary education. The readers do not need to memorize a script, as in a play. The readers read from a script during the entire performance, which frees them from the anxiety that might be associated with the fear of forgetting their parts. Readers practice reading a script, exchanging parts with each reading. One of the benefits from this process might be learning how to work cooperatively in groups. These repeated readings may also improve reading expression, fluency, and comprehension.

Hill (1995) describes “some of the features of Readers Theatre ...” as:

1. Shared reading: Readers read from a shared text or copies of the same text.
2. Group participation: All readers participate at various times.

3. Supportive reading: Even if children don’t know all the words they have the support of the teacher and other children to help them.

4. Demonstrations of how texts work: The teacher uses the text to demonstrate the reading process by drawing attention to the text organisation, meanings, words and various letter combinations. (p. 2)

Hill suggests that the teacher first read the book to the students while they follow along. This should be followed with the students reading along with the teacher, and then they can progress to the Readers Theatre scripts.

The total experience of Readers Theatre may also motivate students to read more. Since readers do not need to memorize a script, they are free to enjoy performing what they read. It might encourage an enthusiasm for all kinds of reading, and stirs their interest in quality literature which could lead to more reading.

Reading Fluency

Readers Theatre may also improve students’ reading fluency. While practicing for their performance the script is practiced many times. This repeated practice helps to improve fluency. Post (1979) states that because readers get to practice their parts repeatedly, Readers Theatre is beneficial to low achieving students as it helps them “to handle material commensurate with his/her ability and thus” affords the “child the chance to succeed right along with
the more adept reader" (p. 262). It is particularly valuable to ESL (English as a Second Language) students, as they can practice standard English while playing a part in the script. Wolf (1993) feels it can be helpful to all students who are labeled, such as ESL, LEP, Chapter 1, and Title 1. She believes "that one possible solution to the problems of labeled children is the confluence of reading with drama" (p. 541). These children can become "experts in interpretation, direction, set design, and costuming" (p. 545).

Young (1991) suggests the improvement in reading fluency, due to the repeated readings, may also improve comprehension, vocabulary, and expression. When a student doesn’t have to continually stop to decode every other word, they will gain a greater understanding of the material. Since the focus of Readers Theatre is on interpretation, their thinking skills may be sharpened and comprehension may increase. Also, children have more time to internalize the meaning of what they are reading because of the repeated practices.

Reading Expression

While the students are practicing, they are encouraged to show expression in their reading. The term expression, in the context of reading a piece of literature, is used to describe the way in which the child alters his/her style of speaking and tone of voice. This is done in conjunction with considering the motives of the character, in order to portray the character as authentically as possible. This is
one of the most important aspects of Readers Theatre, and in order to be able to show expression, a student needs to be able to read fluently and comprehend what is being read. It takes both expressiveness and an understanding of motivation to be able to successfully interpret the feelings of the characters and setting of the piece of literature. If this is done well, the audience can then use their listening and thinking skills to imagine what the characters are experiencing. This should peek their curiosity and motivate the audience to read the book from which the script was written. Without this aspect, Readers Theatre would be nothing more than a poor read-aloud experience.

**Reading Comprehension**

Petty, Petty, & Salzer (1989) state that successful reading comprehension is "more than identifying the words that the graphic symbols represent" (p. 340). It is achieved when a child understands the significance of what is being read. The repeated reading practice during Readers Theatre aids in comprehension. As students become more fluent, their vocabulary increases. To effectively interpret the characters and setting, they use their thinking skills. Fluency, increased vocabulary, and a focus on interpretation can all have a positive effect on reading comprehension.

**Other Benefits**

Students use other skills when becoming directly involved with the literature. If the teacher chooses to have them write a script, they will use their thinking and writing skills. They choose their piece of literature for
the script from many sources, such as a story, a poem, or a
song. They must then “make selective and analytical choices
in transforming the story into a script through social
negotiation, ... formulate, practice, and refine their
interpretations, and ... finally perform for an audience ...
” (Wolf 1993, p. 541). Yaffe (1989) states that students
learn “a valuable lesson – that they have something to say,
that they can say it well, and that other people are
interested in hearing it” (p. 30).

The process of using their reading and speaking skills
when performing the script for an audience, helps with “word
recognition skills, allows practice in pronunciation, and
contributes to fluency in reading” (Trousdale & Harris,
1993, p. 206). It “provides students with exposure to rich,
varied, and colorful vocabulary” (p. 206). Students learn
to alter their style of speaking and their tone of voice,
when considering the motives of the character.

Readers Theatre Scripts

Busching (1981) states that when selecting a piece of
literature to write a script from, one should look for
material that depicts the characters’ thoughts and feelings
rather than merely action. It should be of “high quality”
and “dramatically engaging” (p. 335). It is beneficial to
select a piece of literature that is motivating to the
children, such as one they’ve already read, or one they
would like to read.

For younger readers the scripts should be short at
first. When writing the script, “each character is
portrayed by a reader. A narrator’s part fills in details of the plot or setting. Action is minimal or non-existent; emotion and characterization are portrayed by the reader’s voices” (p. 331). Reader’s can stand or sit in front of the audience. Characters can stay on stage the whole time, or enter and exit when appropriate. However, as mentioned earlier, movements should be kept to a minimum.

Teachers can either obtain prewritten scripts, write their own, or engage the students in writing their own scripts. These scripts are based on a book, or a piece of literature. The scripts can be copied, word for word, or altered slightly to enhance the performance. If any alterations are made, it is extremely important, out of respect to the author, not to make any adjustments that might change the author’s meaning of the passage. Engaging students in writing their own scripts is very time-consuming, but can be very rewarding. “Children a) read a story, b) make selective and analytical choices in transforming the story into a script through social negotiation, c) formulate, practice, and refine their interpretations, d) perform for an audience, and e) evaluate their performance” (Shanklin & Rhodes [as cited in Wolf, 1994, p. 10]). Script revisions are allowed if they can be justified by the students. However, as stated above, the author’s meaning of the passage should not be altered.

Another very important issue for students to keep in mind when revising a script, is that drama is not a free-for-all. Actions have consequences in real life, and this
must be reflected in their work, and revealed to the audience. The audience must be able to believe, or they will begin to doubt. To do this well students must think of themselves as critics and artists (Wolf, 1994). In a study conducted by Shelby Wolf (1994) in an elementary classroom, students were engaged in scriptwriting, including revisions:

They became critics of their own work, evaluating ideas before making the final decisions for enactment. Their growth in adopting a critical stance was dependent on their understanding and incorporation of real life and theatre rules as well as the available resources, both props and players. (p. 27)

As children create scripts they also learn about narrative structure, and how to change indirect speech into direct speech, for example (Hill 1995):

Indirect speech: Arthur had to hold his book so close that his nose got in the way. He couldn’t see the board. Francine had to read Arthur the problems.

Direct speech: Arthur: My eyes are so bad I can hardly read this book. (holds book close to face) My nose is getting in the way! I can’t see the problems on the board either. Francine, would you please read the problems to me. I can’t see them. (Brown,
By doing this, children are learning how to invent dialogue.

Warm-Ups

Some teachers like to start each Readers Theatre lesson with warm-ups, sometimes called "vocal warm-up[s]" (Wolf 1994, p. 19). These can consist of tongue twisters, chants, rhymes, or raps. Hill (1995) has many good examples of voice warm-ups, which she feels are "a good way of building up a feeling of cohesiveness in the classroom" (p. 16). Wolf (1994) mentions "physical warm-ups" such as "sticky goo," which would be the act of removing an imaginary sticky substance from the skin.

In conclusion, some good tips on scriptwriting can be pointed out to the students:

Character's name goes on the left-hand side.
Short dialogue is used to keep the story moving quickly.
Narrator ties the story together or explains reasons for events.
Narrator 1 and narrator 2 may be better if there is lots of description.
Sound effects or music enhance a Readers Theatre.
A chorus of several voices gives dramatic effect.
(Hill, 1995, p. 47)
CHAPTER 3

Action Research Design

Description of Sample

I worked with my fourth grade class, which consisted of 27 students the first four weeks (February 2 to February 27, 1998), and 28 students the next four weeks (May 4 to May 29, 1998). The student population remained the same, with the exception of losing one student after the first four weeks, and gaining two students at the beginning of the second four weeks. The students’ reading levels ranged from Pre-K to 7th grade, and consisted of 12 boys and 15 girls the first four weeks, and 12 boys and 16 girls the second four weeks. These students attended an elementary school located in the high desert, in the city of Hesperia, Ca. 78% of the students were white, and 14% were Latino. There was one black student and one Asian student. The majority of the students come from low socioeconomic families. These students were selected because they were in my classroom, and I was going to work with them on a daily basis.

Procedure

I introduced Readers Theatre to my fourth grade class during an eight-week period. For the first four weeks, my class was divided up into four groups. They were given scripts, four of which were written entirely by me, and one taken out of a source book (Laughlin, Black, Loberg, 1991). They practiced the script for the first three weeks, and performed for other classes during the fourth week. The students were video taped during their first practice
session, and then again at the end of the four weeks.
During the four weeks the students were involved in other activities relating to the Readers Theatre. They wrote diary entries from the point of view of their character, made name cards to wear during the performances, and drew a picture of their character. They also viewed the first video tape of their first practice session, and wrote about how they could improve. At the end of that four weeks, the students filled out a student evaluation form.

During the next four weeks, the students wrote their own scripts from books they had read, and performed two of these scripts for other classes. Again the class was broken up into groups. The first two weeks were used for writing the scripts, the third and fourth for practicing, and their performances were at the end of the fourth week. The scripts were written from books from different areas across the curriculum. I copied the contents of seven books, and gave them to seven groups of students. The 7 books were A Million Fish ... More or Less by Patricia C. McKissack (1992), in the area of mathematics; Molly’s Pilgrim by Barbara Cohen (1983), in the area of social studies; Knots on a Counting Rope by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault (1966), in the area of social studies; Stone Fox by John Reynolds Gardiner (1980), in the area of social studies; The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body (1989), The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks (1986), and The Magic School Lost in the Solar System (1990), all by Joanna Cole, in the area of science. They were instructed to use them to write
scripts, by cutting out the dialog and pasting it next to the character’s name. Eventually each script was complete, I took them home, typed them up, copied two of the scripts for each character, and assigned the class to perform a Readers Theatre on those two scripts. Half of the class would perform the book The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks, and the other half, The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System.

I would attempt to evaluate improvement in comprehension during the last four weeks. At the beginning of the second four weeks, the students were given a short multiple choice question on a book they had read by themselves (The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth by Joanna Cole [1987]). At the end of the second four weeks they were given similar tests on similar books that they had been involved with in the Readers Theatre project (The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks, and The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System). Test results were compared.

**Daily Activities From Teacher’s Log**

Day 1-3 (Beginning of first four weeks of project).

these books to write scripts because my students were involved in a program called Accelerated Reading, and I used the lists of books they had read in this program to pick ones I knew they were familiar with.

I divided my class into four groups. The students who were reading at 4th grade level or higher were in The Velveteen Rabbit group which is a 4th grade level book. The students who were reading at 3rd grade level were assigned to Beware the Dragons! as it is at 3rd grade level. The students reading at 2nd grade level were in The Drinking Gourd group as it is a 2nd grade level book, and the students who were at first grade level or below were in the Frog and Toad Together group as it is a 1st grade level book. All the students had previously read the books they were assigned.

Day 4.

I used Superfudge to introduce Readers Theatre to my class. I gave the script to five of my students and asked them to go to their desks and practice their assigned parts. They were told they could come to me if they didn’t know a word. When they were ready they performed it for the rest of the class. The audience really enjoyed it. I told them they were all going to be performing a script on a book they had read. I then divided them up and gave them their scripts. I stressed the importance of showing emotion and feeling when reading their parts, and speaking loudly so the audience can hear them. I then let them practice. Once all the groups had practiced, I taped each group while they
performed for the rest of the class.

After each performance we asked for suggestions from the rest of the class on how they could improve. The most consistent reply was "read louder." A student asked me if they had to memorize their parts, and I said no. I told the class they would be reading from their scripts during their entire performance. They were very pleased.

**Day 5.**

I told students to get in their groups and to practice again, but to switch parts first. Once again I stressed how important it was to show feelings while reading. When they had practiced for about a half-hour, I had the students sit on the rug while I read *The Velveteen Rabbit* script aloud, modeling the use of expression, and high volume of voice.

**Day 6.**

I had become aware, in the previous day (day 5), that *The Velveteen Rabbit* group was taking a long time to get through their script. So, after that day's class, I cut it down as much as I could. I also had to make a few changes as I lost two students and got a new one. But students were still assigned to books they had read before.

I broke the students up into groups again to practice, changing parts again. While monitoring I noticed eight students who were making a big effort to show expression in their voices.

At the end of this time I modeled reading *Frog and Toad Together, The Drinking Gourd*, and *Beware the Dragons!*, again concentrating on showing expression, and using high volume.
Day 7.
I had each group perform for the class. In discussing their performances we all saw improvement in fluency and expression, compared to the first day they had performed for each other. I then had students make name cards of the characters in the books to be read by the student readers.

I brought up my feeling that The Velveteen Rabbit might still be too long, and that perhaps Beware the Dragon! was also too long. But both groups voted and the majority of the students did not want me to shorten their scripts. The only suggestions from students were that some students needed to talk louder, and make sure their script wasn’t hiding their faces or name cards.

Day 8.
Groups practiced. Again I noticed more expression shown. I also noticed the fluency was improving from their first performances.

Day 9.
To help students put more expression into their parts, I thought it would be helpful if they wrote diary entries from the point of view of their characters. Diary entries can help students empathize more with characters in books. I felt that if they could empathize with their characters more they might be able to show more emotion. This was their first experience with diary entries, so I first explained how to write them, and modeled it with a book I had been reading aloud to them. I monitored students as they worked on their diaries, making comments, and giving
immediate feedback. The hardest part was getting a few of the students to write in the ‘first person.’ Eventually they did all accomplish the assignment. One student had a hard time writing in the past tense, about something that had been experienced earlier. Another wrote about the whole script, instead of focusing on one incident.

Day 10.
Groups practiced.

Day 11.
Students finished their name cards and continued working on their diary entries. Some finished and started a 2nd diary entry. A few started drawing a scene from their story.

I had planned to show them the video I recorded when they performed on Day 1, but I could not get my VCR to work.

Day 12.
I showed the students the video of their first performance, asking them for suggestions on how they could improve their performances. I then asked the students to write in their journals their opinion of how their own performance was, and how they could improve.

Day 13.
I told the students they would be performing towards the end of the 4th week for another classroom. Some expressed excitement and some were nervous. Again (as on Day 4), a student nervously asked me if they had to memorize their whole part, and was relieved when I said, “No.”

We assigned permanent parts for each person to practice
for their performances. While the students performed their scripts for the class I timed each one so we could let the visiting classes know how long they would be in our room.

Day 14.
We finished the timing of all the performances.

Day 15.
Groups practiced their scripts. I told each student to stand as they were announced at the beginning by the narrator. On this day I have noticed more fluency and greater expression in their reading.

Day 16.
Groups practiced their scripts. Most of the students were doing a good job trying to show expression while reading their parts.

Day 17.
The Beware the Dragons! group performed for a 3rd grade class. I picked a 3rd grade class because the reading level of the book was 3rd grade. I video-taped their performance.

The Velveteen Rabbit group performed for a 6th grade class. I picked them because it was a long script, almost 20 minutes. I thought the older students would be able to handle sitting still that long. I video-taped their performance.

Day 18.
The Frog and Toad Together group performed for a 1st grade class, as it was a 1st grade level book. I video-taped their performance.
Day 19.
The Drinking Gourd group performed for 3rd graders. It is a 2nd grade level book, but I thought the subject matter would be appropriate for them. I video-taped their performance.

Day 20.
I asked all students to draw a picture of their character and color it. I also asked the students to give me their feelings about the whole Readers Theatre experience for them, by answering four questions in the form of four paragraphs. The questions were:

1. How do you feel about your Readers Theatre experience the last four weeks?
2. Did it change your feelings about reading?
3. Do you think it improved your reading?
4. Would you want to do another Readers Theatre?

Day 21.
I edited the video recording of the first (before) and last (after) recordings in such a manner that it would be easy to analyze the progress, if any. The same script readings of the first and last recordings were juxtaposed next to each other.

This made it easier for me to go back and forth between the first and last recordings, allowing me to compare the before and after readings. I would use these recordings to see if the students' performances improved in expression and fluency. I would compare each student's "before" performance with their "after" performance, looking
for improvement in fluency and expression.

Day 22.

I viewed the tapings to compare the students' performances on the "before" and "after" recordings. (Improvement is indicated on Chart 1.)

Day 23-32 (Beginning of second four weeks).

I copied the contents of seven books, and gave them to seven groups of students. The 7 books were A Million Fish, More or Less, Molly's Pilgrim, Knots on a Counting Rope, Stone Fox, The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body, The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks, and The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System. They were instructed to use them to write scripts, by cutting out the dialog and pasting it next to the character's name. Only one group seemed to progress at the beginning without any difficulties. The other groups were confused and expressed some frustration. They would lose their place in the script several times, leave parts out, etc. I took turns sitting with each of these groups and helped them get organized. Eventually each script was completed. I took them home, typed them up, copied two of the scripts for each character, and assigned the class to perform a Readers Theatre on those two scripts. Half of the class would perform the book The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks, and the other half, The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System.

Before the students began their practice sessions, I gave all of the students a short multiple choice test on The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth. Before I tested them I
had them read the book silently to themselves. Only 26 of these students read the book as instructed. Two students were absent, so they did not read the book. However, they did take the test later. These tests would later be compared to similar tests I would give at the end of the project, on books they were involved in a Readers Theatre on.

**Days 33-42.**

Students practiced their parts, exchanging parts each time, for the first 9 days. On the 10th day they performed for other classrooms. At the end of the day I tested all students on *The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks*, and *The Magic School Bus Lost in The Solar System*. At the top of their test I had each student write down whether or not they had read the book, and whether or not they performed a Readers Theatre on the book. All students in the class were an audience for either *The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks*, or *The Magic School Bus Lost in The Solar System*. The tests consisted of 5 multiple choice questions. These would later be used to compare comprehension. Five students were absent during this testing.

**Description of Measure**

In order to measure improvement in reading fluency and expression, I videotaped my students reading their scripts for the first time, and then again at the end of the first four weeks. Each student was observed, by me, on their "before" performance and their "after" performance, and the two were compared.
To measure improvement in comprehension, I tested 28 students on *The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth*, a book 26 of the students had read independently. Two students had not read it. The test consisted of 5 multiple choice questions. All students were told they could ask me for help on any words they did not know while reading the book. I then involved the students in a Readers Theatre on two similar books. Fourteen students performed a Readers Theatre on *The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks*, and fourteen students performed in a Readers Theatre on *The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System*. After the Readers Theatre was concluded, I tested them on these two books, with a similar test, again consisting of 5 multiple choice questions. Performances on these two tests were compared to the test on *The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth*, to see if there was a higher performance rate on the tests involved with the Readers Theatre.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

Evaluation Procedure

Fluency was felt to have improved if the student’s reading at the end of the four weeks was less halting than at the beginning, less self-correcting, and less help needed from the teacher. Emotion is best heard when the reader empathizes with the character, and the character’s situation in the script, at the time of reading. The student’s level of emotion while reading was judged to have improved if they sounded like they were putting more emotion in their reading of their character’s part, if they sounded like they were trying to portray their character more authentically, taking story plot into consideration, than they did at the beginning of the four weeks.

To evaluate improvement in fluency and expression, the video of each student at the beginning of the project, was compared, by me, to the video of each student at the end of the first four weeks.

To evaluate improvement in reading comprehension, I gave students a short multiple choice test on The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth before they began practicing for their Readers Theatres on the other two Magic School Bus books. At the end of the quarter, after the performances were done, I tested the students with similar tests on The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks, and The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System, the two books they performed Readers Theatres on. By the end of the quarter students
fell into five different categories of involvement with the three books.

1. **No Contact** - The student had not read the book, was not an audience during a Readers Theatre, or involved in a Readers Theatre on the book (two students fell into this category).

2. **Audience Only** - The student’s sole contact was as an audience during a Readers Theatre only, they had not read the book (two students fell into this category on *The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks*, and four on *The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System*).

3. **Read Only** - The student’s sole contact was reading the book by themselves (26 students fell into this category).

4. **Readers Theatre** - The student’s contact with the book included reading it and performing a Readers Theatre on it (23 students fell into this category, but five students were absent during the test).

5. **Read and Audience** - The student’s contact with the book was through reading it and being in the audience during a Readers Theatre performance on the book (17 students fell into this category).

**Description of Findings**

Out of 27 students, I observed an improvement in fluency in 24 of them (89%), see Figure 1 (It must be kept in mind that Figure 1 is the results of a qualitative test using my own judgment). The first exception was a boy who was changed from *Frog and Toad Together* (1st grade level),
Figure 1

Percentage of Students in Class Who
Improved in Reading Fluency and Emotion

![Percentage of Observed Improvement Chart]
to **The Drinking Gourd** (2nd grade level). His performance the first time sounded slightly halting. His second performance had a slight amount of halting also. The second exception was a girl who had only one line consisting of two words on her second performance. During her first performance she was a narrator, and sounded pretty fluent, with little halting during her reading. It was too difficult to tell whether she had improved on the second performance due to the short part. The third exception was a girl who was absent the first week of the project, therefore I did not get a recording of her first performance.

Out of 27 students, emotion improved significantly in 18 of them. The first exceptions was a boy in **Frog and Toad Together**. In his first performance he played Frog, and showed no emotion, and in his second performance he was a narrator and I also detected no emotion. The second exception was the boy who changed from **Frog and Toad Together** to **The Drinking Gourd**. He showed no emotion in his first performance, and little to none in his second performance. The third exception was a girl in **The Velveteen Rabbit**. She was a narrator, and although she was fluent, she didn’t show much improvement from one performance to the next in the area of emotion. The fourth and fifth exceptions were two girls in **The Drinking Gourd**. These two girls were included in Figure 1, in the area of improvement in emotion (for a total of 74%), see Figure 1.
my own judgment). They both showed a lot of emotion in both performances. The sixth exception was a boy in The Drinking Gourd. He showed very little emotion in his first performance, and if their was any improvement in the second it was too little to notice. The seventh exception was a boy in The Drinking Gourd that showed about the same small amount of emotion in both performances. The eighth and ninth exceptions were the girls discussed in the paragraph on fluency. One’s second part was too small to be able to detect any difference in emotion, and the other student was absent the first week of the project, so was not recorded.

Under the area of improvement in comprehension, out of 28 students, 27 were tested on The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth, 25 under the category of ‘Read Only’ and 2 under the category of ‘No Contact.’ (One student came into the classroom as a new student later in the quarter, and he was not tested). The average score for the ‘Read Only’ category was 92.8% (See Figure 2). The average score for the ‘No Contact’ category was 40%. After the completion of the Readers Theatre performances students were tested on the The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks and The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System. The results of the scores for the book that the students were involved with, indicated under ‘Readers Theatre,’ were 94.78%, and included 23 students. The students who read the book and were an audience during the performance had an average score of 95.29%, and included 17 students, and are indicated under the ‘Read & Audience’ category. The final category,
Figure 2

Results of Comprehension Tests

![Bar Chart showing the scores of comprehension tests with different types of contact with the book. The bars represent the following types of contact:
- No Contact
- Audience Only
- Read Only
- Readers Theatre
- Read & Audience

The chart illustrates the distribution of scores, with each type of contact having distinct bars.](chart.png)
'Audience Only,' was 73.33%, and indicated those students who had not read the book, but had been in the audience during the performance of same book. This category included six students.
CHAPTER 5

Summary

I felt this Action Research Project was a very positive experience for me and my students. I learned about a new technique for children to appreciate literature. The results of the project show that Readers Theatre can be a useful technique to use in the reading program, as it not only motivates students to read, but also increases their reading fluency, expression, and to some extent, comprehension.

According to the evaluation each child wrote, regarding their experiences, it was a positive and fun experience that they would like to repeat again in the future. Their responses to the four different questions were as follows:

1. 76% of the students felt it was a positive experience, 8% felt it was negative, and 16% felt neutral about it.

2. 76% of the students felt it changed their feelings about reading in a positive way, and 24% felt their feelings were good to begin with, and remained the same.

3. 72% of the students felt the experience improved their reading, and 28% felt it stayed about the same.

4. 92% felt they would like to do another Readers Theatre, 4% felt they would not want to, and 4% felt neutral.

One of the purposes of this action research project was to find a way to motivate children to read. Based on the students’ responses to my questionnaire, I believe it was a
success.

Based on my observations the children's fluency definitely improved through the use of Reader's Theatre. 89% of the students improved in this area. The repeated readings during the many practices really helped in this area.

In the area of emotion, I also observed improvement. 74% of the students improved in this area. As time went on most of them learned to put a lot of feeling into their performances. Video taping the first reading, and having the students watch the video while evaluating their performance, really helped them to put more emotion into their voices and speak louder. They were also able to compare their own performance with those of others, which also motivated them to do better.

In the area of improvement in comprehension, the results are not as clear. The students who were involved in a Readers Theatre on the book they were tested on scored 94.78%, which indicates that the students had a good understanding of the content of the material. In comparing this score to the students who had read the book and were an audience for the performance (95.29%), the difference is minimal. Both scores are excellent. If Readers Theatre improves comprehension you might assume that the two above mentioned scores would be significantly better than the score students received on a book they read independently, but were not involved in a Readers Theatre on (92.8%). 92.8% is also an excellent score and is not significantly
different than the two previously mentioned scores. It does appear, however, that in order for comprehension to be significantly affected, being in the audience of a Readers Theatre isn't enough, as seen by the score of 73.33%.

Reflections

One thing I would have done differently, is to prepare scripts that were more appropriate for 4th graders. *Frog and Toad Together* may have been a little boring for the three readers in that group, especially when they witnessed some of the other groups, such as the *Beware the Dragons!* group, which is a much more interesting book. The *Velveteen Rabbit* script was way too long. Even though the group decided they didn't want it shortened, I think it would have been better if I had.

Another needed improvement would be in the area of testing for comprehension. As seen by the test scores, the students' comprehension of the material was excellent. However, the scores were not significantly better than the 'Read Only' category, or the 'Read & Audience' category. I believe the results might have been more meaningful had the tests been longer, the project covered a longer period of time, and consisted of a larger sample.

As far as judging whether or not students improved in the different areas I was interested in, it would be important in the future to have a panel of third persons involved in this. There would be less chance for bias in the results.

One last thing I would like to do next time is have a
multiple-choice questionnaire for the audience, to see how they felt about their experience. This could be very helpful for performances in the future.

**Implications**

Readers Theatre does have positive effects on students in the areas of fluency, emotion, and possibly comprehension. But most important, however, was the fact that the students loved it. They felt it was a positive experience, had fun practicing and performing, and felt confident in their reading abilities by the end of the project. My students who were at-risk in the area of reading, seemed to enjoy it the most. They were able to be just as successful as the better readers.

**Other Research**

More research in the area of testing for improvements in fluency and comprehension need to be included in future research in this area. For example, does the improvement in fluency extend to new material also, and is there a better way to test for comprehension than the method used in this project.
APPENDIX A

Readers Theatre Scripts

BEWARE THE DRAGONS!
By Sara Wilson
Harper & Row, Publishers

(Script Written by Caren A. Toruno)

Suggested Staging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Tildy</th>
<th>Jebediah</th>
<th>Dragon</th>
<th>Mr. Scott</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator #1

Narrator #2

Narrator #1: The Reader’s Theatre we are going to perform is from a book called Beware the Dragons! The part of Tildy is read by

__________________________, the part of Mother

is read by ________________________, the part of the dragon named Jebediah is read by

______________, the part of the other

dragon is read by ________________________, the part of Mr. Scott is read by

__________________________, and the parts of the narrators are read by myself,

__________________________, and ________________________.

Narrator #2: The morning Tildy was to take the boat out alone, there was dragon smoke all over Spooner Bay.

Tildy: Great Crying Cuttlefish! Why’d they have to come poking around now and spoil my day?

Narrator #1: But by sunup, the smoke had cleared and there wasn’t a dragon in sight.

Tildy: They’re out in the far islands by now. They won’t be back for days! Can I row over to the general store?
Mother: Will you keep watch for anything green and smoky?

Tildy: Better’n a keen-eyed gull!

Narrator #2: Her mother brought out a map.

Mother: Don’t dare drift out near Boone’s Cove or toward the lighthouse, Matilda. Dragons in those parts are as thick as gnats, just set to eat something tasty like a little girl!

Tildy: Haven’t heard tell of anybody eaten up yet.

Mother: Doesn’t mean there won’t be! Why else would those fearsome creatures be flying around and around Spooner Bay, scaring folks day and night?

Tildy: Don’t know, but they’ve hightailed it now, and I’ve got some sailing to do!

Mother: Might be some wind coming along too. Maybe even a speck of rain. Row quick, Matilda, and if a storm blows up, stay at the store until it’s over.

Narrator #1: Tildy was too excited to think about storms. Or dragons, either.

Tildy: Right ho! (shouting) I’ll be there in the shake of a seal’s flipper!

Narrator #2: At first, Tildy rowed quickly. Then she slowed down to watch some sea gulls.

Tildy: Would you like a little lunch, birds? I’m feeling hungry myself!

Narrator #1: With the sun warm on her back, Tildy stopped rowing and forgot all about hurrying, until splat! the first raindrops fell on her nose.

Narrator #2: Soon, most of the sky had turned ink dark and a mean wind was gusting up around her.

Tildy: Whooeee! Where’d you come from?
Narrator #1: Things quickly went from bad to worse. The wind and waves carried her little boat on and on, far out into the bay, until suddenly — far from land and smack in the middle of nowhere — the boat hit a bump.

Narrator #2: Tildy couldn’t see a thing in all the rain and mist.

Tildy: Shivering Shark Tails!

Narrator #1: Tildy kept still until the storm finally cleared. But when the bump leaned to one side, Tildy sat up, and looked around, and let out one wild whooping yell.

Tildy: YEOWWW! DRAGONS! (hollering) Great Mustard Greens and Shooting Stars, I’m stuck on a dragon-bump!

Narrator #2: Before Tildy could blink her eyes, the dragons had tossed her out of the boat and up in the air like a sky rocket! The boat came flying up after her.

Tildy: HEEEELP!

Narrator #1: Except for the dragons, there was no one around to hear her.

Narrator #2: Then she heard what sounded like laughing. Dragons laughing. Big hearty roars, followed by lots of bubbling and gurgling.

Narrator #1: The laughter grew louder. It was plain to see that the dragons were having a very good time. Tildy wasn’t. Not one bit.

Tildy: Leaping Lobsters!

Narrator #2: ... Tildy gasped, shooting up in the air again. And again after that.

Narrator #1: When she finally caught her breath, Tildy wasn’t scared anymore. She was really mad! Red-faced, squinty-eyed mad.
Tildy: STOP THAT! You horrible mean nasty bullies! (shouting) You wouldn’t be so brave if there were folks around to help me! PUT ME DOWN!

Narrator #2: So they did. And with a big splash.

Jebediah: We’re very sorry.

Narrator #1: ... said a dragon who introduced himself as Jebediah.

Jebediah: We thought you came out to play with us!

Tildy: PLAY with you? Great Snapping Sea Turtles, you’re as big as houses!

Jebediah: I suppose that’s why nobody ever comes out to play with us. Nobody likes us! (look like you’re going to cry)

Narrator #2: To Tildy’s amazement, some of the dragons cried.

Dragon: It’s as lonesome as winter out here with no one to visit! (crying) Nothing but the wind yowling and no games to play and no new stories to hear, ever.

Tildy: So that’s why you come to Spooner Bay! We thought you wanted to eat us!

Jebediah: Dragons don’t eat people. We eat seaweed and crushed rock and old campfires! (starts crying too)

Narrator #1: Tildy felt terrible.

Tildy: Suffering Squid! Folks in the Bay don’t dislike dragons, they’re just afraid. If you’ll help me get home, I have an idea how to set things right and proper.

Narrator #2: The dragons decided that one idea was better than no ideas at all.

Tildy: Please ask the dragons to go orderly, now. Too much smoke and fire and roaring around is what gets to scaring folks!
Bravely, they escorted Tildy back into Spooner Bay. It turned out to be the biggest excitement for as long as anyone could remember.

Better 'n the Fourth of July!

Tildy: Better 'n the Fourth of July!

....Tildy shouted to Jebediah, riding up on top like a queen of the sea, waving at the people on shore.

When they reached land, Tildy ran quickly to Mr. Scott's General Store.

They're really very nice dragons, not mean and ornery, just lonesome! What they need now is big rubber balls and water kites and rafts. And anything else that floats, please.

Two people fainted.

Balls, and kites and rafts?

.... stammered Mr. Scott. But he and the other townspeople were too scared to say no, not with a whole bay full of dragons outside. They gave Tildy everything she asked for.

Then, while everybody on shore waited breathlessly to see what would happen next, the dragons began to play - really play - for the first time in all their hundreds of years! They flew kites on their horns. They played slide-the-ball-down-your-scales. They had raft races.

Well, I'll be a cross-eyed barnacle! Those dragons look about as fearsome as a pack of pond otters! A mite large, maybe, but what's the harm?

The other townspeople were shocked and puzzled and then relieved. They began to smile. Children begged to go out and play with Tildy.

There was a town meeting, later, before sundown.
Tildy: Please let the dragons stay. They mean no harm. They’re just plain lonesome.

Mr. Scott: About time we had some peace around here! For our part, we’ll see that no dragon lacks for good company or games.

Narrator #1: Everybody cheered. For the first time in more years than anyone wanted to count, there was nothing to be feared in Spooner Bay.

Tildy: Starbursters! The day turned out right, after all!

Narrator #2: But the best part came the next morning, when there was dragon smoke over Spooner Bay and no one seemed to mind. Least of all Tildy. She was, of course, a hero.
Readers Theatre Script

FROG AND TOAD TOGETHER
by Arnold Lobel
HarperCollins Publishers, 1971
A Newberry Honor Book

(Script Written by Caren A. Toruno)

This script comes from one of the 5 stories in this book about the close friendship between Frog and Toad. The name of the story is, “Cookies.”

Suggested Staging:

Toad

X

Frog

X

Narrator #1

X

Narrator: We are going to perform a Readers Theatre on the book called Frog and Toad Together. The part of Toad is read by ____________; the part of Frog is read by ________________; and the narrator is read by me, ________________.

Narrator: Toad baked some cookies.

Toad: These cookies smell very good.

Narrator: He ate one.

Toad: And they taste even better.

Narrator: Toad ran to Frog’s house.

Toad: Frog, Frog, taste these cookies that I have made.

Narrator: Frog ate one of the cookies.

Frog: These are the best cookies I have ever eaten!

Narrator: Frog and Toad ate many cookies, one after another.
Frog: You know, toad, (with his mouth full) I think we should stop eating. We will soon be sick.

Toad: You are right. Let us eat one last cookie, and then we will stop.

Narrator: Frog and Toad ate one last cookie. There were many cookies left in the bowl.

Toad: Frog, let us eat one very last cookie, and then we will stop.

Narrator: Frog and Toad ate one very last cookie.

Toad: We must stop eating!

Narrator: ...cried Toad as he ate another.

Frog: Yes, we need will power.

Narrator: ...said Frog, reaching for a cookie.

Toad: What is will power?

Frog: Will power is trying hard not to do something that you really want to do.

Toad: You mean like trying not to eat all these cookies?

Frog: Right.

Narrator: Frog put the cookies in a box.

Frog: There, now we will not eat any more cookies.

Toad: But we can open the box.

Frog: That is true.

Narrator: Frog tied some string around the box.

Frog: There. Now we will not eat any more cookies.

Toad: But we can cut the string and open the box.
Frog: That is true.

Narrator: Frog got a ladder. He put the box up on a high shelf.

Frog: There. Now we will not eat any more cookies.

Toad: But we can climb the ladder and take the box down from the shelf and cut the string and open the box.

Frog: That is true.

Narrator: Frog climbed the ladder and took the box down from the shelf. He cut the string and opened the box. He took the box outside and shouted in a loud voice,

Frog: HEY BIRDS. HERE ARE COOKIES!

Narrator: Birds came from everywhere. They picked up all the cookies in their beaks and flew away.

Toad: Now we have no more cookies to eat. (Sadly) Not even one.

Frog: Yes, but we have lots and lots of will power.

Toad: You may keep it all, Frog. I am going home now to bake a cake.
Readers Theatre Script

SUPERFUDGE
By Judy Blume
Published by E. P. Dutton, 1980

(Script Written by Caren A. Toruno)

Suggested Staging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Fudge</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator's Opening Lines: We are going to perform a Readers Theatre on Chapter 1, from the book called Superfudge. The character of Peter is read by ________________________, the character of Mom is read by ________________________, the character of Fudge is read by ________________________, the character of Dad is read by ________________________, and the Narrator is read by me, __________________________.

Narrator: Life was going along okay when Peter's mother and father dropped the news. Bam! Just like that.

Mom: We have something wonderful to tell you, Peter,

Narrator: ...Mom said before dinner. She was slicing carrots into the salad bowl. Peter grabbed one.

Peter: What is it?

Narrator: Peter figured maybe his father's been made president of the company. Or maybe his teacher phoned, saying that even though he doesn't get the best grades in the fifth grade, he's definitely the smartest kid in the class.

Mom: We're going to have a baby.
Peter: We’re going to what? (starting to choke)

Narrator: Dad had to whack Peter on the back to stop him from choking. Tiny pieces of chewed up carrot flew out of Peter’s mouth and hit the counter. Mom wiped them up with a sponge.

Dad: Have a baby.

Peter: You mean you’re pregnant?

Mom: That’s right. Almost four months.

Peter: Four months! You’ve known for four months and you didn’t tell me?

Dad: We wanted to be sure.

Peter: It took you four months to be sure?

Mom: I saw the doctor for the second time today. The baby’s due in February.

Narrator: Mom reached over and tried to tousle Peter’s hair. He ducked and got out of the way before she could touch him. Dad took the lid off the pot on the stove and stirred up the stew. Mom went back to slicing carrots. You’d have thought they were discussing the weather.

Peter: How could you? (shouting) How could you? Isn’t one enough?

Narrator: Mom and Dad both stopped and looked at Peter. Peter kept right on shouting.

Peter: Another Fudge! Just what this family needs.

Narrator: Peter turned and stormed down the hall. Fudge, Peter’s four-year-old brother, was in the living room. He was shoving crackers into his mouth and laughing like a loon at Sesame Street on TV. Peter looked at him and thought about having to go through it all over again. The kicking and the screaming and the messes and more - much more. Peter felt so angry that he kicked the wall.
Fudge: Hi, Pee-tah.

Peter: You are the biggest pain ever invented! (yelling)

Narrator: Fudge tossed a handful of crackers at Peter. Peter raced to his room and slammed the door, so hard his map of the world fell off the wall and landed on his bed. His dog, Turtle, barked. Peter opened the door just enough to let him squeeze through, then slammed it shut again. He pulled his Adidas bag out of the closet and emptied two dresser drawers into it. Another Fudge, he said to himself. They're going to have another Fudge. There was a knock at Peter's door.

Dad: Peter...

Peter: Go away.

Dad: I'd like to talk to you.

Peter: About what?

Dad: The baby.

Peter: What baby?

Dad: You know what baby!

Peter: We don't need another baby.

Dad: Need it or not, it's coming. So you might as well get used to the idea.

Peter: Never!

Dad: We'll talk about it later. In the meantime, scrub up. It's time for dinner.

Peter: I'm not hungry.

Narrator: Peter zipped up his bag, grabbed a jacket and opened his bedroom door. No one was there. He marched down the hall and found his parents in the kitchen.
I'm leaving. I'm not going to hang around waiting for another Fudge to get born. Good-bye.

But Peter didn't move. He just stood there, waiting to see what they'd do next.

Where are you going?

To Jimmy Fargo's.

They have a one-bedroom apartment. You'd be very crowded.

Then I'll go to Grandma's. She'll be happy to have me.

Grandma's in Boston for the week, visiting Aunt Linda.

Oh.

So why don't you scrub up and have your dinner, and then you can decide where to go.

Peter didn't want to admit that he was hungry, but he was. And all those good smells coming from the pots and pans on the stove were making his mouth water. So he dropped his Adidas bag and went down the hall to the bathroom. Fudge was at the sink. He stood on his stool, lathering his hands with three inches of suds.

Hello, you must be Bert. My name is Ernie. Glad to meet you.

He offered Peter one of his sudsy little hands.

Roll up your sleeves. You're making a mess.

Mess, mess .... I love to make a mess.

We know ... we know.
Narrator: Peter ran his hands under the faucet and dried them on his jeans. When they got to the table, Fudge arranged himself in his chair. Since he refuses to sit in his booster seat, he has to kneel so that he can reach his place at the table.

Fudge: Pee-tah didn’t scrub. He only rinsed.

Peter: You little ... .

Fudge: Hello, I’m Bert. You must be Ernie.

Father: That’s right. How are you, Bert?

Fudge: Well, I’ll tell you. My liver’s turning green and my toenails are falling off.

Father: Sorry to hear that, Bert. Maybe tomorrow will be a better day.

Fudge: Yes, maybe.

Narrator: Peter shook his head and piled some mashed potatoes on his plate. Then he drowned them in gravy.

Peter: Remember when we took Fudge to Hamburger Heaven, and he smeared the mashed potatoes all over the wall?

Fudge: I did that?

Peter: Yes, and you dumped a plate of peas on your head too.

Mom: I’d forgotten all about that day. (laughing)

Peter: Too bad you didn’t remember before you decided to have another baby.

Fudge: Baby?

Narrator: Mom and Dad looked at each other. Peter got the message. They hadn’t told Fudge the good news yet.

Mom: Yes. We’re going to have a baby.

Fudge: Tomorrow?
Mom: No, not tomorrow.
Fudge: When?
Dad: February.
Fudge: January, February, March, April, May, June, July ...
Peter: Okay ... okay ... We all know how smart you are.
Fudge: Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty ...
Peter: Enough!
Fudge: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, R, B, Y, Z, ...
Peter: Will somebody turn him off?
Narrator: Fudge was quiet for a few minutes. Then he said,
Fudge: What kind of new baby will it be?
Peter: Let's hope it's not like you.
Fudge: Why not? I was a good baby, wasn't I, Mommy?
Mom: You were an interesting baby, Fudgie.
Fudge: See, I was an interesting baby.
Mom: And Peter was a sweet baby. He was very quiet.
Peter: Lucky you had me first, or you might not have had any more kids.
Fudge: Was I a quiet baby, too?
Dad: I wouldn't say that.
Fudge: I want to see the baby.
Dad: You will.
Fudge: Now!
Dad: You can't see it now.
Fudge: Why not?

Mom: Because it's inside me.

Narrator: Here it comes, Peter thought, the big question. When Peter asked it, he got a book called How Babies Are Made. He wondered what Mom and Dad would say to Fudge. But Fudge didn’t ask. Instead, he banged his spoon against his plate and howled.

Fudge: I want to see the baby. I want to see the baby now!

Dad: You'll have to wait until February, just like the rest of us.

Fudge: Now Now Now (screaming)

Narrator: Another five years of this, Peter thought. Maybe even more. And who's to say that they aren't going to keep on having babies, one after the other.

Peter: Excuse me.

Narrator: Peter got up from the table. He went into the kitchen and grabbed his Adidas bag. Then he stood in the doorway and called,

Peter: Well, I'd better be on my way.

Fudge: Where is Pee-tah going?

Peter: I'm running away. But I'll come back to visit. Someday.

Fudge: No, Pee-tah ... don't go.

Narrator: Fudge jumped off his chair and ran to Peter. He grabbed Peter’s leg and started bawling.

Fudge: Pee-tah .... Pee-tah ..... take me with you.

Narrator: Peter tried to shake him off his leg but he couldn’t. Fudge can be really strong. Peter looked at his mother and father. Then he looked down at Fudge, who gave him the same look as Turtle when he’s begging for a biscuit.
Peter: If only I knew for sure what the baby would be like.

Dad: Take a chance, Peter. The baby won’t necessarily be anything like Fudge.

Peter: But it won’t necessarily not be like him either.

Fudge: I want an interesting baby, like me.

Peter: If you think it’s going to sleep in my room, you’re crazy.

Mom: The baby will sleep in here. In the dining area.

Peter: Then where will we eat?

Mom: Oh, we’ll think of something.

Narrator: Peter put his Adidas bag down and tried shaking Fudge off one more time.

Peter: Okay, I’ll stay for now. But when the baby comes, if I don’t like it, I’m leaving.

Fudge: Me too. Sam got a new baby and it smells. P.U. (holding nose)


Fudge: I do ... I do...

Narrator: Fudge let go of Peter and climbed into his chair.

Dad: Peter?

Peter: Sure, why not?

Narrator: And Peter sat down at the table too. Mom reached over and tousled his hair. This time he let her.
Readers Theatre Script

THE DRINKING GOURD
by F. N. Monjo
HarperCollins, 1970

(Script Written by Laughlin, M. K., Black, P. T., & Loberg, M. K. (1991) )

This script comes from chapters 2, 3, and 4, when Tommy Fuller discovers runaway slaves hidden in his father’s barn and accompanies them along the Underground Railroad.

Suggested Staging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tommy</th>
<th>Little Jeff</th>
<th>Vinnie</th>
<th>Marshall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Jeff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deacon Fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrator #1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrator #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator #1’s Opening Lines:

In this scene from F.N. Monjo’s The Drinking Gourd, young Tommy Fuller is sent home from church by his father, Deacon Fuller, for misbehaving. Although Tommy has been told to go to his room, he goes instead to the barn. As he jumps from the hayloft to the haywagon, he hears a low groan and climbs back into the loft. There he discovers a family of runaway slaves hiding in the hay wagon.

Tommy Fuller is read by ________________;
Deacon Fuller is read by ________________; Big Jeff is read by ________________; Little Jeff is read by ________________; Vinnie is read by ________________; and the Marshall is read by ________________. The narrators are myself, ________________, and ________________.

Tommy: Who’s there? (hollers)
Big Jeff: Stop right there! You won’t take us alive. (deep voice)

Narrator #2: A black man stood up, covered with hay. He had an axe in his hand.

Narrator #1: Tommy was so frightened he fell back into the hay.

Big Jeff: Oh, my goodness, Vinnie, it’s only a little boy.

Narrator #2: The man dropped the axe he held.

Big Jeff: We just hiding. We won’t hurt you.

Tommy: Does Father know you’re here? What—what are you doing in our barn?

Big Jeff: Is Deacon Fuller your daddy?

Narrator #1: Tommy nodded his head.

Big Jeff: He hid us here.

Narrator #2: A little boy stood up beside him.

Big Jeff: That’s my boy Little Jeff. I’m Big Jeff. This is my wife Vinnie. And this is Baby Pearl. We running away!

Tommy: Running away?

Vinnie: We going to Canada.

Big Jeff: We up from Carolina. We been following the drinking gourd every step of the way.

Tommy: The drinking gourd? What’s that?

Little Jeff: Shoot, boy! You mean you never heard of the drinking gourd? I’ll show you.

Narrator #1: Little Jeff points to the Big Dipper in the winter sky.

Little Jeff: That’s the drinking gourd!
Tommy: No, that’s the Big Dipper.

Little Jeff: Same thing! The front end of the drinking gourd points straight up to the North Star. Follow the North Star, and you get to Canada. Get to Canada, and you be Free!

Deacon Fuller: Thomas Dudley Fuller! Didn’t I tell you to wait in your room?

Tommy: Father! I --- I found Jeff and Vinnie and ------

Deacon Fuller: I see who you found. You found all my passengers. Don’t ask any questions. Help hitch up the horses. We’ve got to get started.

Narrator #2: The family are hidden in the hay, but they sit up to talk to Tommy.

Big Jeff: I been a slave all my life, Tommy, until two weeks ago. That was the day I decided we would run away to Canada on the underground railroad.

Tommy: The underground railroad?

Little Jeff: Shoot, boy! You never heard about that neither?

Deacon Fuller: You see, Tommy, the underground railroad isn’t a real railroad with steam engines and tracks and cars. It’s a secret group of people who believe slavery is wicked. They live in homes and farms like ours, stretching from here to Canada. Everybody in the group hides people like Jeff and Vinnie, helping them get away.

Little Jeff: And they got stations on the underground railroad.

Tommy: Like our barn!

Big Jeff: And they got conductors.

Deacon Fuller: Like me!
Vinnie: And they got passengers!

Little Jeff: Like us!

Deacon Fuller: They call it underground because it's a secret. Every bit of it has to be a secret!

Big Jeff: You right. We valuable property. My old master lost $2,500 when he lost us, if he lost a penny.

Deacon Fuller: Then I'm sure he'll send some men to try to catch you. So you get back down under that hay.

Big Jeff: Nobody's going to catch me as long as I got my axe.

Narrator #1: Then Big Jeff and Vinnie and Little Jeff and Baby Pearl all hid from sight.

Deacon Fuller: Tommy, don't say a word to anybody about what happened tonight. Big Jeff's a brave man. I'd hate to see a brave man sent back into slavery. Promise?

Tommy: I promise.

Deacon Fuller: Whoa, hosses. This is the end of the line. I have to find the boat now. It's hidden here on the riverbank.

Narrator #2: Tommy's father walked into the darkness. A whippoorwill called.

Narrator #1: After Father leaves, Tommy hears hoofbeats and four men approach.

Marshall: Say, young fellow, I'm a U.S. marshal. These are my men. We're going to search that wagon. We're looking for runaways.

Tommy: Runaways?

Marshall: A Negro slave, his wife, and two children. There's a reward for them. You wouldn't have them hidden in that wagon, would you, boy?
Narrator #2: Tommy's mouth was dry.

Tommy: You won't find anybody but hay in this wagon.

Marshall: Mebbe we better search it anyway.

Narrator #1: Tommy was scared. He thought about Little Jeff and the others hidden in the hay. If the marshal found them, he would send them back down South! They would have to be slaves! They would never be free!

Tommy: Marshal, I guess I better tell you all about it. You see, I'm Tommy Fuller, and I'm running away myself.

Marshall: You Deacon Fuller's boy?

Tommy: That's right.

Marshall: Pshaw! This is the boy made all that fuss in church this afternoon. Fishing for geese!

Narrator #2: All the men laughed.

Tommy: Father was boiling mad. He was going to give me a licking. So I ran away.

Marshall: We're chasing the wrong wagon, boys. You better go home to your pa, Tommy, and take your licking.

Tommy: Yes, sir.

Marshall: And next time you go fishing, tell your pa I want you to catch me two ducks and a nice fat turkey. That's an order.

Narrator #1: All the men laughed. Then they rode away.
Narrator #2's Closing Lines:
Tommy and Deacon Fuller are successful in sending Big Jeff and his family farther along the Underground Railroad. Deacon Fuller helps Tommy understand a new meaning for bravery.
Readers Theatre Script

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT
by Margery Williams
Published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1983

(Script Written by Caren A. Toruno)

Suggested Staging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skin Horse</th>
<th>Rabbit</th>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Nana</th>
<th>Fairy</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rabbit #1
X

Narrator #1
X

Narrator #3
X

Narrator #5
X

Narrator #1: We are performing a Reader's Theatre on the book called The Velveteen Rabbit. The part of Rabbit is read by ________________, the part of the Skin Horse is read by ________________, the part of Nana and the Fairy is read by ________________, the part of the boy is read by ________________, the part of the two live rabbits are read by ________________, and ________________, the part of the doctor is read by ________________, and the parts of the Narrators are read by myself, ________________, and ________________, and ________________, and ________________, and ________________, and ________________.
Narrator #2: There was once a Velveteen Rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. His coat was spotted brown and white, he had real thread whiskers, and his ears were lined with pink sateen. On Christmas morning, he sat wedged in the top of the Boy’s stocking.

Narrator #3: There were other things in the boy’s stocking, but the Rabbit was quite the best of all. For at least two hours the Boy loved him, and then in the excitement of company coming to dinner, and looking at all the new presents, the Velveteen Rabbit was forgotten.

Narrator #4: For a long time he lived in the toy cupboard or on the nursery floor, and no one thought very much about him.

Narrator #6: The Rabbit didn’t know that real rabbits existed; he thought they were all stuffed with sawdust like himself.

Narrator #1: The only person who was kind to him at all was the Skin Horse. The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it.

Rabbit: What is REAL?

Narrator #1: ... asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room.

Rabbit: Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?

Skin Horse: Real isn’t how you are made. It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.
Rabbit: Does it hurt?

Skin Horse: Sometimes.

Narrator #3: ....said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful.

Skin Horse: When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.

Rabbit: Does it happen all at once, like being wound up, or bit by bit?

Skin Horse: It doesn't happen all at once. You become. It takes a long time. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby.

Rabbit: I suppose you are Real?

Skin Horse: The Boys Uncle made me Real. That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always.

Narrator #4: The Rabbit longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad.

Narrator #6: There was a person called Nana who ruled the nursery.

Narrator #1: One evening, when the Boy was going to bed, he couldn't find the china dog that always slept with him. Nana was in a hurry, and it was too much trouble to hunt for china dogs at bedtime, so she simply looked about her, and seeing that the toy cupboard door stood open, she made a swoop.

Nana: Here, take your old Bunny! He'll do to sleep with you!
Narrator #2: And she put the Rabbit into the Boy’s arms. That night, and for many nights after, the Velveteen Rabbit slept in the Boy’s bed. At first the Rabbit missed his talks with the Skin Horse. But very soon he grew to like it, for the Boy used to talk to him, and made nice tunnels for him under the bedclothes that he said were like the burrows the real rabbits lived in.

Narrator #4: And so time went on, and the little Rabbit was very happy - so happy that he never noticed how his beautiful velveteen fur was getting shabbier and shabbier.

Narrator #5: Spring came, and they had long days in the garden, for wherever the Boy went the Rabbit went too. Once, when the Boy was called away suddenly to go out to tea, the Rabbit was left out on the lawn until long after dusk, and Nana had to come and look for him with the candle because the Boy couldn’t go to sleep unless he was there. He was wet from the dew and quite earthy from diving into the burrows the Boy had made for him in the flower-bed, and Nana grumbled as she rubbed him off with a corner of her apron.

Nana: You must have your old Bunny! Fancy all that fuss for a toy!

Narrator #6: The Boy sat up in bed and stretched out his hands.

Boy: Give me my Bunny! You mustn’t say that. He isn’t a toy. He’s REAL!

Narrator #1: When the little Rabbit heard that, he was happy, for he knew that what the Skin Horse had said was true at last. The nursery magic had happened to him, and he was a toy no longer. He was Real. The Boy himself had said it.
One evening, while the Boy went off to pick flowers, and the Rabbit was lying there alone, he saw two strange beings creep out of the tall bracken near him. They were rabbits like himself, but quite furry and brand-new. They must have been very well made, for their seams didn't show at all, and they changed shape in a queer way when they moved. They crept quite close to him, twitching their noses. They stared at him, and the little Rabbit stared back.

Rabbit #1: Why don’t you get up and play with us?
Rabbit: I don’t feel like it
Rabbit #2: Ho! It’s as easy as anything.
Narrator #4: And he gave a big hop sideways and stood on his hind legs.
Rabbit #2: I don’t believe you can!
Rabbit: I can! I can jump higher than anything!
Rabbit #1: Can you hop on your hind legs?
Narrator #5: That was a dreadful question, for the Velveteen Rabbit had no hind legs at all! The back of him was made all in one piece, like a pincushion. He hoped they wouldn’t notice.
Rabbit: I don’t want to!
Narrator #6: But the wild rabbits have very sharp eyes. And this one stretched out his neck and looked.
Rabbit #2: He hasn’t got any hind legs! Fancy a rabbit without any hind legs!
Narrator #2: And he began to laugh.
Rabbit: I have! I have got hind legs! I am sitting on them!
Rabbit #1: Then stretch them out and show me, like this!
Narrator #3: And he began to whirl round and dance, till the little Rabbit got quite dizzy.

Rabbit: I don’t like dancing. I’d rather sit still.

Narrator #4: The strange rabbit stopped dancing, and came so close this time that his long whiskers brushed the Velveteen Rabbit’s ear. He jumped backwards.

Rabbit #1: He doesn’t smell right! He isn’t a rabbit at all! He isn’t real!

Rabbit: I am Real! I am Real! The Boy said so! (nearly crying)

Narrator #5: Just then the Boy ran past them, and the rabbits disappeared.

Rabbit: Come back and play with me! Oh, do come back! I know I am Real!

Narrator #6: But there was no answer. The Velveteen Rabbit was all alone.

Narrator #2: Weeks passed, and the little rabbit grew very old and shabby, but the Boy loved him just as much. And then, one day, the Boy was ill. His face grew very flushed, and he talked in his sleep, and his little body was so hot that it burned the Rabbit when he held him close. The little rabbit lay very still under the bedclothes, for he was afraid that if he was found some one might take him away, and he knew that the Boy needed him.

Narrator #3: Eventually the boy got better, and one day they let him get up and dress. They carried the Boy out on to the balcony, wrapped in a shawl, and the little Rabbit lay tangled up among the bedclothes, thinking, and listening to Nana and the Doctor. The Boy was going to the seaside tomorrow. The room was to be disinfected, and all the books and toys that the Boy had played with in bed must be burnt.

Rabbit: Hurrah! Tomorrow we shall go to the seaside!

Narrator #4: Just then Nana caught sight of him.

64
Nana: How about his old Bunny?

Doctor: That? Why, it’s a mass of scarlet fever germs! - Burn it at once. Get him a new one. He mustn’t have that one any more!

Narrator #5: And so the little Rabbit was put into a sack with the old picture-books and a lot of rubbish and carried out to the end of the garden behind the fowl-house. The gardener would come early the next morning and burn the whole lot. That night the Boy slept in a different bedroom, and he had a new bunny to sleep with him.

Narrator #6: The little Rabbit felt very lonely in the sack. The sack had been left untied, and so by wriggling a bit he was able to get his head through the opening and look out. He was cold, and his thin, threadbare coat was no longer any protection to him. He thought of all the happy times he had had in the garden with the Boy, and his talks with the wise and gentle Skin Horse, and a real tear, trickled down his little shabby velvet nose and fell to the ground.

Narrator #2: And then a strange thing happened. For where the tear had fallen a flower grew out of the ground. It had slender green leaves the color of emeralds, and in the center of the leaves a blossom like a golden cup. And presently the blossom opened, and out of it there stepped a fairy. She came close to the little Rabbit and gathered him up in her arms and kissed him on his velveteen nose.

Fairy: Little Rabbit, don’t you know who I am?

Narrator #3: The Rabbit looked up at her, and it seemed to him that he had seen her face before, but he couldn’t think where.

Fairy: I am the nursery magic Fairy. I take care of all the playthings that the children have loved. When they are old and worn out and the children don’t need them any more, then I come and take them away with me and turn them into Real.
Rabbit: Wasn’t I Real before?

Fairy: You were Real to the Boy because he loved you. Now you shall be Real to every one.

Narrator #4: And she held the little Rabbit close in her arms and flew with him into the wood. In the open glade between the tree-trunks the wild rabbits danced with their shadows on the velvet grass, but when they saw the Fairy they all stopped dancing and stood round in a ring to stare at her.

Fairy: I’ve brought you a new playfellow. You must be very kind to him and teach him all he needs to know in Rabbit-land, for he is going to live with you for ever and ever!

Narrator #5: And she kissed the little Rabbit again and put him down on the grass.

Fairy: Run and play, little Rabbit!

Narrator #6: But the little Rabbit sat quite still, for he didn’t want the wild rabbits to see that he didn’t have any hind legs. He did not know that when the Fairy kissed him that last time, she had changed him altogether. And he might have sat there a long time, if just then something hadn’t tickled his nose, and he lifted his hind toe to scratch it. And he found that he actually had hind legs, and real fur, and ears that twitched, and long whiskers. He gave one leap and the joy of using those hind legs was so great that he went springing about the turf on them. He grew so excited that when at last he stopped to look for the Fairy she had gone.
Narrator #2: Autumn passed and winter, and in the Spring, when the days grew warm and sunny, the Boy went out to play in the wood behind the house. And while he was playing, two rabbits crept out from the bracken and peeped at him. One of them was brown all over, but the other had strange markings under his fur, as though long ago he had been spotted, and the spots still showed through. And about his little soft nose and his round black eyes there was something familiar, so that the Boy thought to himself:

Boy: Why, he looks just like my old Bunny that was lost when I had scarlet fever!

Narrator #3: But he never knew that it really was his own Bunny, come back to look at the child who had first helped him to be Real.
Readers Theatre Script

A MILLION FISH ... MORE OR LESS
By Patricia C. McKissack

(Script Written by: Kanica Chum, Cody Beecroft, Traci Beilharz, Vanessa Dutcher, Brett Griffin, Kyle Green, and Caren Toruno)

Suggested Staging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hugh Thomas</th>
<th>Papa-Daddy</th>
<th>Elder Abbajon</th>
<th>Miss Challie Pearl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atoo (alligator)</th>
<th>Mosley (raccoon)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chantilly (cat)</th>
<th>Birds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator: We are performing a Readers Theatre on the book called A Million Fish... More or Less. It was early morning on the Bayou Clapateaux. Hugh Thomas just tossed his line into the water when Papa-Daddy and Elder Abbajon came rowing out of the gauzy river fog. They were swapping bayou tales, just like they had for years.

Papa-Daddy: The Elder and me was just sayin' that the Bayou Clapateaux is a mighty peculiar place. Take the time back in '03, me and the Elder here caught a wild turkey weighed five hundred pounds!

Hugh Thomas: (Eyes getting big) That's a powerful big turkey.

Elder Abbajon: (quickly) As we was marchin' that gobbler home, I spied a lantern that'd been left by Spanish conquistadores back in the year 15 and 42. And it was still burning!

Hugh Thomas: After three hundred and fifty years!
Papa-Daddy: (whispering) Just when the Elder picked up that lantern, the ground commenced to quaking, and the longest, meanest cottonmouth I ever did see raised up. The thing had legs, and went to chasing us. The hounds broke and run, I got tangled up in the ropes, and that turkey got clean away. (nods quickly at Elder Abbajon)

Elder Abbajon: 'Bout that time, a swarm of giant mosquitoes attacked. I lost my footin' and dropped the lantern in a pool of quicksand. Might' near fell in myself. 'Course, as you can see, I didn't then, 'cause I'm here now.

Narrator: Hugh Thomas studied on what the two ol' swampers had told him.

Hugh Thomas: (smiles) Y'all are just funning - right? ... Did that turkey really weight five hundred pounds?

Papa-Daddy: More or less (snaps suspenders and winks eye).

Hugh Thomas: And was that lantern really over three hundred and fifty years old?

Elder Abbajon: Give or take a year or two (swats a mosquito).

Hugh Thomas: Was it really still burning?

Papa-Daddy: Well, let's just say it was flickering a bit.

Narrator: And with their tale all told, the two men rowed away.

Papa-Daddy: Remember,

Narrator: ... Papa-Daddy called just 'fore they disappeared behind the curtain of fog.

Papa-Daddy: Strange things do happen on the Bayou Clapateaux.
Narrator: Now Hugh Thomas was alone with only worrisome mosquitoes to keep him company. But it wasn't long before he caught three small fish. And in the next half-hour he caught a million more! Big ones, little ones, all sizes. The boy was so excited he whooped with joy.

Hugh Thomas: Wait 'til Papa-Daddy and Elder Abbajon see this!

Narrator: Then, loading his magnificent catch on his wagon, he turned to leave. But without warning, two yellow eyes surfaced just above the water line. Hugh Thomas knew it was Atoo, the grand-pere of all the alligators on Jackson's Pointe. The old gator slithered onto the bank, blocking the boy's way.

Atoo: (Angry) Where do you think you will go with all our fish?

Narrator: Hugh Thomas blinked. Why, that gator was talking right out!

Hugh Thomas: (scared and uncertain) Th-th-these are my fish.

Narrator: Atto's mean eyes took in the catch.

Atoo: And what's for me and mine to eat if I let you take them all?

Narrator: Hugh Thomas considered making a run for it. But the old gator must have read his mind.

Atoo: Don't even think of it! Your best chance is to figure on this. If one hundred alligators one hundred feet long can move at one hundred yards per second, how long would it take us to get from this water to you and your wagon of fish? Answer now!

Hugh Thomas: Not long enough for me to get away!

Narrator: Deciding that anything was better than tangling with Atoo and all his kin, he solved the riddle by throwing a goodly amount of fish back into the boyou.
Atoo: You make the right answer.

Narrator: Then Atoo turned and disappeared beneath the dark waters, along with the hundred other alligators who had been watching and waiting.

Narrator: Hugh Thomas still had close to a half-million fish left. He followed the swamp path that was the quickest way to Papa-Daddy and Elder Abbajon's houseboat. Story had it that Jean Polet's pirate treasure was hidden somewhere 'mongst the cypress knees, but Hugh Thomas wasn't interested.

Hugh Thomas: I've got my own treasure.

Narrator: The air grew thick, hovering over the swamp like a big smothering hand. Then the still came, a terrible kind of silence with its own sound. The boy hummed and quickened his step. Something was stalking him, closing in fast. The ghost of Jean Polet, maybe?

Narrator: No! Hugh Thomas was suddenly surrounded by an army of raccoons, led by the most notorious rogue of them all - Mosley!

Mosley: (shouting) By my leave! We'll be demanding a toll, li'l sir. And ye wagon of fish there will do nicely.

Hugh Thomas: (crying out) Wait, that's not fair!

Mosley: Not fair, says he! And what'll be fair to you?

Hugh Thomas: Half, maybe?

Mosley: Why settle on half, mate, when we can take it all?

Hugh Thomas: A contest? That's it! We'll have a contest of some kind.

Mosley: (laughing) A contest it'll be. You win, we takes half the catch. I win, we takes it all. Mind you, that's as fair as it'll be gettin'.
To Hugh Thomas's astonishment, Mosley whistled, and two black bears appeared. Reaching beneath a huge swamp cabbage, the pirate pulled out a twenty-foot snake.

We'll skip rope, says I!

And so the contest began. The bears turned and Mosley jumped. Hugh Thomas hadn't seen such fancy footwork in all his life. That rascal skipped so hard and so fast he was down in a pit when he finally missed on jump 5,552. His motley crew sent up a loud cheer.

But Hugh Thomas held his own - 1,000 ... 2,000 ... 3,000 ... 4,000 ... 4,050. Hugh Thomas jumped and jumped .... 5,000. He was so tired. His legs hurt, but he jumped some more ... 5,550. He managed just three more jumps before missing, but it was enough to win ... 5,553!

I takes me lickin', and now I'll be takin' me fish.

One by one, hundreds of masked bandits marched past the wagon and plucked a juicy treat. Then Mosley found the plumpest fish for himself and beckoned Hugh Thomas to hurry along.

Even though his catch was cut by half again, Hugh Thomas still felt like a winner. Moving with purpose, he passed the large cypress stump called Napoleon's Elbow, then quit the swamp. Winding his way through the deserted grounds of the Mossland Mansion, he held with tradition and threw part of his catch to the waterfowl that lived in the old garden pool. Since slaver times, fishermen believed that feeding these birds would bring them luck the next time out.

Thief! Thief!

A fish crow spied Hugh Thomas's catch and sent up a signal. Birds darkened the sky. They swooped down, speared their fish, and soared away, screeching.
Birds: Thief! Thief!

Hugh Thomas: Shoo!

Narrator: But the birds chased Hugh Thomas across the parish road and under the trestle, stopping just short of the first house in Free Jack's Quarters.

Narrator: Chantilly, the neighbor girl's cat, was sunning on the porch steps. Her gray eyes were fixed on the wagonful of plump fish.

Chantilly: (excited) Why, it's a Christmas gift! .... (In a soft purr) To see you, that is. It's not my custom to report on my mistress's whereabouts. But if you want to see Miss Challie Pearl, she's with Walter Edward, out back in the okra patch. Can't you hear them laughing together?

Narrator: Without thinking, Hugh Thomas hopped the fence and disappeared around the house. Sometime later, he came back with his friend in tow.

Hugh Thomas: (excited) Come see for yo'self. It was a million fish!

Challie: What million? I see three little fish.

Hugh Thomas: (looking confused) You tricked me Chantilly. You ate my fish! Say you did!

Narrator: The cat blinked innocently and cleaned her whiskers. Challie Pearl scooped up her pet.

Challie: You must be addled, Hugh Thomas! Come tellin' that whopper, then layin' blame on my poor precious kitty-cat.

Narrator: With only the three fish left, Hugh Thomas followed the path to the backwater slough where Papa-Daddy and Elder Abbajon's houseboat was tied up. They were sitting on the front porch playing checkers.

Elder Abbajon: Seems the boyou let you come'way with a fine catch this morning.
Papa-Daddy: Best luck a fisherman can have is to catch just enough for dinner.

Hugh Thomas: But I caught a million more. What happened to 'em is a long story.

Papa-Daddy and Elder Abbajon: So, you've learned that the Bayou Clapateaux is a mighty strange place. Tell us, now, was it really a million?

Hugh Thomas: (winking and smiling) More or less.

Narrator: ...answered Hugh Thomas, and he started right in on his tale.
Readers Theatre Script

**Knots on a Counting Rope**
by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

(Script Written by: Danny Meissenburg, Rhett Malachowski, Reynaldo Monterrosa, and Caren Toruno)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Staging:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator: We are going to perform a Readers Theatre on a book called *Knots on a Counting Rope*. It’s a story of love, hope, and courage. The counting rope is a metaphor for the passage of time, and for a boy’s emerging confidence in facing a great challenge. (pause)

On a cool, dark night, under a canopy of stars, an Indian boy sits with his grandfather, bathed in the glow of a campfire.

Boy: Tell me the story again, Grandfather. Tell me who I am.

Grandfather: I have told you many times, Boy. You know the story by heart.

Boy: But it sounds better when you tell it, Grandfather.

Grandfather: Then listen carefully. This may be the last telling.

Boy: No, no, Grandfather. There will never be a last time. Promise me that. Promise me.

Grandfather: I promise you nothing, Boy. I love you. That is better than a promise.

Boy: And I love you, Grandfather, but tell me the story again. Please.

Grandfather: Once there was a boy child ...

Boy: No, Grandfather. Start at the beginning. Start where the storm was crying my name.
It was a dark night, a strange night. Your mother and father and I were safe in the hogan ...

... and the sheep were safe in the pen ...

... when a wild storm came out of the mountains ...

... crying, "Boy-eeeeeeeee! Boy-eeeeeeeee!"

... and your mother said, "I hear it in the wounded wind. A boy child will be born tonight."

Then what happened, Grandfather?

I rode up the canyon fast, to bring the grandmother. It is not a good sign for a child to be born without a grandmother’s blessing.

Was the wind still calling for me, Grandfather?

Yes, Boy, it was whipping up sand as sharp as claws, and crying like a bobcat, "Boy-eeeeeeeee! Boy-eeeeeeeee!"

 Were you afraid, Grandfather?

I was much afraid.

Then what happened, Grandfather? Just as I was born ... tell me that part.

It was strange ... strange. Just as you came forth and made your first cry, the wind stopped howling and the storm was over ...

The grandmother took you up in her arms, and said, "He will walk in beauty ... to the east ... forever.

And I was born strong, wasn’t I, Grandfather?

No, you were not strong. You were sick and frail. We thought you would die. ... All night you lay silent with your eyes closed, your breath too shallow, too weak for crying ...
Boy: ... and you carried me out to see the morning, Grandfather, but I did not open my eyes. Tell me that part.

Grandfather: Two great blue horses came galloping by ...

Boy: ... and they stopped, Grandfather! They stopped and looked at me ...

Grandfather: ... and you raised your arms to the great blue horses, and I said, "See how the horses speak to him. They are his brothers from ...

Boy: ... from beyond the dark mountains. This boy child will not die." That is what you said, isn't it, Grandfather?

Grandfather: Yes, Boy, that is what I said, "This boy child will not die. The great blue horses have given him the strength to live."

Boy: And that is when you named me, isn't it, Grandfather?

Grandfather: After you smiled your first smile, we had the naming ceremony. All of the grandmothers and grandfathers were there.

Boy: And you named me Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses.

Grandfather: It is a strong name.

Boy: Did I need a strong name, Grandfather?

Grandfather: All children need a strong name to help them grow strong.

Boy: And I grew strong, didn't I?

Grandfather: Yes, Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses, and each day you are growing stronger. You are learning to cross the dark mountains.

Boy: I already have crossed some of the dark mountains.

Grandfather: There will be more, Boy. Dark mountains are always around us. They have no beginnings and ...
Boy: ... they have no endings. But we know they are there, Grandfather, when we suddenly feel afraid. ... Will I always have to live in the dark?

Grandfather: Yes, Boy. You were born with a dark curtain in front of your eyes.

Boy: But there are many ways to see, Grandfather.

Grandfather: Yes, Boy, you are learning to see through your darkness because you have the strength of blue horses.

Boy: I see the horses with my hands, Grandfather, but I cannot see the blue. What is blue?

Grandfather: You know morning, Boy.

Boy: Yes, I can feel morning. Morning throws off the blanket of night.

Grandfather: And you know sunrise.

Boy: Yes, I hear sunrise, in the song of the birds.

Grandfather: And you know sky, Boy.

Boy: Yes, sky touches my face ... soft, like lambs' wool ... and I breathe its softness.

Grandfather: Blue is all of these. Blue is the feeling of a spring day beginning. Try ... try to see it, Boy.

Boy: Blue? ... blue? Blue is the morning ... the sunrise ... the sky ... the song of the birds ... O, I see it! Blue! Blue! Blue is happiness, Grandfather! I feel it ... in my heart!

Grandfather: There was a sweep of blue in the rainbow, Boy, that morning your horse was born.

Boy: O, tell me that part, Grandfather! I could not see the rainbow but I can still feel its happiness.
Boy: 
Grandfather: I awakened you, Boy, during the night, remember, just before the foal was born.

Boy: And you said to me, "Come, Boy, Circles is ready to foal. The colt will be yours." ... And I named the little wet foal ... Rainbow!

Grandfather: You have trained her well, Boy.

Boy: Rainbow is smart, Grandfather.

Grandfather: Like you. She is good at remembering.

Boy: Rainbow is my eyes, Grandfather. She takes me to the sheep, wherever they are, and when I am ready, she finds the way home.

Grandfather: No one thought you could teach her to race, Boy ...

Boy: ... but I did, Grandfather! Every day, day after day, we followed you along the trail ... And you let me hold the reins.

Grandfather: You traced the trails in your mind, boy, both you and Rainbow.

Boy: Yes, Grandfather, we learned the trails by heart ... up South Mountain to Granite Rock ... down the steep shortcut to Meadow-of-Blue-Flowers ... then straight across the Red Flats to Lightning-Split-Tree ... then down the switchbacks to the canyon trail ... and on around to the finish line. I learned from Rainbow when to turn by the pull of her neck and by counting her gallops. Now tell me again about the race, Grandfather.

Grandfather: It was a tribal day, Boy. You and the other boys were at the starting line ... but you pulled back.

Boy: I was afraid, Grandfather, until you called to me. Tell me again what you said.

Grandfather: I said, "Don't be afraid, Boy! Trust your darkness! Go like the wind!"
Boy: And I leaned forward on Rainbow’s neck. I grabbed her mane tight, and I said, “Go, Rainbow, go!” I could feel the pushing and crowding and galloping thunder all around me. Rainbow and I went twisting, turning, galloping, galloping, galloping, counting the gallops ... remembering the way ... And what did the people say, Grandfather!

Grandfather: They said, “Who is that boy riding bareback ... racing the race with all of his heart?”

Boy: And you said, “That is Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses ... He and his horse are together like one.” ... but I didn’t win, Grandfather.

Grandfather: No, but you rode like the wind.

Boy: The wind is my friend, Grandfather. It throws back my hair and laughs in my face.

Grandfather: You see the wind better than I, Boy.

Boy: I finished the race, hot and dusty, sweat dripping from my face ...

Grandfather: And you were smiling, Boy!

Boy: I wasn’t afraid, Grandfather. I could see through the dark every turn of the race. Rainbow and I knew the way.

Grandfather: You were crossing dark mountains, Boy!

Boy: Tell me again what you told me then. I like to hear it over and over.

Grandfather: I said, “Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses, you have raced darkness and won! You now can see with your heart, feel a part of all that surrounds you. Your courage lights the way.”

Boy: And what did the grandmothers say?

Grandfather: You tell me, Boy. I know you remember.

Boy: Yes, I remember, Grandfather. They said, “This boy walks in beauty. His dreams are more beautiful than rainbows and sunsets.”
Grandfather: Now, Boy ... now that the story has been told again, I will tie another knot in the counting rope. When the rope is filled with knots, you will know the story by heart and can tell it to yourself.

Boy: So that I will grow stronger, Grandfather?

Grandfather: Yes ... stronger ... strong enough to cross the dark mountains.

Boy: I always feel strong when you are with me, Grandfather.

Grandfather: I will not always be with you, Boy.

Boy: No, Grandfather, don’t ever leave me. What will I do without you?

Grandfather: You will never be alone, Boy. My love will always surround you ... with the strength of blue horses.
Readers Theatre Script

Stone Fox
by John Reynolds Gardiner

(Script Written by:
Sarah James, Aaron Zuniga, Chris Schwartz, and Caren Toruno)

Suggested Staging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrator</th>
<th>Little Willy</th>
<th>Snyder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator: We are going to perform a Readers Theatre on the book called Stone Fox.

(Everyone stands up one at a time and announces what characters they are playing)

Narrator: Little Willy lives on a potato farm with his grandfather. His grandfather is sick and Little Willy gets Doc Smith. Doc Smith says it’s a sickness that can’t be cured. Grandfather can’t speak, and only communicates by moving his hands and fingers. Little Willy has been riding his sleigh with his dog Searchlight. When they get home, they see a man on the front porch.

Snyder: Get over here!

Narrator: Snyder’s voice cut through the air like the twang of a ricocheting bullet. Little Willy had never heard a voice like that before. Not on this farm. He couldn’t move. But Searchlight sure could. The owner of the voice barely had time to step back into the house and close the door. Searchlight barked and snarled and jumped at the closed door. Then the door opened a crack. The man stood in the opening. He was holding a small derringer and pointing it at Searchlight. His hand was shaking.

Little Willy: Don’t shoot! (shouting)

Narrator: Little Willy reached out and touched Searchlight gently on the back. The barking stopped.

Little Willy: Who are you?
Snyder: (With authority) Name's Clifford Snyder. State of Wyoming.

Little Willy: What do you want?

Snyder: Official business. Can't the old man inside talk?

Little Willy: Not regular talk. We have a code. I can show you.

Narrator: Snyder again aimed his gun at Searchlight, who had begun to growl.

Snyder: (demanding) Leave that ... thing outside.

Little Willy: She'll be alright if you put your gun away.

Snyder: No!

Little Willy: Are you afraid of her?

Snyder: I'm not ... afraid.

Little Willy: Dogs can always tell when someone's afraid of them.

Snyder: Just get in this house this minute. (yelling)

Narrator: Little Willy left Searchlight outside. But Clifford Snyder wouldn't put his gun away until they were all the way into Grandfather's bedroom. And then he insisted that little Willy shut the door. Grandfather's eyes were wide open and fixed on the ceiling. He looked much older and much more tired than he had this morning.

Snyder: You're no better than other folks. And anyway, it's the law. Plain and simple.

Narrator: Little Willy didn't say anything. He was busy combing Grandfather's hair, like he did every day when he got home. When he finished he held up the mirror so Grandfather could see.
Snyder: I’m warning you. If you don’t pay ... we have our ways. And it’s all legal. All fair and legal. You’re no better than other folks.

Little Willy: Do we owe you some money, Mr. Snyder?

Snyder: Taxes, son. Taxes on this farm. Your grandfather there hasn’t been paying them.

Narrator: Little Willy is thinking to himself ...

Little Willy: Taxes? (confused) Grandfather had always paid every bill. And always on time. ... So what’s this about taxes? Grandfather never mentioned them before. There must be some mistake.

Little Willy: Is it true Grandfather?

Narrator: But Grandfather didn’t answer. Apparently he had gotten worse during the day. He didn’t move his hand, or even his fingers.

Snyder: Ask him about the letters.

Little Willy: What letters?

Snyder: Every year we send a letter - a tax bill - showing how much you owe.

Little Willy: I’ve never seen one. (insisting)

Snyder: Probably threw 'em out.

Little Willy: Are you sure ... .

Narrator: And then Little Willy remembered the storage box. He removed the boards in the floor, then lifted the heavy box up onto the floor. He opened it and removed the papers. The papers he remembered seeing when he had looked for the money to rent the horse.

Little Willy: Are these the letters?

Narrator: Snyder snatched the letters from little Willy’s hand and examined them.
Snyder: Yep, sure are. These go back over ten years. This here is the last one we sent.

Narrator: Snyder holds up one of the letters. Little Willy looked at the paper. There were so many figures and columns and numbers that he couldn’t make any sense out of what he was looking at.

Little Willy: How much do we owe you, Mr. Snyder?

Snyder: Says right here. Clear as a bell.

Narrator: Snyder jabbed his short finger at the bottom of the page.

Little Willy: (eyes popping open) Five hundred dollars! We owe you five hundred dollars?

Narrator: Snyder nods his head and rocks forward onto his toes, making himself taller.

Snyder: And if you don’t pay, I figure this here farm is just about worth ...

Little Willy: (screaming) You can’t take our farm away!

Narrator: Searchlight begins barking outside. Snyder smiles, exposing his yellow, tobacco-stained teeth.

Snyder: Oh yes we can.

Narrator: Read Stone Fox to find out if Little Willy finds a way to help Grandfather save the farm.
Readers Theatre Script

**Molly’s Pilgrim**
by Barbara Cohen

(Script Written by: Crystal Crook, Elsa Flores, Doris Littleton, Christina Rhoten, Amber Schwartz, and Caren Toruno)

**Suggested Staging:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emma</th>
<th>Molly</th>
<th>Elizabeth</th>
<th>Mama</th>
<th>Miss Stickley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrator:** We are performing a Readers Theatre on a book called *Molly’s Pilgrim*. It is about a girl named Molly, who moves here from Russia. There are two girls named Elizabeth and Hilda that call her awful names.

*(Everyone stands up one at a time and announces what characters they are playing)*

**Narrator:** Molly didn’t like the school in Winter Hill. In Winter Hill they laughed at her. Elizabeth laughed most of all. Molly never raised her hand to answer a question, but when Miss Stickley called on her, she had to say something. Her English wasn’t perfect yet, so Elizabeth always giggled at whatever Molly said. Miss Stickley would stare at Elizabeth, and then she’d shut up. But later, in the schoolyard, she’d say ...

**Elizabeth:** You talk funny, Molly. You look funny, Molly.

**Narrator:** And then she’d sing a song.

**Elizabeth:** Jolly Molly, Your eyes are awfly small. Jolly Molly, Your nose is awfly tall.

**Narrator:** Hilda and Kitty would sing the song, too, and sometimes even Fay and Emma. They all admired Elizabeth. One day Elizabeth and Hilda followed Molly halfway home, singing that terrible song. Molly ran home and burst into tears. Her mother put her arms around Molly. Molly’s mother felt like a big, soft cushion.
Mama: Shaynkeith, what’s the matter?

Narrator: Molly’s mother didn’t speak much English. She talked to Molly in Yiddish.

Molly: Mama, let’s go back to New York City. In this third grade, there aren’t any other Jewish children. I don’t talk like the other girls. They make fun of me. I hate going to school.

Mama: Oi, Malkeleh, we can’t go back to New York City. In New York, Papa had to work in a factory. We had to live in a poor tenement house. Here in Winter Hill, Papa has a good job in Mr. Brodsky’s store downstairs, and Mr. Brodsky even lets us live in this nice apartment.

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

Mama: If the Cossacks haven’t burned it down (angry). They burned the synagogue. One day, who knows, they would have burned us. May they grow like onions, with their heads in the ground. (pause) In Goraduk, Jewish girls don’t get to go to school at all. They have to grow up ignorant, like donkeys. I’ll go to your school, I’ll talk to the teacher. She’ll make those paskudnyaks stop teasing you.

Molly: (interrupting quickly) No, Mama, no! You don’t have to do that.

Narrator: Molly didn’t want Miss Stickley or Elizabeth to see Mama. She didn’t talk like the other mothers; she hardly talked English at all. She didn’t look like them either.

Molly: It’ll be all right. I’ll talk to Miss Stickley myself.

Narrator: But of course Molly didn’t talk to Miss Stickley, and nothing changed. But she didn’t say another word about it to Mama. Then one day in November, during Reading, Miss Stickley said ...
Miss Stickley: Open your books to page one hundred and thirty-two. You may begin, Molly.

Narrator: Molly looked at the title.

Molly: The First... The First Th... Th... Th...

Narrator: Molly shook her head.

Molly: Miss Stickley, I don’t know that word.

Miss Stickley: It’s a hard word, Molly, especially if you haven’t seen it before. Who can tell Molly what that word is?

Elizabeth: Thanksgiving (tossing her long black curls). I thought everyone knew that.

Molly: Thanksgiving? Thanksgiving? What’s Thanksgiving?

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

Miss Stickley: The story will explain the word, Molly. Go ahead, start reading.

Narrator: Molly read three more sentences and didn’t stumble over any more words. Then the class took turns reading. Molly thought it was a good story. It was about the Pilgrims and how they started the holiday of Thanksgiving. Molly had never heard of Pilgrims before.

Miss Stickley: Now, children, I’m tired of decorating the room with paper turkeys and paper pumpkins every Thanksgiving. I thought it would be fun to do something different this year. (excited) We’ll make a model of the Pilgrim village at Plymouth, Massachusetts, celebrating the first Thanksgiving. We’ll make the houses and the church here in school. But I want you to make the people at home. You can make dolls out of clothespins. The boys can make Indians and the girls can make Pilgrims. If you sit in row one, two, or three, make a woman. If you sit in row four, five, or six, make a man.
Narrator: Molly sat in row two. She had to make a Pilgrim woman.

Miss Stickley: Bring your dolls tomorrow. Then I’ll show you how to make houses out of cardboard.

Narrator: When Molly got home, Mama said ...

Mama: Nu, shaynkeit, do you have any homework?

Molly: I need a clothespin.

Mama: A clothespin? What kind of homework is a clothespin?

Molly: I have to make a doll out of it. A Pilgrim doll.

Mama: Nu, Malkeleh, what’s a Pilgrim?

Molly: Pilgrims came to this country from the other side.

Mama: Like us.

Molly: They came for religious freedom. They came so they could worship God as they pleased.

Mama: Do you have any other homework?

Molly: Yes, I have ten arithmetic problems. They’re hard.

Mama: Do them, and then go out to play. I’ll make the doll for you. I’ll make it tonight. It’ll be ready for you in the morning.

Molly: Just make sure it’s a girl doll.

Mama: Naturally. Who ever heard of a boy doll?
Narrator: The next morning as Molly sat down at the table for breakfast, the doll was at her place. Maybe she had started out as a clothespin, but you’d never have known it to look at her. Mama had covered the clothespin with cloth and stuffing. She had made hair out of dark brown yarn and she’d embroidered eyes, a nose, and a mouth on the face. She had dressed the doll in a long, full red skirt, tiny black felt boots, and a bright yellow high-necked blouse. She had covered the yarn hair with a yellow kerchief embroidered with red flowers.

Molly: She’s gorgeous, Mama. But Mama (slowly) she doesn’t look like the Pilgrim woman in the picture in my reading book.

Mama: No?

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

Mama: (laughing) Of course. I did that on purpose.

Molly: You did, Mama? Why?

Mama: What’s a Pilgrim, Shaynkeith? A Pilgrim is someone who came here from the other side to find freedom. That’s me, Molly. I’m a Pilgrim!

Narrator: Molly was sure there was something wrong with what Mama was saying. She was not the kind of Pilgrim Miss Stickley or the reading book had been talking about. But it was too late to make another doll now. All she could do was take the only one she had to school with her.

Most of the dolls were out on the desks. Molly had carried hers inside a little paper bag. She put it inside her desk without even taking it out of the bag.

The bell hadn’t rung yet. Elizabeth and Hilda were walking up and down the aisles, pointing to the dolls and whispering. When they came to Molly’s desk, Elizabeth said in a low voice, ...
Elizabeth: Miss Stickley’s going to be mad at you, jolly Molly. She doesn’t like people who don’t do their homework.

Molly: (muttering) I did it.

Elizabeth: Well, then, let’s see it.

Narrator: Molly shook her head.

Elizabeth: You didn’t do it. (taunting) You didn’t, you didn’t.

Narrator: Molly opened her desk and took out the paper bag. Slowly she pulled out the doll.

Elizabeth: Oh, my goodness. How can anyone be as dumb as you, jolly Molly? That’s not a Pilgrim. Miss Stickley is going to be really mad at you. Miss Stickley’s going to get you this time.

Narrator: Molly’s face felt hot as fire. The bell rang. Elizabeth and Hilda rushed to their seats. Molly shoved the doll back into her desk. Miss Stickley walked around the room, just as Elizabeth had. She looked at each one of the dolls.

Miss Stickley: Why Michael, what a magnificent headdress. Where did you find so many feathers? ... Sally, she’s lovely. Such an interesting face .... Such beautiful gray silk, Elizabeth. Yours is a very rich Pilgrim.

Elizabeth: I think she’s the best so far.

Miss Stickley: Well, she’s very good.

Narrator: Then Miss Stickley came to Molly. Without looking up, Molly pulled her doll out of the desk. Elizabeth laughed out loud.

Elizabeth: My goodness, Molly. That’s not a Pilgrim. That’s some Russian or Polish person. What does a person like that have to do with Pilgrims?

Miss Stickley: She’s very beautiful. Perhaps Molly just didn’t understand.
Molly: Mama said ...

Narrator: Elizabeth giggled again. Miss Stickley put her hand on Molly’s shoulder.

Miss Stickley: Tell me what your mama said, Molly.

Molly: This doll is dressed like Mama. Mama came to America for religious freedom, too. Mama said she’s a Pilgrim.

Narrator: Elizabeth hooted. She wasn’t the only one. Miss Stickley marched up to the front of the room. She turned and faced the class.

Miss Stickley: Listen to me, Elizabeth (loudly). Listen to me, all of you. Molly’s mother is a Pilgrim. She’s a modern Pilgrim. She came here, just like the Pilgrims long ago, so she could worship God in her own way, in peace and freedom. Elizabeth, do you know where the Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving?

Elizabeth: They just thought it up, Miss Stickley.

Miss Stickley: No, Elizabeth. They read in the Bible about the Jewish harvest holiday of Tabernacles. The Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving from Jews like Molly and her mama. May I have your doll for a while, Molly?

Molly: Sure.

Miss Stickley: I’m going to put this beautiful doll on my desk, where everyone can see it all the time. It will remind us all that Pilgrims are still coming to America. I’d like to meet your mama, Molly. Please ask her to come to see me one day after school.

Emma: Your doll is the most beautiful, Molly. Your doll is the most beautiful one of all.

Molly: Yes, I know.

Narrator: Molly decided if Miss Stickley actually invited her, it was all right for Mama to come to school. Molly decided something else, too. She decided it takes all kinds of Pilgrims to make a Thanksgiving.
Readers Theatre Script

The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body
by Joanna Cole

(Script Written by: Tina Guillen, Dominic Inigarida, Justin Pearson, Jennifer Rhoten, Sabra Graber, Alicia Lee, and Caren Toruno)

Suggested Staging:
Ms. Frizzle Dorothy Ann Wanda Phoebe John Arnold Amanda
X X X X X X
Narrator Little Bird
X X

Narrator: Today we are going to perform a Readers Theatre on a book called The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body.

(Everyone stands up one at a time and announces what characters they are playing)

Narrator: It all began when Ms. Frizzle showed the class a filmstrip about the human body. The kids knew trouble was about to start, because they knew Ms. Frizzle was the strangest teacher in the school.

Ms. Frizzle: We’re going to learn about ourselves. This should interest you, Arnold!

Amanda: A filmstrip is only the beginning, you know.

Dorothy Ann: Yeah! I bet she has books about this, too.

Wanda: When’s recess?

Narrator: The very next day, The Friz made them do an experiment on their own bodies.

Phoebe: Oooh, Weird!

Narrator: Then she announced that they were going on a class trip to the science museum. They were going to see an exhibit about how their bodies get energy from the food they eat.
Ms. Frizzle: Your cells need energy to help you grow, move, talk, think, and play.

Narrator: The trip started out like any other trip. They rode to the museum in the old school bus. Along the way, they stopped at a park for lunch.

Arnold: I'll trade you these terrific fish sticks for that horrible peanut butter and banana sandwich.

John: Forget it!

Narrator: When it was time to go, everyone got back on the bus - everyone but Arnold. He was still at the picnic table, daydreaming and eating a bag of Cheesie-Weesies.

Ms. Frizzle: When you eat, your body digests the food so your cells can use it to make energy. Hurry up, Arnold!

Narrator: Ms. Frizzle reached for the ignition key, but instead she pushed a strange little button nearby.

Amanda: At once, we started shrinking and spinning through the air.

Dorothy Ann: From inside we couldn't see what was happening. All we knew was that we landed suddenly . . .

Wanda: . . . and then we were going down a dark tunnel. We had no idea where we were. But, as usual, Ms. Frizzle knew. She said we were inside a human body, going down the esophagus - the tube that leads from the throat to the stomach.

Narrator: They didn't know it, but they were inside Arnold's body!

Phoebe: Most of us were too upset about leaving Arnold behind to pay much attention.

Kids: Where's Arnold?

Amanda: He got left!
Dorothy Ann: That's what happens when you eat junk food!

Wanda: I thought we were going to the museum.

Ms. Frizzle: There's been a slight change of plans ... we're being digested instead. We are now passing into the stomach.

Narrator: It wasn't exactly quiet in there. The walls of the stomach moved in and out, churning and mashing the food into a thick liquid. The bus was turning round and round and digestive juice splashed the windows. Now we knew how it felt to be a hamburger! Ms. Frizzle drove to the bottom of the stomach.

Ms. Frizzle: We'll drive through this opening to the small intestine. In the small intestine, food is broken down into molecules tiny enough for the body cells to use.

Phoebe: I wanna go home!

Wanda: But this is educational.

Phoebe: Does education have to be messy?

Arnold: I don't feel so good. Maybe it was something I ate.

Little Bird: Poor kid!

Narrator: The small intestine was a coiled-up hollow tube. The inner walls of the tube were covered with tiny "fingers" called villi.

Ms. Frizzle: In the villi are tiny blood vessels. Food molecules are taken into these blood vessels. Once the food is in the blood, it can travel all over the body.

Dorothy Ann: We felt ourselves getting even smaller, and Ms. Frizzle started driving into one of the villi.

Amanda: She was going straight into a blood vessel!

Ms. Frizzle: Class, the bus is following the path of the food molecules into the blood.
Phoebe: You mean this body thinks we're food?
Amanda: That's better than being waste.
Dorothy Ann: I wish Arnold were here to see this.
John: Yeah! It's so gross!
Wanda: Now we were in the blood, but it did not look red.
Ms. Frizzle: Blood is not just a red liquid. It's made of cells, floating in a clear fluid.
John: Those cells look like red rubber saucers!
Ms. Frizzle: Those are red blood cells. They carry oxygen from the lungs to all the cells of the body.
Narrator: Here and there a white blood cell was busy destroying disease germs.
Ms. Frizzle: White blood cells are like soldiers protecting your body from enemies.
John: Looking back, we saw a white blood cell chasing the bus.
Ms. Frizzle: We'll be safer with the red blood cells, kids.
Narrator: Ms. Frizzle reached for the handle that controlled the bus's doors.
Kids: Don't do it! (yelling)
Narrator: But when did Ms. Frizzle ever listen? The doors of the bus flew open. The kids were swept out of the bus and into the bloodstream.
Ms. Frizzle: Everybody hitch a ride! (yelling)
Narrator: Each kid grabbed a red blood cell as it went by. Their last glimpse of the bus was when it went into another blood vessel - with the white blood cell right behind it!
Arnold: Oh my gosh! I'm lost!
Little Bird: Don’t panic.

Ms. Frizzle: These red blood cells have turned dull red—they need more oxygen.

Narrator: The next thing they knew, they had flowed into the heart.

Ms. Frizzle: Inside the heart are four hollow spaces, called chambers. Each chamber is a little pump.

Narrator: The two chambers on the right side of the heart took in used blood from the body and pumped it to the lungs. In the lungs, the red cells picked up fresh oxygen.

Ms. Frizzle: We get new oxygen from the air each time we breathe in. We get rid of a waste gas—carbon dioxide—each time we breathe out.

Arnold: My heart is pounding.

Little Bird: Take a deep breath. You’ll be OK.

Narrator: From the lungs, the red blood cells carried them back to the heart. This time they were on the left side of the heart—the side that pumps fresh blood back to the body again.

Ms. Frizzle: Kids, it looks as if these red blood cells are on their way to the brain.

John: Look! When the red blood cells pick up oxygen, they turn bright red.

Ms. Frizzle: Class, those brain cells need more oxygen!

Phoebe: We’ll never get home unless we find the bus.

Dorothy Ann: Maybe we’ll find it in the brain.

Arnold: Which way back to school?

Little Bird: Use your brain.
Narrator: When they reached the brain, they let go of their red blood cells and squeezed out of the blood vessel. It was hard to believe that this wrinkled gray blob was the control center of the body.

Ms. Frizzle: Children, we are walking on the cerebral cortex, the pinkish gray, outer layer of the brain. Without it we couldn’t see, hear, smell, touch, taste, talk, move, or think!

John: Your brain never lies down on the job.

Ms. Frizzle: The brain is made of billions of busy nerve cells. They are constantly sending and receiving messages from the eyes, ears, muscles, and other parts of the body.

Arnold: Let’s see ... Ms. Frizzle was driving that way to the museum, so our school must be this way.

Little Bird: Good thinking.

Narrator: They left the head by climbing down the bones of the spine. Inside the bones was the spinal cord – a thick bundle of nerve cells stretching from the brain. Smaller bundles of nerve cells branched out from each side of the spinal cord. These carried nerve messages to all the parts of the body.

Ms. Frizzle: The spinal cord connects the brain with the nerves that go to the body.

Amanda: We followed some nerves that went to the leg muscles.

Dorothy Ann: The leg muscles were working hard.

Wanda: They needed a lot of energy. They used up a lot of food and oxygen from the blood.

Phoebe: The heart was beating faster to carry fresh blood to the muscle cells.

Ms. Frizzle: Children, we are sliding on a muscle. From here, we’ll return to the bloodstream.

John: I wonder where Arnold is now.
Amanda: I have the strangest feeling he's close by.
Arnold: I'll get there sooner if I run! (panting)
Little Bird: The more active you are the faster your heart beats.
Narrator: They entered a nearby blood vessel. The blood was moving so fast they were afraid they would lose each other. But at that moment, the school bus floated by. What a relief! They jumped on and went up through the heart and lungs again - just the way they went before.
Ms. Frizzle: Class, we're on the way out of the body.
Narrator: When they emerged from the bloodstream, they were in a huge open space.
Dorothy Ann: Where are we?
Ms. Frizzle: Children, this is the nasal cavity.
Kids: The what? (yelling)
Ms. Frizzle: The inside of the nose.
Phoebe: We're in a nose?
John: This time she's gone too far.
Phoebe: I am so grossed out! (yelling)
Wanda: Suddenly, we heard a deafening noise. It sounded like "An-aa-aa-ah!"
Arnold: I think I'm going to sneeze . . .
Little Bird: Use your hankie.
Phoebe: Then we heard, "CHOOOOOOO!"
Ms. Frizzle: Class, the sound you hear is a sneeze. Anything in the nose can make you sneeze. It could be a bit of dirt or dust, or some bacteria.
John: In this case it happens to be a school bus.
A tremendous blast of air hit the bus full force. They all flew forward, spinning around and around.

Children, prepare for landing. Please remain seated until the school bus has some to a complete stop.

Is she for real?

They were going so fast, they couldn't see anything, but they could tell they were getting bigger. Then - thud! - they landed. There they were, back at school. And there was Arnold, in the school parking lot, blowing his nose.

We're back!

Look! There's Arnold!

Where were you?

Arnold! The trip was amazing! You should have been there!

Back in the classroom, it was business as usual. Ms. Frizzle made the kids draw a chart of the human body for the bulletin board. But, at last everything was quiet in Ms. Frizzle's class - everything, of course, except her dress!

She must buy her clothes in outer space.

Don't give her any ideas!
Readers Theatre Script

The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks
by Joanna Cole

(Script Written by: Kanica Chum, Cody Beecroft, Traci Beilharz, Vanessa Dutcher, Brett Griffin, Kyle Green, and Caren Toruno)

Suggested Staging:
Tim  Dorothy  Ralph  Florrie  Arnold  Ms. Frizzle  Teenager  X  X  X  X  X  X  X

Narrator 1  X

Narrator 2  X

Narrator 3  X

Narrator 1: We are performing a Readers Theatre on the book called The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks.

(Everyone stands up one at a time and announces what characters they are playing)

Narrator 2: Our class really has bad luck. This year, we got Ms. Frizzle, the strangest teacher in school.

Narrator 3: We don’t mind Ms. Frizzle’s strange dresses.

Narrator 1: Or her strange shoes.

Narrator 2: It’s the way she acts that really gets us. Ms. Frizzle makes us grow green mold on old pieces of bread.

Narrator 3: She makes us build clay models of garbage dumps, draw diagrams of plants and animals, and read five science books a week.

Narrator 1: Other classes go on trips to the zoo, or even the circus. Guess where we went on our class trip. To the waterworks!

Tim: Bor - ing!
Dorothy: Typical!

Narrator 2: And to get ready for the trip. Ms. Frizzle made us spend a whole month in the library. We had to find out exactly how our city gets its water - down to the last drop. We also had to collect ten interesting facts about water.

Ralph: I don’t think there are ten interesting facts about water.

Florrie: Maybe four and a half.

Narrator 3: In the parking lot, the old school bus was waiting. To our surprise, there was no bus driver: Instead, The Friz herself was behind the wheel.

Molly: Oh No! Not the Octopus Dress!

Dorothy: Let’s pretend we don’t know her.

Narrator 1: At the end of the block the bus went into a dark tunnel. When we came out, something amazing had happened. The bus looked a lot different. We looked different, too. Everyone was wearing a scuba diving outfit! Even Ms. Frizzle.

Arnold: I want my Mommy.

Narrator 2: Ms. Frizzle was the only one who didn’t seem to notice the change. She just drove on. In the middle of a bridge, the bus started ...

Narrator 3: to rise into ...

Narrator 1: the air.

Narrator 2: It went right up ...

Narrator 3: into a cloud.

Ms. Frizzle: As you know, class, water is always evaporating from lakes, rivers, streams, and oceans. Arnold, are you paying attention?
Arnold: (Thinking to himself) I knew I should have stayed home today.

Narrator 1: Then Ms. Frizzle did the weirdest thing ever. She told everybody to get out of the bus! The kids didn't want to go. But Frizzie threatened to give extra homework if we didn't.

Tim: I'll take the homework.

Narrator 2: Some kids stuck their heads out of the cloud and looked down. There were mountains down there! And the cloud was going higher every minute.

Narrator 3: It was getting colder, too. All around us, drops of water began to form. And as the drops got bigger, we got smaller!

Florrie: Help! We're shrinking!

Arnold: I was already small for my age.

Narrator 1: Before long, each kid was the size of a raindrop. In fact, each kid was in a raindrop. The drops began to fall. Ms. Frizzle's class was raining!

Florrie: It's a good thing I brought my umbrella.

Narrator 2: We fell into a clear mountain stream and began flowing down the mountainside.

Ms. Frizzle: Watch out for rocks, children.

Narrator 3: In no time we reached the reservoir that holds water for our city. We were going into the water purification system. This class trip was not so boring after all!

Ms. Frizzle: We have reached the reservoir, children. Follow me to the water purification system. Are you listening, Arnold?

Arnold: (Thinking to himself) Not really.

Narrator 1: The water in the reservoir was pretty dirty. We were covered with dirt and mud.
Ms. Frizzle: (Shouting) Follow me to the mixing basin.

Narrator 2: In the mixing basin, a clumping substance called alum was added to the water. The alum formed globs, and all the dirt and mud stuck to the globs.

Ralph: Yuck!

Tim: Watch out for the globs!

Ms. Frizzle: (Shouting) On to the settling basin!

Narrator 3: There the globs sank to the bottom, and the clean water flowed off the top. Now we were on our way to the filter.

Narrator 1: This was the sand-and-gravel filter that takes out any impurities still in the water. We were impurities, we couldn’t get through!

Molly: We can’t get through!

Arnold: We’ll be stuck in the waterworks forever!

Narrator 3: Luckily, Ms. Frizzle showed us a special way around the filter. When the water came out of the filter, it was sparkling clear.

Ms. Frizzle: Class, these layers of sand and gravel strain out the tiniest bits of dirt left in the water -- even most of the disease germs.

Narrator 2: In the pipe from the filter to a storage tank, a chemical called chlorine was added to the water. Chlorine kills any remaining disease germs. A trace of fluoride was also added to keep kids from getting so many cavities.

Narrator 3: The water had come all the way through the purification system. We thought our class trip was over. But Frizzie had other ideas.

Ms. Frizzle: (Shouting) Everybody into the storage tank.

Narrator 1: Before we knew what was happening, we were whooshed out of the tank and into a pipe that carries water to our city.
Narrator 2: Then we went into water mains, the pipes that run under the city streets.

Ms. Frizzle: The force of water as it moves through the pipes is called Water Pressure. Go with the flow, kids.

Narrator 3: A smaller pipe carried us to a building. We went up into the pipes in the walls.

Narrator 1: When a seventh-grader turned on a faucet in the girls’ bathroom, we came splashing out.

Teenager: EEEEEEEK!

Narrator 2: The building was our school!

Narrator 3: We were back!

Narrator 1: We were our regular size again!

Narrator 2: We were dressed in normal clothes again!

Narrator 3: Except for Ms. Frizzle, of course.

Narrator 1: Back in the classroom, Ms. Frizzle acted as if nothing strange had happened. She started feeding the class lizard.

Narrator 2: And she put us to work right away.

Narrator 3: We had to make a chart showing how water gets to the homes and buildings in our city.

Narrator 1: When Arnold drew a picture of a kid inside a raindrop, Ms. Frizzle said,

Ms. Frizzle: Where do you get these crazy ideas, Arnold?
Readers Theatre Script

THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS LOST IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM  
by Joanna Cole

(Script Written by Rebecca James, Courtney Sabin,  
Ian Spaulding, Heather Rodriguez, Richard Prest,  
and Caren Toruno)

Suggested Staging:  
Arnold  Janet  Tim  Mrs. Frizzle  Alex  Carmen  
X   X   X   X   X   X  
Dorothy Ann  Florrie  
X   X  
Ralphie  Rachel  
X   X  
Narrator 1  Narrator 2  
X   X  

Narrator 1: We are going to perform a Readers Theatre on  
a book called The Magic School Bus Lost in  
the Solar System, by Joanna Cole.

(Characters introduce their parts)

Narrator 1: It was trip day again in Ms. Frizzle’s class.  
Everyone was excited. We were going to the  
planetarium to see a sky show about the solar  
system.

Mrs. Frizzle: Class, an orbit is the path of a planet or  
other object around the sun.

Janet: I knew that. I get all A’s in school. I  
have five computers. My class went to the  
planetarium last year.

Tim: (Thinking) What a show-off.

Carmen: Thanks for inviting your cousin, Arnold.

Arnold: She’s actually nice when you get to know her.

Narrator 2: Janet was Arnold’s cousin. She was visiting  
our class for the day.
Mrs. Frizzle: I know all of you will be nice to our guest.

Narrator 1: We tried to be nice to Janet. We really did. As we got on the school bus, we told her that Ms. Frizzle is the weirdest teacher in school. But Janet wasn’t interested. She wanted to tell us about herself.

Janet: My school is taller than your school. Our swings are better than your swings. My teacher is weirder than your teacher.

Narrator 2: As usual, it took a while to get the old bus started. But finally we were on our way. As we were driving, Ms. Frizzle told us all about how the Earth spins like a top as it moves in its orbit. It was just a short drive to the planetarium, but Ms. Frizzle talked fast.

Ms. Frizzle: When the Earth spins we say it rotates. The Earth makes one complete rotation – turn – every 24 hours.

Narrator 1: When we got to the planetarium, it was closed for repairs.

Ms. Frizzle: Class, this means we’ll have to return to school.

Kids: Back to school? I’m so depressed!

Janet: My planetarium is always open.

Narrator 2: On the way back, as we were waiting at a red light, something amazing happened. The bus started tilting back, and we heard the roar of rockets.

Ms. Frizzle: Oh, dear. We seem to be blasting off! Children, we are going through the atmosphere – the layers of air around the Earth.

Janet: My bus has bigger rockets than your bus.

Florrie: Yeah right, Janet.
When the roar of the rockets stopped, we looked around. Everything had changed. The bus had turned into a spaceship. We were all dressed in space suits, and we were lighter than feathers. We floated above our seats!

I’m flying!

I’m flying higher than you are!

Far behind, in the black sky, we saw the planet Earth getting smaller and smaller. We were traveling in space! We had become astronauts!

Class, notice Earth’s blue oceans, white clouds and brown land.

I think I have to go to the bathroom.

Our first stop will be the Moon.

We got off the bus and looked around. There was no air, no water, no sign of life. All we saw were dust and rock and lots and lots of craters. Ms. Frizzle said the craters were formed billions of years ago when the Moon was hit by meteorites. Meteorites are falling chunks of rock and metal.

We are so light on the Moon!

That’s because the moon has less gravity than the Earth.

It was fun on the Moon. We wanted to play, but Ms. Frizzle said it was time to go. So we got back on the bus.

We’ll start with the Sun, the center of the solar system.

And we blasted off. We zoomed toward the Sun, the biggest, brightest, and hottest object in the solar system. Jets of super-hot gases shot out at us from the surface. Thank goodness Ms. Frizzle didn’t get too close!
Ms. Frizzle: You should never look directly at the sun, children. It can damage your eyes!

Narrator 1: She steered around to the other side and pulled away.

Ms. Frizzle: We'll be seeing all the planets in order, class. Mercury is the first planet, the closest to the Sun.

Janet: My school is heated with Solar energy. I have a sun deck. I have ten pairs of sunglasses.

Florrie: Give us a break, Janet.

Narrator 2: Mercury was a dead, sun-baked planet.

Ms. Frizzle: This planet is a lot like our Moon. There is no water and hardly any air. Notice the craters on its surface as we pass by.

Narrator 1: Before long, we felt ourselves being pulled in by the gravity of Venus - the second planet from the Sun. Venus was completely covered by a thick layer of yellowish clouds.

Ms. Frizzle: We will now explore the surface of Venus. We will be heavier here than on the moon or Mercury because Venus has more gravity.

Narrator 2: Below the clouds, Venus was as dry as a desert. The ground was covered with rocks. And it was HOT! It was about 400 degrees Centigrade! That's much hotter than an oven baking cookies!

Narrator 1: The air was so heavy we could feel it pressing down on us! Ms. Frizzle said there might be volcanoes around, too.

Kids: Let's get out of here!

Ms. Frizzle: Our next stop is Mars, the red planet, fourth from the Sun. On our way, we'll be passing through the orbit of Earth, the third planet.

Janet: I've been to Mars lots of times.

Arnold: Just ignore her.
Narrator 2: As we came close to Mars, we passed its two moons, which are called Phobos and Deimos. Compared to our Moon, they were tiny. And they weren’t even round!

Narrator 1: Looking down, we saw a huge canyon. Ms. Frizzle said it was as long as the United States. There was a volcano three times taller than the tallest volcano on Earth. And all around, there were channels that looked like dried-up river beds.

Narrator 2: We landed and started walking around. Suddenly a huge dust storm blew up. Ms. Frizzle said dust storms on Mars can last for months. They may cover the whole planet. We scrambled back on the bus and headed out!

Ms. Frizzle: Mars is the last of what we call the inner planets. We will now be going through the asteroid belt to the outer planets. Isn’t space travel exciting, Arnold?

Arnold: (thinking) I really prefer filmstrips.

Narrator 1: Thousands of asteroids were spinning all around us. All at once, we heard the tinkling of broken glass. One of our taillights had been hit by an asteroid. Ms. Frizzle put the bus on autopilot and went out to take a look. She kept on talking about asteroids over the bus radio.

Ms. Frizzle: The largest asteroid is only 1/3 the size of our moon. Most asteroids are the size of houses or smaller.

Alex: (worried) I wish she’d come inside.

Narrator 2: Suddenly there was a snap. Ms. Frizzle’s tether line had broken! Without warning the rockets fired up, and the bus zoomed away! The autopilot was malfunctioning.

Narrator 1: On the radio, Ms. Frizzle’s voice grew fainter and fainter. Then she was gone. We were on our own! We were lost in the solar system!
Ms. Frizzle: (voice fading out) Kids, I’ll meet you later ... later ... later.

Arnold: Come in, Ms. Frizzle, do you read me?

Narrator 2: Most of us were too scared to move. But Janet started searching the bus. In the glove compartment she found Ms. Frizzle’s lesson book. As she began reading from it a huge planet came into view.

Janet: Class, this is Jupiter. It’s the first of the outer planets, and the largest planet in the solar system.

Tim: She shouldn’t touch Ms. Frizzle’s things.

Alex: But this is an emergency!

Janet: As we approach Jupiter, we can see some of its 16 moons. Arnold, are you listening?

Arnold: (thinking) Boy, Ms. Frizzle plans everything!

Narrator 1: We thought the school bus was going to land. But there was no solid ground to land on. Jupiter is a “gas giant” – a planet made almost entirely of gas. As we left Jupiter we wondered and worried. Would we ever get home?

Class: Ms. Frizzle, where are you?

Janet: Jupiter is so big that more than one thousand Earths could fit inside it.

Narrator 2: The next sight made us forget our troubles. It was Saturn, a gas planet like Jupiter. It had swirling clouds and lots of moons. But the most incredible thing about Saturn was its rings. It was the most beautiful planet in the solar system!

Janet: There are thousands of rings around Saturn, class.
Next was Uranus, a blue-green gas planet with faint gray rings and moons. Some scientists think they might be made of chunks of graphite - the material used in pencils on Earth.

Methane gas in its atmosphere makes Uranus look blue.

The bus was going faster and faster and we couldn’t control the autopilot. We swept past stormy Neptune, another blue-green planet - eighth from the Sun. All we could think about was finding Ms. Frizzle!

Neptune is the last of the giant gas planets.

We’re almost out of gas ourselves!

And the nearest service station is 4,000 million kilometers away.

We were going so fast, we almost missed seeing the ninth planet, tiny Pluto, and its moon, Charon. We were so far away from the Sun that it didn’t look big anymore. It just looked like a very bright star. We were leaving the solar system.

Janet flipped rapidly through Ms. Frizzle’s book. Suddenly she found something new - the instructions for the autopilot. We punched in ASTEROID BELT on the control panel. Slowly the bus turned around. It was working! We were going back!

Janet really saved the Day.

I told you she’s a good kid.

When we reached the asteroid belt, there was Ms. Frizzle!

Hey, that asteroid is dressed funny.

That’s not an asteroid, it’s Ms. Frizzle!

Boy, am I glad to see her.

Me too!
Narrator 2: With Frizzie back at the wheel, the bus headed straight for Earth. We re-entered the atmosphere, landed with a thump, and looked around.

Ms. Frizzle: Boys and girls, we are arriving on earth, the third planet from the sun.

Narrator 1: We were in the school parking lot again. The rockets were gone. The space suits were gone. The bus was a wreck. Everything was back to normal.

Narrator 2: In the classroom, we made a terrific chart of the planets and a mobile of the solar system.

Narrator 1: At last, it was time to go home. It had been a typical day in Ms. Frizzle’s class. Now we had only one problem. Would anyone ever believe us when we told about our trip?
APPENDIX B

Comprehension Tests

The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks

1. Ms. Frizzle was the ____________ teacher in school.
   a. oldest
   b. newest
   c. strangest
   d. strictest

2. In the middle of the bridge the bus __________.
   a. ran out of gas
   b. met another bus
   c. went up in the clouds
   d. fell over the railing

3. The class turned into __________.
   a. clouds
   b. snowflakes
   c. birds
   d. raindrops

4. What does all the dirt and mud stick to in the reservoir?
   a. huge magnets
   b. sticky rocks
   c. globs of alum
   d. tiny strainers

5. What kills the germs in the water?
   a. iron
   b. sand
   c. bacteria
   d. chlorine
The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth

1. For their homework each person was to find a _______.
   a. leaf
   b. bug
   c. flower
   d. rock

2. The bus began spinning and became a _______.
   a. helicopter
   b. train engine
   c. submarine
   d. steam shovel

3. What is found in sedimentary rock?
   a. seeds
   b. food
   c. diamonds
   d. fossils

4. As they went farther into the earth it got _______.
   a. lighter
   b. hotter
   c. colder
   d. wetter

5. Lava from a volcano turns into _______.
   a. jewels
   b. metals
   c. water
   d. rock
The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System

1. The _______ is the center of the solar system.
   a. moon
   b. North Star
   c. sun
   d. Earth

2. Earth is the _______ planet from the sun.
   a. ninth
   b. fifth
   c. third
   d. first

3. Why did Ms. Frizzle leave the bus?
   a. to go for a space walk
   b. to fix the autopilot
   c. to collect asteroids for the classroom
   d. to fix a tail light broken by an asteroid

4. Which is the largest planet in the solar system?
   a. Pluto
   b. Jupiter
   c. Mars
   d. Earth

5. Back in the classroom, the class _______.
   a. wrote a story about their trip
   b. decorated the playground with asteroids
   c. made a mobile of the solar system
   d. cleaned up the bus for the next trip
Magic School Bus Tests’ Answer Keys

Lost in the Solar System
1. sun
2. third
3. to fix a tail light broken by an asteroid
4. Jupiter
5. made a mobile of the solar system

Inside the Earth
1. rock
2. steam shovel
3. fossils
4. hotter
5. rock

At the Waterworks
1. strangest
2. went up in the clouds
3. raindrops
4. globs of alum
5. chlorine
REFERENCES


