

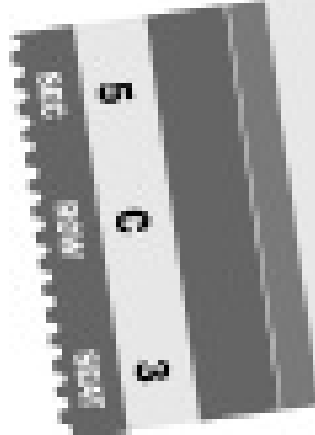
HIP Readers' Theater Plays



By Paul Kropp and Lori Jamison

*For grades 4 to 10 | Easy to read and perform
With teaching and performance notes*

High Interest Publishing | HIP Books



Introduction

Readers' Theater is a technique for performing an unstaged play from a prepared script. The script is often based on a picture book, novel or story but may sometimes offer dramatic representations of speeches, essays or science concepts. Generally speaking, no costumes, sets or props are used in the performance. Instead, student actors use their voices, facial expressions and sound effects to create a convincing dramatic experience. Often a narrator conveys the story's setting and provides any necessary transition between scenes.

Obviously, Readers' Theater offers a good introduction to drama by magically transforming the classroom into a stage. But Readers' Theater is far more than a classroom exercise in dramatic arts. Many studies show it to be a powerful tool for building key reading skills.

Readers' Theater develops comprehension by requiring readers to understand characters and situations. It builds fluency through repeated reading and rehearsal of a script. It engages both participants and audience in the reading and performance of a shared text. And it builds confidence in even the most reluctant reader.

In Readers' Theater, the script is read rather than memorized. To do this effectively, student readers need to practise and rehearse carefully to depict the characters and convey the message of the play.

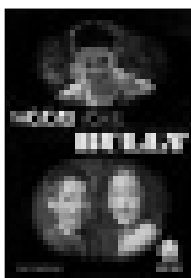
The performance of a Readers' Theater requires a reader/performer to rehearse his or her role many times, individually and as part of the ensemble. A reader might well rehearse his or her role 20 times before the actual performance to effectively portray the character and the emotions in the play. Each individual role must be practised until it is read fluently, and then the entire performance (with sound effects) must be rehearsed until the presentation is seamless and effective. Only then can the magic of theater transform students into characters, their classmates into an engaged audience, and your classroom into a theater.

In his book *The Fluent Reader*, researcher Tim Rasinski says, "Readers' theater is an authentic, entertaining, and educationally powerful way to communicate meaning." Rasinski offers extensive research support for the use of prepared oral reading in the classroom:

- Students enjoy reading more.
- Students explore more sophisticated words and text structures.
- Students build oral reading confidence and fluency.
- Students become a community of oral readers.

Rasinski's own findings reported a gain of 17 words per minute in fluency, and significant improvements in comprehension, among students who engaged in Readers' Theater for

Choose Your Bully



Richard and Ling have been dealing with a bully all year long. Now Ling is mad enough to take him on – all by herself.

APPROPRIATE GRADE LEVELS: 3–8

PERFORMANCE TIME: 4 minutes

THE NOVEL IN BRIEF: Ling and Richard come up with a great idea to deal with their school bully – hire a bodyguard. But when their bodyguard starts to bully them too, they have to come up with a better scheme.

PERFORMING NOTES: The voices are key to a successful performance. Richard must be scared, Ling forceful and Chuck brutish. All sound effects can be made by the student actors themselves.

CHARACTERS:

Narrator 1 (9 lines)

Narrator 2 (9 lines)

Ling (9 lines)

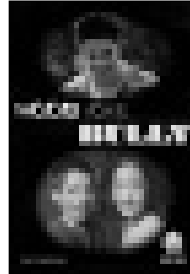
Richard (5 lines)

Chuck – a bully (11 lines)

SOUND EFFECTS: *footsteps, thumps, laughter*

Choose Your Bully – Readers’ Theater

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Ling
Richard
Chuck – a bully



SOUND EFFECTS: *footsteps, thumps, laughter*

NARRATOR 1: This Readers’ Theater play is adapted from the novel *Choose Your Bully* by Lori Jamison. Today’s actors are

NARRATOR 2: Richard and Ling were walking to school. They were talking about Chuck, the school bully.

LING: You have to stop being a victim, Richard.

RICHARD: So how do I do that?

LING: Stand up for yourself.

RICHARD: Easy for you to say.

LING: Don’t give in like a wuss. Tell Chuck no and just keep saying no.

NARRATOR 1: Richard shook his head, then he looked ahead. There was Chuck, the bully, waiting for them.

(sound effect: footsteps)

CHUCK: Ah . . . Richie Rich, you are right on time. I need some lunch money.

NARRATOR 2: The three of them just stared at each other.
Ling could feel all her muscles get tight.

RICHARD: I don't have any money today.

CHUCK: Yeah, like I really believe that. You've got
more money than any kid in this town.
Now pay up, or get beat up.

NARRATOR 1: Ling tried to stand up for her friend.

LING: Richard said no. And no means no.

CHUCK: Shut up . . . Ding-a-Ling. This is between
Richie Rich and me. You want to use this sidewalk,
you've got to pay the toll. Unless you want to pay
the toll for him.

LING: There is no such thing as a toll sidewalk.

CHUCK: I said shut up, Ling.

NARRATOR 2: Chuck turned back to Richard and held out
his hand.

CHUCK: Two bucks today, kid.

RICHARD: I . . . I don't have two bucks. I've only got
fifty cents.

CHUCK: That'll do, for a start.

NARRATOR 1: Richard took off his backpack to look for money.
That's when Ling got really angry.

LING: Richard, don't give him anything!

CHUCK: Shut up, Ling.

LING: I mean it, Richard. You don't have to pay this jerk.
This is robbery. This is theft. I'm going to call
the cops.

CHUCK: *(laughing)* With what?