

Reader's Theatre

Aims of the workshop

1. to enable students to understand reader's theatre as a means for introducing a story to an audience.
2. to practice doing a reader's theatre with the correct intonation, characterization and staging routines.

Notes

What is reader's theatre?

- Dramatic reading aloud of a story in groups, mainly making use of one's voice, facial expressions and simple hand movements.
- With minimal use of props and body movement.
- Presenters stand in a line, holding the script in hand.

What is not reader's theatre?

- It is not drama as there is no need to memorise the script, set up elaborate props and use dramatic body movement.

Techniques in presenting reader's theatre

- May make use of simple props e.g. head bands, and backdrop e.g. powerpoint slides
- May make use of music and simple sound effects.
- Presenters stand in a line. Each presenter should make sure that the audience can see him.
- Use loudness (stress), facial expressions and simple hand movements to get across the meaning of the text.
- May use repetitions/chorus

Benefits of reader's theatre

- Reading comprehension
- Practise reading aloud with meaning
- Enhance confidence in using English
- Enhance peer learning/co-operation
- Can be carried out as a whole class activity

Tips for adapting a story and turning it into a reader's theatre

Choice of text

- Enjoyable, dramatic story
- Around 350 to 400 words
- Not too many characters
- Characters with scope for imagination, dramatic acting out.

Some sample scripts of reader's theatre

- *Nuts*
- *Little Red Hen*
- *Three Billy Goats Gruff*
- *The Princess And The Pea*

Nuts

Text adapted from "Nuts" written by Natalie Babbitt. *Best shorts: favourite short stories for sharing selected by Avi with Carolyn Shute*. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company (2006), USA.

Characters:

Narrator / Devil / Farm wife

Narrator: One day the Devil was sitting in his throne room, eating walnuts from a large bag and complaining, as usual, about the terrible nuisance of having to crack the shells, when all at once, he had an idea.

Devil: The best way to eat walnuts is to trick someone else into cracking them for you.

Narrator: So he fetched a pearl from his treasure room, opened the next nut very carefully with a sharp knife so as not to spoil the shell, and put the pearl inside along with the meat. Then he glued the shell back together.

Devil: Now all I have to do is to give this walnut to some greedy soul who'll find the pearl in it and insist on opening the lot to look for more!

Narrator: So he dressed himself as an old man with a long beard and went up into the World, taking along his nutcracker and the bag of walnuts with the special nut right on top.

And he sat himself down by a country road to wait.
Pretty soon a farm wife came marching along.

Devil: Hey there! Want a walnut?

Narrator: The farm wife looked at him shrewdly and was at once suspicious but she didn't say anything.

Farm wife: All right. Why not?

Devil: (chuckling to himself) That's the way!

Narrator: The farm wife cracked the nut open, picked out the meat and ate it, and threw away the shell.

Farm wife: Thank you very much. It's a very nice nut. Bye.

Devil: That's strange. Either she swallowed my pearl or I gave her the wrong walnut to eat.

Narrator: The devil took out three more nuts that were lying on top of the pile, cracked them open, and ate the meat, but there was no pearl to be seen. He opened and ate four more, still no pearl. And so it went, on and on all afternoon.

Devil: Well, that's that. She swallowed it.

Narrator: There was nothing for it but to go back down to Hell. But he took along a stomach ache from eating all those nuts, and a temper that lasted for a week.

Farm wife: Let me now take the pearl out from under my tongue. I'll sell it for two turnips and a butter churn. I am lucky today. We are not all of us greedy.

(392 words)

Little Red Hen

Source: a traditional story

Characters:

Narrator / Little Red Hen / Cow / Pig / Dog

Setting: A farm

SCENE 1

Narrator: The Little Red Hen found a sack of wheat seed and rushed to tell her friends. Perhaps they would help her plant the seeds.

Little Red Hen: Cow, will you help me plant my seeds?

Cow: Not I, not I. It is too hot to do such work.

Little Red Hen: Pig, will you help me plant my seeds?

Pig: Not I, not I. It is too hot to do such work.

Little Red Hen: Dog, will you help me plant my seeds?

Dog: Not I, not I. It is too hot to do such work.

Narrator: So the Little Red Hen planted the seeds all by herself.

SCENE 2

Narrator: Several weeks went by and the seeds began to grow. The Little Red Hen decided to ask her friends to help her tend and weed the garden.

Little Red Hen: Cow, will you help me weed the garden?

Cow: Not I, not I. The shade is too cool to leave.

Little Red Hen: Pig, will you help me weed the garden?

Pig: Not I, not I. The mud is too cool to leave.

Little Red Hen: Dog, will you help me weed the garden?

Dog: Not I, not I. The doghouse is too cool to leave.

Narrator: So the Little Red Hen weeded and tended the garden all by herself.

SCENE 3

Narrator: As the weeks went by, the sun ripened the wheat until it was ready to harvest. So the Little Red Hen decided to ask her friends to help her harvest the wheat.

Little Red Hen: Cow, will you help me harvest the wheat?

Cow: Not I, not I. It is too hot today.

Little Red Hen: Pig, will you help me harvest the wheat?

Pig: Not I, not I. It is too hot today.

Little Red Hen: Dog, will you help me harvest the wheat?

Dog: Not I, not I. It is too hot today.

Narrator: Once again the Little Red Hen had to do all the work herself. She harvested the wheat. When she was finished, she asked her friends to help her grind the wheat into flour.

Little Red Hen: Cow, will you help me grind the wheat into flour?

Cow: Not I, not I. It is too close to milking time.

Little Red Hen: Pig, will you help me grind the wheat into flour?

Pig: Not I, not I. It is too close to supper time.

Little Red Hen: Dog, will you help me grind the wheat into flour?

Dog: Not I, not I. It is too close to supper time.

Narrator: So the Little Red Hen ground the wheat into flour all by herself.

SCENE 4 – The Next Day

Narrator: The Little Red Hen decided to bake her flour into bread. She decided to give her friends another chance to help her.

Little Red Hen: Cow, will you help me bake this flour into bread?

Cow: Not I, not I. It is too hot to bake.

Little Red Hen: Pig, will you help me bake this flour into bread?

Pig: Not I, not I. It is too hot to bake.

Little Red Hen: Dog, will you help me bake this flour into bread?

Dog: Not I, not I. It is too hot to bake.

Narrator: The Little Red Hen baked the bread all by herself. When it was done, she let it cool for a while. Before she knew it, the time came to cut and eat the bread. Looking around, she didn't see anyone.

Little Red Hen: Hum, I wonder who will help me eat this bread?

Cow: (rushing up) I will!

Pig: (rushing up) I will!

Dog: (rushing up) I will!

Little Red Hen: No, you won't. I did all the work. I get the rewards of that work... this bread.

(The cow, the pig, and the dog all hang their heads.)

Three Billy Goats Gruff

Source: a traditional story

Characters:

Narrator / Little Billy Goat Gruff=Little BG / Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff=Middle BG /
Big Billy Goat Gruff=Big BG / Troll / Bridge

The goats' voice and trip, trap sounds as they cross the bridge should become louder with the size progression of the Billy Goats.

Narrator: Welcome to our show. The play is The Three Billy Goats Gruff.

SCENE 1

Narrator: Little Billy Goat Gruff sees a rickety, old bridge. On the other side of the bridge is a meadow with green, green grass and apple trees.

Little BG: I'm the littlest billy goat. I have two big brothers. I want to go across this bridge to eat some green, green grass and apples so that I can be big like my two brothers.

Narrator: Little Billy Goat Gruff starts across the bridge.

Bridge: Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator: Just as the Little Billy Goat Gruff came to the middle of the bridge, an old troll popped up from under the bridge.

Troll: Who is that walking on my bridge?

Little BG: It is I, Little Billy Goat Gruff.

Troll: I'm a big, bad troll and you are on my bridge. I'm going to eat you for my lunch.

Little BG: I just want to eat some green, green grass and apples in the meadow. Please don't eat me. I'm just a little billy goat. Wait until my brother comes along. He is much bigger than I am.

Troll: I guess I will. Go ahead and cross the bridge.

Little BG: Thank you very much, you ugly troll.

Troll: What did you call me? Come back here!

Little BG: Bye!
Bridge: Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator: Little Billy Goat Gruff ran across the bridge. He ate the green, green grass and apples. The troll went back under his bridge and went to sleep.

SCENE 2

Narrator: Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff walks up to the rickety, old bridge. He too sees the meadow with the green, green grass and apple trees.

Middle BG: I'm the middle-size billy goat. I have a big brother and a little brother. I want to go across this bridge to eat some green, green grass and apples so that I can be big like my brother.

Narrator: Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff starts across the bridge.

Bridge: Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator: Just as the Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff came to the middle of the bridge, an old troll popped up from under the bridge.

Troll: Who is that walking on my bridge?

Middle BG: It is I, Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff.

Troll: I'm a big, bad troll and you are on my bridge. I'm going to eat you for my lunch.

Middle BG: I just want to eat some green, green grass and apples in the meadow. Please don't eat me. I'm just a middle-size billy goat. Wait until my brother comes along. He is much bigger than I am.

Troll: I guess I will. Go ahead and cross the bridge.

Middle BG: Thank you very much, you ugly troll.

Troll: What did you call me? Come back here!

Middle BG: Bye!

Bridge: Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator: Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff ran across the bridge. He ate the green, green grass and apples. The troll went back under his bridge and went to sleep.

SCENE 3

Narrator: Big Billy Goat Gruff sees the rickety, old bridge. On the other side of the bridge is meadow with the green, green grass and apple trees.

Big BG: I'm the biggest billy goat. I have two brothers. I want to go across this bridge to eat some green, green grass and apples so I can get even bigger.

Narrator: Big Billy Goat Gruff starts across the bridge.

Bridge: Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator: Just as the Big Billy Goat Gruff came to the middle of the bridge, and old troll popped up from under the bridge.

Troll: Who is that walking on my bridge?

Big BG: It is I, Big Billy Goat Gruff.

Troll: I'm a big, bad troll and you are on my bridge. I'm going to eat you for my lunch.

Big BG: Come on and make my day! If you come up here, you will be going, going, gone!

Narrator: The troll climbs onto the bridge. Big Billy Goat Gruff lowers his head and charges the troll! Big Billy Goat Gruff knocks the troll off the bridge!

Big BG: The bully won't bother us again. I have done my job. Now, I'm going to eat that green, green grass and apples.

Bridge: Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator: Big Billy Goat Gruff ran across the bridge. He ate the green, green grass and apples. That mean old troll never came back to the bridge. He learned that being mean never pays.

The Princess and the Pea

Work of teachers on in-service primary English teacher training course at
Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2004

Characters:

Narrator / The King / The Queen / The Prince / The Princess / Chorus

Narrator: On the Prince's twenty-fifth birthday...

Chorus: Congratulations and Celebrations!

The King & It's time to get married, son.

The Queen: You must find a Princess!

Chorus: Find a Princess!

Find a Princess!

Narrator: The Prince travels from New York to Beijing without success. He cannot find a real Princess.

Chorus: Can't find a Princess!

Can't find a real Princess!

Narrator: The Prince is sad and lonely.

The Prince: Where, oh where, can I find a REAL Princess?

Chorus: Where to find?

Where to find?

Narrator: One dark and stormy night, there is a knock on the door.

Chorus: (Sound effect: knocking on the door)

The King: Hello?

Narrator: There in the rain stands a Princess.

She is cold and wet from head to toe.

Chorus: Oh....All wet from head to toe!

From head to toe!

The Princess: P-p-p- please sir, may I come in?

I am cold and wet from head to toe.

Chorus: Let her in!
Let her in!

Narrator: The King lets her in. The Queen makes her coffee.
The Queen puts a lot of sugar in her coffee.

Chorus: Very nice!
Very very nice!

The Queen: Here's some sweet coffee!
It will keep you warm.

Chorus: Keep you warm!
Drink it!

The Princess: I can't drink this coffee!
It's much too bitter!

Chorus: Oh! What!

The Queen: Here's a soft jumper.
It will keep you dry.

Chorus: Keep you dry!
Put it on!

The Princess: I can't wear this jumper. It's much too rough!

Chorus: Oh! What?

The Queen: Ah-ha! I think she may be a REAL Princess!
Let's do a test!

Chorus: A test!
A test!
A test for a REAL Princess!

Narrator: The Queen puts a pea on the bed.
She puts twenty mattresses on top of the pea.

Chorus: What? Twenty mattresses!

Narrator: Then she puts twenty feather blankets on top

of the mattresses.

Chorus: Wow? Twenty feather blankets on top?

The Queen: Now her bed is very soft, soon we shall see...
A REAL Princess will feel the pea!

Chorus: Feel the pea???

The Princess: I can't sleep in this bed!
I feel something hard!

Chorus: OH! WHAT?
She feels something hard?

**The Queen &
The King:** She is a REAL Princess!

Narrator: The Prince and the REAL Princess get married.

Chorus: Congratulations and Celebrations!

Narrator: The King puts the pea in a museum.
You can see the pea there,
Unless someone steals it.

Song: The Princess and the Pea

Tune: Baa Baa Black Sheep

Work of teachers on in-service primary English teacher training course at
Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2004

The Prince, the Prince is a big man now

He's gonna get a pretty wife

"Don't know how!" Oh "Don't know how!"

To be with him through his life.

One dark, dark and stormy night

From nowhere comes a lovely girl

This very one's gonna be all right

The best ever in the world