

Reader's Theater

Reading, Writing, Listening Skills:

- Involving all family members cooperatively in a literacy activity
Reader's Theater involves the entire family at once and is a social activity. Children and parents are more likely to engage in reading activities in the future due to the high level of stimulating interaction they share together.
- Simultaneously teaching reading and writing
Reader's Theater requires use of reading comprehension, creative writing, and speech skills of the parents without the use of textbooks. The reading, writing, and speaking activities become more meaningful and fulfilling when taken out of the classroom and applied directly to family life. As a result, parents will continue working on the skills as well as reading to their children.

As the text is read, the children must, through their imagination, create the setting, character, and emotion. The presenters/parents merely suggest these aspects through their reading. Reader's theater develops imaginative listening skills in children.

Life Skills:

- Breaking the nonreading cycle in families
Reader's Theater is interactive—the book is read almost as a play. Children's involvement and excitement is increased and reading, no longer foreign and intangible for both the parents and children, becomes a positive family activity.
- Incorporating self-presentation skills into classroom activities
Parents develop and model for their children self-presentation skills such as voice projection, inflection, and articulation. Parents also work as a team when preparing and reading the script; therefore, cooperative decision-making skills (i.e., respecting the opinions of others) are developed and modeled.
- Making the activity their own while developing a positive creative outlet
The nature of reader's theater celebrates "flying solo." Once parents take on the responsibilities of a script, there is no longer need for a facilitator. Parents' self-esteem increases by playing an active role in their own and their children's educational development.

Reader's theater also lets parents make creative decisions only they can make. Trust in one's own instincts leads to greater self-awareness, critical thinking skills, and the practice of creative persuasion and decision-making.

Why Use Reader's Theater:

Orally read performance of a script in which meaning is conveyed primarily through the readers' expressive and interpretive reading (and not through movement, memorization, props, or costumes).

- exposes students to an alternative to narrative prose
- promotes cooperative action and learning
- develops fluency, word recognition, and comprehension through emphasis on expressive reading and repeated (practiced) reading

- enjoyable and motivating literary experience
- can be used as an alternative way to respond to reading (e.g., write a script from a story that was read and perform it for an audience)
- when developing a script from an authentic piece of literature, students study the craft of the author and use the original text as a “scaffold” or model for their own writing.

Choosing Texts for Reader’s Theater:

- Interesting story (action)
- Relatively brief
- Several characters (consider multiple narrators)
- Lots of dialogue

Adapting a Script:

With the aid of a facilitator (student, teacher, tutor, etc.):

1. Students read an appropriate children’s book. They discuss the plot and characters’ qualities.
2. Students decide which role they want to read and who is going to be the director and writer.
3. Students read and discuss the book again.
4. Students adapt the book into script form.
5. Students write an introduction (of the readers, book, questions, etc.) to be read by the narrator.
6. Students prepare questions with which to prompt a post-reading discussion session with their children.
7. Students practice the script.
8. Students perform the script.

Recommended Books for Reader’s Theater:

(Look for more by these authors!)

Reading levels vary; select with the children’s age in mind.

Baby Rattlesnake, Lynn Moroney

Coyote and the Laughing Butterflies, Harriet Peck Taylor

Coyote Steals the Blanket, Janet Stevens

How the Animals Got Their Colors, Michael Rosen

Misoso: Once Upon a Time Tales From Africa, Verna Aardema

It's the Bear!, Jez Alborough
Who's in Rabbit's House?, Verna Aardema
Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears, Verna Aardema

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