



Theater Time
A Unit for 5th-8th Grades



Theater Time ...

Theater Time is a six week Club that focuses on theater and drama in twelve lessons. Each lesson will focus on the skills and talents that actors' use to engage the audience with the material that they are presenting. This Club will focus on the medium of Reader's Theater for this six weeks. You may find Reader's Theater scripts by going on line and also on the Reading A-Z website which you can access by purchasing a subscription.

During this Club students will focus on key language arts standards, including:

WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND SYSTEMATIC VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

- 1.2. distinguish and interpret figurative language and multiple-meaning words
- 1.5. understand and explain "shades of meaning" for related words (e.g., softly and quietly)

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRADE-LEVEL-APPROPRIATE TEXT

- 3.2. analyze how the qualities of the character (e.g., courage or cowardice, ambition or laziness) affect the plot and resolution of the conflict
- 3.3. analyze the influence of setting on the problem and its resolution
- 3.6. identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images
- 3.7. explain the effects of key literary devices in a variety of fictional and non-fictional texts (e.g., symbolism, imagery, metaphor)

LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

- 1.1. relate the speaker's verbal communication (e.g., word choice, pitch, feeling, tone) and non-verbal messages (e.g., posture, gesture)
- 1.2. identify the tone, mood, and emotion conveyed in the oral communication

Club members will do a variety of exercises to strengthen their ability to use their voice, their body language, and their ability to connect with the audience to deliver the Reader's Theater scripts to an audience of their peers at the end of the 6 week session.



Theater Time...#1

Welcome to the Theater Time Club. This club will strengthen your ability to communicate with an audience the emotions and feelings of a character. This Club will explore a variety of different Reader's Theater scripts, each with a different cast of characters, setting, tone and mood, plot, and point of view. Dynamic communication skills can be strengthened through practice. The actual presentation of the Reader's Theater script will take place at the end of the club in a culminating event. The exercises have been selected to help you do an outstanding job of presenting the Reader's Theater script.

Each of us comes equipped with three basic communication tools: voice, body language, and the ability to connect with the audience.

Exercise:

- Think about your most embarrassing moment. (Think it all the way through, from the beginning to the end)
- Find a partner.
- Share your most embarrassing moment with your partner.
- Tell them in your most effective way.
- When you are finished, listen to what your partner has to share.
- As the person who listened, tell your partner how you knew that they cared about this story. How did they use their voice to let you know that they were enthusiastic about the story?
- Reverse roles and repeat the exercise.

When you use your voice you can control the rate, the volume, the pitch, the tone, and also, if you want, an accent. It is important that as an actor you learn how to use these attributes of your voice to be an effective communicator.

Select one of the three quotes below.

1. Read it silently to yourself 5 times. Hear yourself saying the quote.
2. Practice the quote out loud 5 times.
3. Find a partner.
4. Practice saying this quote fast. Practice s-l-o-w.
5. Practice saying this in a whisper. Practice in A LOUD VOICE.
6. Practice saying this in a little girl's voice. In a man's voice.
7. Practice saying this like you are angry. Like you think it's a joke.
8. Practice saying this like you think a French person sounds. A Canadian.

Quote #1:

“The villagers made a nice life for themselves and lived well for many years. But over time, they forgot their hardworking ways. Rotten fruit skins began to pile up and nasty flies moved in. Rather than clean up the mess, the villagers moved to another spot along the lake.”

Quote #2:

“Desmond has never felt so uncomfortable. He is in front of a room full of strangers, none of whom know Desmond’s quirks or faults like his friends at home do. He wants more than anything to run outside, jump on an airplane, and fly back to Jamaica, but instead, he makes his way to his seat.”

Quote #3:

“A beautiful young woman lived in a mansion in a very exclusive part of town. Everywhere this beauty went, people threw themselves at her feet, competing for her attention. Day after day everyone she met left her company disgusted, offended, and cursing her name. She was spoiled, demanding, and spiteful.”¹

Reading the Scripts or a passage from the Reading textbook:

1. Form three as close to equal groups as possible.
2. Each group is given a script.
3. Silently read the script to yourself.
4. As a group, divide the parts among the members of the group. (Give roles with a small number of speaking parts to the same person.)
5. Read the script aloud with each person reading his/her part aloud.
6. Use your voice: control the rate, the volume, the pitch, the tone, and also, if you want, an accent.
7. Switch roles.
8. Read the script again with the new characters.
9. Repeat a third time if there is enough time.

¹ Excerpts from Reader’s Theater Scripts from Reading A-Z— www.readinga-z.com



Theater Time ...#2

Each of us comes equipped with three basic communication tools: voice, body language, and the ability to connect with the audience. At our last meeting we worked on voice. We learned that when you use your voice you can control the rate, the volume, the pitch, the tone, and also, if you want, an accent.

Warm-up Exercise:

Select one of the three quotes below.

1. Read it silently to yourself 5 times. Hear yourself saying the quote.
2. Practice the quote out loud 5 times.
3. Find a partner.
4. Practice saying this quote fast. Practice s-l-o-w.
5. Practice saying this in a whisper. Practice in A LOUD VOICE.
6. Practice saying this in a grandparent's voice. In a monster's voice.
7. Practice saying this like you are frightened. Like you are tired.
8. Practice saying this with an accent.

Quote #1:

"I've had enough! Your behavior is an embarrassment. I've wanted you time and time again to change your ways, but you've proved you just can't behave. Tomorrow, you're going to start learning to provide for yourself. Maybe that will teach you a lesson.

Quote #2:

"Desmond is afraid that the class will laugh at him because he speaks differently from everyone else. He's heard them laugh at Mr. Tidewell, who pronounces some things differently because he's from Georgia. Mr. Tidewell notices Desmond's nervousness, and he doesn't pressure him into saying more.

Quote #3:

"A nap is a wonderful idea. I will wake rested and ready to think about a solution. After all, we are people. Thinking is what separates people from monkeys."²

Today we are going to look at the dynamic communication skills that show themselves in the speaker's body language. Your body language is all of the things that you do to communicate without the words.

² Ibid.

Exercise:

1. Think of something that you have accomplished that you are very proud of. (winning a trophy, being picked for a team, playing at your piano recital, reading 1,000,000 pages)
2. Find a partner.
3. Share your moment of pride with your partner.
4. Tell them in your most effective way. Think about your facial expressions, your hand and body movements.
5. When you are finished, listen to what your partner has to share.
6. As the person who listened, tell your partner how you knew that they cared about this story. How did they use their body language to let you know that they were enthusiastic about the story?
7. As the person who spoke, tell your partner how you knew that they were listening to what you had to say by their body language.
8. Reverse roles and repeat the exercise.

When you focus on your body language, you can control your body movements, your hand movements, the way you tilt your head, your facial expressions including your mouth, your forehead, and most importantly your eyes. There is an old saying that your “eyes are the window to your soul.” This is very true. Your eyes can express happiness, anger, sadness, fatigue, joy, excitement, contempt, and many other emotions. These emotions are felt by everyone, no matter what language you speak. Sometimes when language is not shared, your body language and your facial expressions can convey the meaning of what you are saying. Your emotions are conveyed by your body.

Musical Shares:

- Below you will find a list of emotions. Select one.
- Think about how your face and your body would look if you were feeling this emotion.
- When the music plays, move around the space.
- When the music stops, find a partner.
- Using only your facial expressions and your body language, communicate the emotion that you selected.
- Your partner should guess the emotion that you are demonstrating.
- Reverse roles and repeat the process.

List of Emotions:

joy	sadness	amused
frightened	brave	delighted
tired	struggling	anxious
exasperated	interested	disappointed
doubting	quizzical	disgust
shocked	relieved	relaxed

Reading the Scripts:

1. Form three as close to equal groups as possible. Be with the same people from yesterday. (You will have a different script.)
2. Each group is given one of the scripts.
3. Silently read the script to yourself.
4. As a group, divide the parts among the members of the group. (Give roles with a small number of speaking parts to the same person.)
5. Read the script aloud with each person reading his/her part aloud.
6. Use your body language: your body movements, your hand movements, the way you tilt your head, your facial expressions including your mouth, your forehead, and most importantly your eyes.
7. Switch roles.
8. Read the script again with the new characters.
9. Repeat a third time if there is enough time.



Theater Time ...#3

Each of us comes equipped with three basic communication tools: voice, body language, and the ability to connect with the audience. At our last meeting we worked on body language. We learned that when you use body language you can control your body movements, your hand movements, the way you tilt your head, your facial expressions including your mouth, your forehead, and most importantly your eyes.

Warm-up Exercise:

Select one of the three quotes below.

1. Read it silently to yourself 5 times. See yourself saying the quote. What are you doing with your face, your body, your hands?
2. Practice the quote out loud 5 times.
3. Find a partner.
4. Practice saying this quote without using any physical gestures or facial expressions.
5. Practice saying this quote with physical gestures but without animated facial expressions.
6. Practice saying this quote with genuine physical gestures and animated facial expressions.
7. Feedback from the partner should be on physical gestures and animated facial expressions.
8. Reverse roles and repeat.

Quote #1:

The lazy villagers were very excited about having servants to do all their chores—everyone except Lazy Head. He was worried the Old Man might think the villagers needed his little people and start charging for their services.

Quote #2:

Hey, I'm used to tropical temperatures where it rarely drops below seventy degrees. I've never worn so many clothes at the same time, and I can't tell you how weird it feels having this turtleneck wrapped around me. It's been choking me all morning.

Quote #3:

Not waiting for an argument, he marched back downstairs. Penny, on the other hand, refused to take her father's threat seriously. She tossed a few things into a suitcase—just for show—and within the hour, headed downstairs to play her father's little game.³

When you focus on your ability to connect, you can control how well you focus on the face of the person/people to who you are speaking. Connection is made when you pay attention to the body language of the listener and recognize if you are soliciting an appropriate response from the audience. Are they nodding, are they focused, does their face mirror the appropriate emotion (joy,

³ Ibid.

sadness, excitement, etc.)? Connection occurs when the information you are sharing is relevant to the listener and it is stated so clearly that you are creating a picture for the listener. Part of connecting is looking at individual people as you “work the room”, making those connections with everyone. Sometimes when you are performing you have to imagine the audience because the lighting does not allow you to actually see the audience. It used to be suggested that you look over the tops of the heads of the audience. This is easy for the audience to pick up on, so look at individuals instead of a crowd, speak the truth, and put your own heart and meaning into what you are saying. Another important thing to remember when connecting to the listener is to be certain, when there is a large group, that you spend time (15-20 seconds or so) connecting with each section of the audience, rather than simply focusing on one or two people.

Exercise:

1. Select a quote below.
2. Practice the quote.
3. Hear yourself say the quote, using your voice as effectively as you can.
4. See yourself say the quote, think about what you are doing with your face, your body, your hands.
5. Visualize yourself paying close attention to the responses of the people that you are talking with.
6. See yourself “massaging” your presentation to include and draw in the audience.
7. Find a partner.
8. Say your quote. Focus on “making the connection” with your partner.
9. Partner provides feedback about what helped them to feel connected with you and what you were saying.
10. Reverse roles and repeat.

Quote #1:

She soon began to cry and her cries were so heartbreaking, even the servants who she had mistreated for years felt pity for her. But her Father did not relent. The next morning, after a fitful night’s sleep on the doorstep, she was awoken by a police officer.

Quote #2:

Wonderful aromas come from the kitchen, and the Chicago home is decorated with Jamaican furniture, native paintings on the walls, and colorful rugs on the floor. Reggae music plays on the stereo. Desmond sneaks a taste from one of the bubbling pots on the stove.

Quote #3:

The possibilities are mind-gobbling. But right now, my mind is so boggled with all the things I could be doing, I need to take a nap.⁴

Reading the Scripts:

1. Form three as close to equal groups as possible. Be with the same people as the past 2 Club Sessions. (You will be reading the final Reader’s theater selection.)
2. Each group is given one of the scripts.
3. Silently read the script to yourself.

⁴ Ibid.

4. As a group, divide the parts among the members of the group. (Give roles with a small number of speaking parts to the same person.)
5. Read the script aloud with each person reading his/her part aloud.
6. Use your body language: your body movements, your hand movements, the way you tilt your head, your facial expressions including your mouth, your forehead, and most importantly your eyes.
7. Switch roles.
8. Read the script again with the new characters.
9. Repeat a third time if there is enough time.



Theater Time ...#4

Characterization

Today the focus is going to be on characterization. Characterization is one of the most powerful of the literary elements, whether the story is a contemporary tale in which characters face realistic problems or an adaptation of classic literature. In a Reader's Theater Script, the author reveals the characters in the script primarily through narration (the lines spoken by the narrator) and the dialogue of the character themselves. Characters are also revealed by the actions (or lack of action) of the character and the thoughts that other have about the character. Although these characterization techniques do not usually use words that specifically tell you about a character, they give you enough information for you to infer (figure out what is implied) and reason through the information to decide about the characters. When we use reasoning effectively, the reader must use clues from the script to make a calculated guess about the character's emotions, beliefs, actions, hopes, and fears. It is uncovering the character in this way that helps the actor to give a more believable performance.

Today, we will look at the story of Paul Bunyan, an American folk hero. (You can access stories about Paul Bunyan at www.americanfolklore.net). Folktale characters are usually less completely developed than are characters in other types of stories. They tend to be symbolic and flat, often have a limited range of personal characteristics and do not change in the course of the script. Folk tales usually establish the main characters' natures early on. It is also usually easier to identify the good and bad characters in folktales. Keep this information in mind when we look at this folktale script.

Exercise:

1. To begin today's club, you will read a Paul Bunyan tale.
2. Read the story carefully, and as a team consider how who the main characters are—how you know, and how you might portray them.
3. Fill out the form below

Author's Technique	Characterization	Evidence
Narration		
Dialogue		
Character's Action		
Thoughts of other characters about the character		

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Sample:

Character: **Lazy Susan**

Author's Technique	Characterization	Evidence
Narration	lazy	"Talking about problems was one of the few things...still did
Dialogue	lazy	Maybe I will dream up a solution ...my mind is so boggled with all the things I could be doing, I need to take a nap.
Character's Action	wants servants	Twenty for me!
Thoughts of other characters about the character	smart	What a brilliant idea

Exercise:

Take a look at the chart that you completed.

How does this information help you get "into the head" of the character so you can read the part as if you ARE the character, not just reading a part?

In your Journal:

Jot down some strategies that you will use vocally and with your body language to better play this character.

Jot down how you believe this character's attitude is relevant to the audience.

Exercise:

- Divide into 3 groups.
- Read a section of the story (1 person at a time) and provide feedback to one another about how effective you are portraying the intent of the story.
- After reading the segment of the story, rate your performance. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being not well, and 5 being excellent, how well did you read the character in this script? Record your rating in your journal and explain what specific strategies you used to achieve that rating.



Theater Time ...#5

Warm-up Exercise:

Charades: Practicing your Body Language and Your Ability to Connect

- Divide into two groups
- One at a time, without saying a word, select one of the incidents below and act it out in front of the group. Remember that you are communicating with the group through your body language. If someone who goes before you selects your topic, be prepared to select another one.
- As you act out the incident, the rest of the students will guess.
 - Taking a walk
 - Picking a flower
 - Smelling a flower
 - Sneezing
 - Getting ready for school
 - Brushing your teeth
 - Combing your hair
 - Putting on your shoes
 - Putting on your backpack
 - Waving down an ice cream truck
 - Happy to have ice cream
 - Eating ice cream
 - Disappointed because you dropped your ice cream
 - Being cold
 - Putting on a jacket
 - Zippering a jacket
 - Exasperated because the zipper gets stuck

Characterization

Today the focus is going to be on characterization for the second time. Characterization is one of the most powerful of the literary elements, whether the story is a contemporary tale in which characters face realistic problems or an adaptation of classic literature. In a Reader's Theater Script, the author reveals the characters in the script primarily through narration (the lines spoken by the narrator) and the dialogue of the character themselves. Characters are also revealed by the actions (or lack of action) of the character and the thoughts that other have about the character. Although these characterization techniques do not usually use words that specifically tell you about a character, they give you enough information for you to infer (figure out what is implied) and reason through the information to decide about the characters. When we use reasoning effectively, the reader must use clues from the script to make a calculated guess about the character's emotions, beliefs, actions, hopes, and fears. It is uncovering the character in this way that helps the actor to give a more believable performance.

Exercise:

1. To begin today's club, you should select the characters that you would like to read in the Reader's Theater scripts that you have.
2. Select two roles that you are interested in reading. **Note:** It is important to have more than one choice in case the part you want is taken by someone else.
3. Put your name on the reading roles on the chart with the correct script written at the top.
4. Label your choices on both charts with a 1 or a 2 after your name so it will help when decisions are made.

Once in the character group, (with the exception of the Narrator) create a chart on this character's attributes by completing the chart that follows.

Character's Name _____

Author's Technique	Characterization	Evidence
Narration		
Dialogue		
Character's Action		
Thoughts of other characters about the character		

Exercise:

Take a look at the chart that you completed.
How does this information help you get "into the head" of the character so you can read the part as if you ARE the character, not just reading a part?

In your Journal:

Jot down some strategies that you will use vocally and with your body language to better play this character.
Jot down how you believe this character's attitude is relevant to the audience.

Take a look at a second script and complete the same activities as above. Select a character that you are interested in reading.

Once in the character group, (with the exception of the Narrator 1) create a chart on this character's attributes by completing the chart that follows.

Character's Name _____

Author's Technique	Characterization	Evidence
Narration		
Dialogue		
Character's Action		
Thoughts of other characters about the character		

Exercise:

Take a look at the chart that you completed.
How does this information help you get "into the head" of the character so you can read the part as if you ARE the character, not just reading a part?

In your Journal:

Jot down some strategies that you will use vocally and with your body language to better play this character.
Jot down how you believe this character's attitude is relevant to the audience.

Divide into 2-3 groups and select the script that you are going to read.
As a group, read through the script.

After reading the script, rate your performance. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being not well, and 5 being excellent, how well did you read the character in this script? Record your rating in your journal and explain what specific strategies you used to achieve that rating.



Theater Time ...#6

The Setting

The setting is the location or locations where the script takes place. The location is selected intentionally by the author to best meet the needs of the characters and the intent of the story. Authors use settings to create moods that add credibility to characters and plot. The illustrations and text can create the mood of a location. Sometimes the setting is the Antagonist if the author has set up the story to include a person-against-society or a person-against-nature conflict. If the setting is used in an historical background it is important that the setting be accurate for that time and place. Settings can also have symbolic meanings that underscore what is happening in the story. Symbolism is common in traditional folktales, where frightening adventures and magical transformations occur in the deep dark woods, and splendid castles are the sites of “happily ever after.” The setting can reflect indoors or outdoors, city or country, school yard or on the streets, day or night, cold or hot, sunny or windy, past, present or future, and so on.

Warm-up Exercise:

Take a piece of drawing paper and divide into fourths.

Number each of the rectangles 1-4.

Read the story excerpt

Draw the setting that you think would best fit this excerpt

Excerpt #1

Ellinor froze. From far down the hill a large group of men were coming toward her. Their leader was in front. She thought that they were at peace but she wasn't sure. She did not understand them.

Excerpt #2

Daniel sat at the table with his new treasure in front of him. The book's cover was faded to reddish brown with age, and the title had disappeared. When he opened it a faint smell of dust and ink emerged like a closet full of newspapers on a warm day. Daniel flipped the first pages aside until he found the copyright page. He always liked to know when books were published.

Excerpt #3:

She froze. From far down the hill a large group of Wampanoag men were coming toward her. Their leader, Massasiot was in front. She thought that they were at peace with the Indians, but she wasn't sure. She did not understand the Wampanoag and their ways.

Excerpt #4

Then she felt another chill come over her. At first she thought that it came from her realization that the best sci-fi, mastering science often meant power over nature—just not human nature. But it

was not a tingly feeling she was feeling, it was an icy blast, as if she was standing in front of an air conditioner that had just turned on. Once again she was in front of her mirror⁵

Exercise:

Divide into three groups, each with one of the Reader's Theater Scripts

Review the script and determine the setting or settings of the script.

Consider these options:

Indoors or outdoors

Present, past or future

United States or somewhere else

Day or night

City or country

Summer, winter, spring, fall

Settings in contrast, settings without contrast

Discuss in your group:

In what ways does the setting make a difference?

Would this story have worked in another setting?

Decide on a different setting, picture it clearly in your mind.

Discuss what you see around you.

Review the script in light of that setting. Is it a better fit? A worse fit? The same fit?

Practice:

In the script groups that you are in, after assigning the roles, practice reading the script aloud as a group.

As you practice through the script, focus on your dynamic communication skills (voice, body language, ability to connect with one another) and picture yourself in the setting of your script.

Listen to the clues given to you by the other speakers.

Try to keep your reading as "real" as you can.

When every group has had an opportunity to practice, each group should perform their script for the rest of the Club.

When listening to the script, be thinking about what the actors are doing that you like and want them to continue.

Be VERY specific (I liked it how you had a laugh in your voice when you said.... I liked how you looked so tired when you said this line.)

Write it down so you can share in the debrief.

Also think about what you would like more of the next time they read.

Be VERY specific (I would like for you to have looked up at the audience more, I would like for you to speak this specific line more slowly).

Write it down so you can share in the debrief.

⁵ Ibid.

After reading the script, rate your performance. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being not well, and 5 being excellent, how well did you read the character in this script? Record your rating in your journal and explain what specific strategies you used to achieve that rating.



Theater Time ...#7

Plot

Excitement in a story or script occurs when the main characters experience a struggle or overcome conflict. Conflict is the usual source of the plot. There are all kinds of conflict: person-against-person, person-against-society, person-against-nature, and person-against-self.

Person-against-person is a conflict that occurs often in literature. An example of this would be in the story of Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor. Because Peter is disobedient and greedy, he and the owner of the garden Mr. McGregor, immediately come into conflict. Another example is in Ramona and Her Father when her father loses his job and they come into conflict with one another because Ramona is expecting “vacation” and dad is tense and irritable.

Person-against-society conflicts develop when the main character’s actions, desires, or values differ from those of the surrounding society. In Judy Blume’s book, Blubber, such a conflict exists as Blume shows the cruelty to a fat child by her peers. It is believable because we live in a society that values “thinness”. Another example would be in The Message, a story of the French Resistance during World War II when the majority of society accepted the Nazi regime.

Person-against-nature conflicts occur when that antagonist is nature and the natural laws of survival that govern the natural environment that people find themselves in. In the book Julie of the Wolves, Miyax (Julie in English) is lost without food on the North Slope of Alaska. Her conflict is with the vast cold tundra that stretches for hundreds of miles without human presence. Another example can be found in the book Call It Courage when the conflict begins with the crashing, storm sea and the hurricane that capsizes the boat.

Person-against-self conflict occurs when the main character must face a secret in their past, a family disturbance, a wrestling between good and evil. An example of this can be found in Hatchet when Brian is forced to look at the secret about his mother that caused his parents’ divorce. In the book Wringer, the boy realizes that he must either accept the violence associated with killing pigeons, or he must find the courage to oppose the attitudes and actions expressed by his friends and the members of the town.

Exercise:

1. Take a look at the script that you worked on yesterday.
2. With your group, discuss the conflict in the story.
3. Decide which type of conflict it is and identify evidence from the text itself that confirms your opinion.
4. Create a chart that identifies the type of conflict and the evidence that you have found.
5. Share with the group.
6. Accept feedback from the entire group.

In your journal, reflect on the discussion that just occurred. Write about the theme for one of the scripts and why you believe that the group was accurate or inaccurate in what they selected. If you disagree with the choice of the group, what do you believe the theme is? What evidence do you find.

Read Around Exercise:

- Make one large circle with all Club Members.
- Bring all three scripts to the circle. Number them 1, 2, and 3.
- Beginning with **Script #1**, start a “read around”. A read around means that you begin with one person, move counter clockwise, and each person reads the next script part. For example, the first person would read the first part, the second person would read the next character, and so on around the circle.
- Listen to how the person reads the part. Listen for how well they communicated the line with you.
- After reading **Script #1**, read **Script #2** in the same way. Follow that with a reading of **Script #3**.

Assigning Parts

- Now that you have heard everyone read, a decision needs to be made as to who will read which part in which script.
- Club Members should be prepared to volunteer to read parts that interest me.
- If there are multiple people who want the same part, have a read off and the group will select.
- Once a person has a part, they can not get a second part until everyone has at least one part.
- Record who will read each part for each script.

Club members should work with the people in their group and practice their script.

After reading the script, rate your performance. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being not well, and 5 being excellent, how well did you read the character in this script? Record your rating in your journal and explain what specific strategies you used to achieve that rating.



Theater Time ...#8

Theme

The theme of a story or a script is the underlying idea that ties the plot, characters, and setting together into a meaningful whole. There is no prescribed method for discovering theme. Sometimes we can best get at it by asking in what way the main character has changed in the course of a script and what, if anything, that character has learned before its end. Sometimes the best approach is to explore the nature of the central conflict and its outcome. Sometimes the title will provide an important clue. Usually the character's actions and the outcome of the story usually develop and support the theme. Common themes include: it is important to dream; you need to develop personally; there needs to be a code of behavior to guide your life; you need to learn how to overcome problems; cooperation is essential; there is a need for kindness when we interact with others; don't judge another until you have experienced what they have experienced; and many others.

Exercise:

1. Divide into the three groups according to the script you will be reading.
2. Discuss what you believe is the theme of the script. (There may be more than one)
3. Write the one you select on chart paper in the center of a web.
4. Find evidence of this theme in your script. Write the evidence at the end of a spoke coming from the theme you have written in the center.
5. Share with the other groups.
6. Get feedback from the other groups about your theme selection.

In your journal, reflect on the discussion that just occurred. Write about the theme for one of the scripts and why you believe that the group was accurate or inaccurate in what they selected. If you disagree with the choice of the group, what do you believe the theme is? What evidence do you find?

When reading your parts in the Reader's Theater, you need to consider all of the aspects of the script in order to convey the message of the script. As you prepare for your performance consider the following checklist:

	Theme: What is the message that we need the audience to take away from our performance? How does the character I read support this message and help to drive it home? (Directly by the words/attitudes, or as the counterpoint to the message?)
	Plot: What is the conflict in the script? How is my character involved in the conflict? How do I use my body language and voice to convey this?
	Setting: What is the setting of this script? If I were in this exact situation, how would I be feeling? What would I be thinking? How would I act?
	Characterization: What is my character's point of view? How is my character portrayed

	in the script? By the narrator's words? By the words of other characters? In what ways does this characterization affect by voice, my body language, my ability to connect to the audience?
	Dynamic Communication Skills: How will I use my voice, (the volume, the rate, the pitch, and perhaps an accent), my body language, (my hands, my body, my facial expressions, my eyes), and my ability to connect with my audience, to give an effective performance?

Now that you have thought through your role as an actor, and all of the skills and understandings that will help you play that role, meet with your group and practice your script as a whole.

After reading the script, rate your performance. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being not well, and 5 being excellent, how well did you read the character in this script? Record your rating in your journal and explain what specific strategies you used to achieve that rating.



Theater Time ...#9

Rehearsal Day

Today you are going to perform your script for each other. This will be the first dress rehearsal.

Before meeting in your script group to practice, you and your group need to stage your reader's theater. To stage your script, some people could be seated (those who can sit up very straight and not slouch) and some can stand. Each and every one of you needs to be facing forward so you can speak to the audience with the ability to turn toward the cast member you are speaking to.

A few dramatic techniques can add an element of flair and fun to a performance. Remember to think about expressions and movements that your character might make. Keep in mind that the most important purpose of reader's theater is twofold, for you to become an excellent reader, and for your audience to be entertained and also learn from the script.

You can use portions of the classroom or the entire classroom as a stage. You can use the floor, tables, and desks. Of course, make sure that you are careful and safe, no standing on the tables or desks (sitting only).

Use the following simple tips to keep the performance smooth and entertaining.

- Make sure that you are positioned within view of all members of the audience. It is important that the audience can hear lines and see movements and expressions.
- If you choose to place all the readers in front of the audience at once, it is helpful to have them stand in a semicircle so that each reader can be seen by all the other readers and by the audience.
- Don't allow one reader to block the audience's view of another reader.
- Remind to look at, talk to, and react to the other readers/characters. However, the narrator may face and speak to the audience.
- As an alternative to having all the readers stand together in the performance area, you may want to direct the performance by having readers enter from and exit to the side before and after delivering their lines. Having readers move in and out of the performance area will require more rehearsal time

Meet first in your group for one last rehearsal. Do a read around of your script from your positions.

Perform your script for the others in your Club. Ask them to provide feedback by telling you what they like and what they would recommend to make the performance even more engaging for the audience. As a group, decide whether or not you will incorporate their feedback.

Go through each of the scripts. Provide feedback on each performance.



Theater Time ...#10

Performance Day #1

Today is your first performance. Arrange to have one other club or small group of students be the audience. Present all three of the scripts.

When your performance is complete become part of the audience for the remainder of your Club.

When all of the performances have been given, reflect on your performance and what you have learned about being an actor. Enter your reflections in your journal.



Theater Time ...#11

Performance Day 2

Today is your second performance. Arrange to have another club or small group of students be the audience. If you can arrange it, have the students from a nearby elementary come to your site for the performance. Present all three of the scripts in reverse order from yesterday.

When your performance is complete become part of the audience for the remainder of your Club.

When all of the performances have been given, reflect on your performance and what you have learned about being an actor. Enter your reflections in your journal. Compare today's performance with yesterday's performance. Which day do you believe you were at your best? What do you believe is the reason for this?



Theater Time ...#12

Cast Party

Today you will have your cast party. This is traditional in “show business”. Work with the program leader to be sure that you have some refreshments. It is also okay to volunteer to bring a treat to share with everyone.

During this cast party, write your name on a 5” by 8” card. Leave it out on your space in the Club classroom. During the cast party, go around to each person’s card and give them a complement about their performance. Absolutely NO putdowns, only positive comments about a person’s hard work or outstanding delivery.

Enjoy yourselves and thank you for all of the hard work to get these scripts ready for the audience. Remember that in order to be a great actor, you must become that character.



For more information, contact
Consult 4 Kids at
www.consultfourkids.com