



Reader's Theater

This highly engaging and motivating reading strategy promotes connected text fluency — reading aloud with expression and confidence. Unlike traditional theater, reader's theater needs no costumes, props or memorization. Reading aloud from a script, readers use only their voices, facial expressions and gestures to interpret the emotions, attitudes and motives of characters. The goal is to read a script aloud effectively so the audience visualizes the action.

Repeated reading of scripts is the key component of reader's theater. Research shows that repetition builds word-level automaticity, which enables a focus on oral reading expression. Students are more likely to reread if they know they'll be performing for an audience. Because fluency is an important issue for English language learners, this strategy is good support for them.

Watch a video of students performing a reader's theater piece [here](#).

How-To Steps

1. Locate or choose a script that is appropriate in content and difficulty for the readers.
2. Model expressive reading of the script.
3. Assign reading parts. Try choral reading and echo reading to boost reading confidence before asking individuals to read on their own.
4. Ask students to read and reread to practice expression.
5. Practice the basics of performing (i.e., speaking loudly and clearly so the audience can hear and not worrying about small mistakes).
6. Perform for an audience!

Tips for Implementing Reader's Theater

- Model expressive reading.
- Introduce reader's theater using prepared scripts. Students need to grasp the concept of reader's theater and become familiar with the format of a script before writing their own.
- Give the students lots of time to prepare. Emphasize practicing and rereading. Practice roles in different ways: individually and in small groups, privately and in front of others.
- Rehearse with the readers, providing needed direction and support around interpretation, pacing, expression, volume, positions and motions.
- Teach the basic steps of performance: how to use highlighters to mark the part, how to interpret the part and read expressively, how to hold the script, and when to assume various stage positions.
- Begin with short presentations.
- Perform for an audience as often as possible.
- Use props sparingly.

Extension: Writing Scripts for Reader's Theater

Once confidence is built using fully developed scripts, students might begin adapting and even writing their own scripts. The power of reader's theater is greatly increased when students integrate reading, writing and thinking skills. In the process of breaking down a story to turn it into a simple script, students learn about fundamental aspects of literature, such as character, plot, setting and structure.



Reader's Theater

When creating a script, students should first choose a story they like, or a section of a book that takes about 5 minutes to read. Stories are best suited for adaptation when they are rich in dialogue and have well-defined, exciting characters. A compelling story line, a tale that flows at a steady pace, action and conflict make a story a good candidate for reader's theater.