

Really Good Stuff® Activity Guide

City Mouse, Country Mouse



Congratulations on your purchase of the Really Good Stuff® **Really Good Readers' Theater**. This guide will help you prepare a group of students for the performance of a **Readers' Theater** leveled text.

This Really Good Stuff® product includes:

- **Really Good Readers' Theater Book Set**
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One part for all, three group parts, and three individual parts

Guided Reading Level: I DRA Level: 16

- **This Really Good Stuff® Activity Guide**

The Art of Presenting Readers' Theater!

Introduction

In order to present Readers' Theater, you must keep one word in mind—FUN!

Above all, Readers' Theater builds fluency and expression in children's oral reading, which motivates the student and makes the process enjoyable. The short performances can help struggling readers feel confident or give capable readers a chance to step into the limelight. Either way, their reading skills improve.

Readers' Theater is simple because it is about having fun while reading. You won't need any costumes or props, only your student stars and these colorfully illustrated Readers' Theater books. Students can improve their reading comprehension and fluency as they read and reread the text, working on vocal expression and other performance elements (see *Getting to Know the Script*). Encourage your students to practice at school and on their own and to have a good time with it.



Discuss the genre of the script as you introduce the script, its characters and its themes. Students should not be expected to memorize the script or its curricular content; instead, they should relax into the reading.

Benefits of Readers' Theater

This Readers' Theater collection will benefit your teaching in many ways:

- opportunities to improve fluency make reading more enjoyable for children
- newer readers get to experience reading something familiar aloud, without the fuss of sounding out words
- reluctant and eager readers engage in the reading process together
- students improve their performance skills and self-confidence in front of an audience
- simple scripts don't require costumes, props or even a stage
- the content builds vocabulary and connects to curriculum
- students read parts separately and together, offering a fun added challenge
- students gain experience working cooperatively
- students gain an appreciation of a new literary form, the play

Assigning Parts

The Guided Reading and DRA levels have been assigned by educational professionals. When you assign the script parts, think about individuals' abilities and what configurations work best for your group of whatever size:

- Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Each group or pair can split up the parts. They can all practice different scripts or the same script.
- The whole class can read together, if you divide the class into two or more groups. Group 1 can read the lines for part 1 (green), and so on.
- Buddies can perform parts together.

Color Coding

Readers' Theater includes scripts accompanied by colorful pictures. The text for every part is color coded. Students follow simple color coding as they recite the voice parts solo and with other students. Give each child their own Readers' Theater book and assign individual students or pairs script parts to follow ("You'll be green," "you'll be pink," etc.). If needed, you can double up some of the parts—particularly if you have more students than scripts.

All activity guides can be found online:

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Getting to Know the Script

Students spend a few days working with the script, allowing them to gain confidence in reading their parts.

Day 1

1. Give students the title of the script and say something about the story or content. This will help your students understand the relationship of the characters and the themes of the script.
2. Pass out the books and direct the students to the script. As your students follow along silently, read the script for the students, modeling creative use of vocal expression.
3. Ask the students how they liked the story. Discuss the script and its themes, and go over any challenging vocabulary.

Days 2 and 3

1. Review any challenging vocabulary words.
2. Divide students into pairs and have them practice the script, taking turns reading every other part.
3. Walk around, listen to the students' readings, offer suggestions and model lines as needed. Help the readers work on pace, expression and intonation for the different parts as they rehearse the Readers' Theater. Show how the parts are enhanced when read with the appropriate emphasis and voice techniques. Discuss emotions the reader might need to convey, such as excitement or disappointment. Include some physical theater as well. Encourage hand gestures, facial expression and acting out movements for animal characters. Also show how vocal speed and volume can affect the presentation. Make sure they notice and correctly follow punctuation.
4. Make sure both students in each pair have practiced all the parts in the script more than once.

Days 4 and 5

1. Once students are familiar with the script, assign script parts to the students in your reading group. Another option, if you are working with a large group or whole class, is to split them into smaller groups and assign script parts, clearly telling each student or pair his or her color (see *Assigning Parts*).
2. Read the script aloud. If you plan to have the group perform for an audience, such as classmates or another class, plan this in advance. Repeated readings will only further their enjoyment and give them more opportunity for reading success.

Practice and Performance Reminders

1. **Practice repeatedly.** Whether you have the whole group casually perform Readers' Theater scripts or have small groups perform them for the class, the students should practice the scripts repeatedly. They will have fun as they gain confidence working over a few days.
2. **Discuss performance elements.** Use practice time as an opportunity to review the elements discussed in Preparation and Performance (see *Getting to Know the Script*) such as vocal expression and body language. Point out if students are talking too softly, too fast, too loud, or not at all! If a group is performing a single part, they should be unified. If necessary, model saying lines expressively.
3. **Command respect.** Discuss the standard of behavior that you expect during practice and performances. Explain how a student or pair should handle an unexpected event during a performance such as a mistake, an interruption or a noisy audience member.
4. **Discuss script positions.** The audience wants to see the performer—not the script! It is also helpful if they make eye contact with their audience at times. Come up with a plan for how you would like the students to stand or sit. Discuss page turning as well as the best way to introduce and conclude the performance.
5. **Modify as necessary.** Keep in mind that some students are shy, others are very expressive, and the variations go on. Though you plan in advance who will be assigned each part, remind the students that you may find it necessary to switch parts once you begin rehearsing. You'll find that some students are too nervous to perform a voice part alone, and you'll decide to pair them with at least one other student.

Readers' Theater Journal

Have students keep a journal of their experiences performing in Readers' Theater. They can write what they like or dislike about the performances, keep notes on what they discover in rehearsal, and so on.

You can also challenge students to write plays inspired by Readers' Theater. Set aside time for students who want to share—or perform with a group—the scripts they've written.

