

## 07s:193 Teaching Literature to Adolescents

### Reader's Theater Assignment

#### Overview

Reader's Theater can be an effective way of introducing and engaging readers in different literary texts (novels, short stories, plays, and even poems) through performance. At its simplest level, Reader's Theater serves as a visual and oral book talk but can also be used as a student-generated project in conjunction with a text.

In this class you will work with a partner to develop a script around a text of your choosing—either one we read as a group or one you and/or your teammate has read. On the night of your performance, you will recruit readers/performers and assign roles. Each performance lasts just a few minutes but allow time for questions about the text. **Please have a class set to hand out to classmates and a copy for Bruce** (32 copies should get it). If possible, you can recruit your readers the week before and can provide them with a script. Do not worry about assigning roles by gender—it is perfectly acceptable for women to read male parts, etc.

#### Elements of the Script

A Reader's Theater script includes three key pieces:

- *Staging information*: a brief section listing the character parts and narrator which can also include directions for positioning the readers.
- *Narrator's introduction*: this provides a brief but enticing introduction to the book and its characters. This section should tell the audience the chapter or section from which the selection is taken and introduce the speakers. It is vital that it include some context for the scene so that viewers can understand the sequence of events and dialogue.
- *Script*: taken from an engaging moment in the text (but rarely from the actual climax or final resolution—don't give away the ending, for instance) and usually including dialogue. Scene selection is important. You will have to write in transitions and a part for the narrator to provide context and to explain some of the events. Generally, if the narrator plays too big a role, it is better to select a different scene.

#### Performance

Select readers/performers who are comfortable with reading aloud. Often students will be more willing to take a role if they have time to read over the script ahead of time. Allow students to take scripts home if possible. It is not necessary for the scripts to be memorized—usually this is just an animated reading. Encourage students to read “in voice” and with animation. This makes the experience more enjoyable for the audience and performers. If one or more of the students have read the text, then they can answer questions about the book and make recommendations otherwise the teacher can serve this role.

## Instructional Possibilities

1. Students alone or in pairs can create a Reader's Theater script as a way of responding to and sharing a book of their own choosing as in an individual reading program.
2. Groups of students can develop a Reader's Theater script after reading a book in a literature circle.
3. Teachers can generate and obtain Reader's Theater scripts to use as a way of introduce books to students. This works well for literature circles and in individual reading programs.
4. Students can take Reader's Theater to another level and can bring in props and can add more movement and action to the scripts and thus create a skit that depicts a scene from a text.

## Other Resources:

ERIC Bibliography on RT [http://www.indiana.edu/~eric\\_rec/ieo/bibs/rdr-thea.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/ieo/bibs/rdr-thea.html)

Aaron Shepard's RT Webpage: <http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/>

Downloadable RT Scripts <http://www.geocities.com/rtscripts/RT.sit>  
(32 scripts with a table of contents; comes as a compressed file. Grades range from Gr. 2-12)