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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

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Reader's Theater

Readers Theater is an effective fluency activity that helps struggling readers comprehend AND decode better! The advantage to reader's theater is that students practice by repeating the same reading many times. By preparing for an audience, students experience a true purpose, which makes the reading assignment authentic.



To make getting scripts easy, you can:

1. Go to Aaron Shepard's Website: www.aaronshep.com.
2. There you will find several scripts for legends and fairy tales and other public domain books. The books are listed by genre, theme, and reading level. He tells you how many readers are needed for the script but that's easily adaptable. He tells you how many minutes the play should last.
3. Start with an easy play first. I recommend, "Which Shoes Do You Chose?" for 3rd graders. For 4th-5th-grade students, "A Frog Went to Heaven" seems like a good choice.
4. Download the scripts. When you make copies, make an extra for each child - one to practice at school, one to practice at home.
5. You might also download the Aaron Shepherds tips for teaching kids to read the scripts and stage the plays. The packet provided is priceless. (These readers theater is usually kept pretty simple. No props are required unless you want to get more elaborate.)

Get Started

1. On the first day, each child reads all the parts the first time through, silently or chorally.
2. After reading, the kids ask questions about things they don't understand. The teacher can ask questions, too: What audience would enjoy this play? What's the main idea of the play? What is the author's purpose for writing the play? Who can summarize the story in one sentence? Let's see if we can use 3 descriptive words to characterize (character x). Discussing the structures of stories and literary devices grows naturally from deciding how to say each line. (If you know your line foreshadows things to come, you must say it clearly or maybe even use a different voice.) (Characterization: *How would your character say that line? Why?*)
3. Then, divide the script so that each student reads one part. Highlight parts in different colors. The next day the group meets, rotate the scripts so everyone tries a new part. Rotate the third and fourth day, also. On the final day, decide who will read each part and actually perform the play.
4. Before the group performs, tape-record or videotape the reading. Ask students to critique their fluency. You may need them to tape recorder or videotape several times before the readers improve their fluency: paying attention to punctuation, reading with expression, reading with voice that can be heard, phrasing the words, etc.
5. When the readers are ready to perform, write an introduction together. A one-sentence summary will help the audience "get into" the play. The exercise will also help the performers learn author's purpose, main ideas, characterization, and many other end-of-year test skills. Choose one student to read the introduction.
Example... Today we will perform Readers Theater called "Which Shoes Do You Choose?" It is a play about a character who has so many shoes, she can't decide what to wear. You should enjoy the play since we think it is a very funny one. While you're enjoying it though, listen for the lesson the main character learns at the end.
6. Make arrangements to perform the readers theater in another classroom, preferably for students younger than the performers.

In this way, the children read, comprehend, prepare for tests and have fun at the same time.