

This resource guide is about two things: Readers' Theatre, and folktales from a variety of cultures. Readers' Theatre provides teachers with an important tool for involving students in writing and oral reading. Folktales offer a rich source of materials for multi-cultural understanding and the teaching of values.

The guide is divided into two sections. The first provides some practical ideas for writing Readers' Theatre and teaching it in the classroom. It includes two overhead projector masters.

The second section contains 23 summaries of folktales which can be used by teachers and students to write their own Readers' Theatre versions of the stories. Six of these are already converted into Readers' Theatre format as examples of how this can be done. These are ready to duplicate and use in the classroom. Included are folktales from Europe, America, Africa, Mexico, Asia and Southeast Asia.

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About Readers' Theatre

Here is a teaching strategy that can be used in nearly all subjects and grade levels. Readers' Theatre is simply the reading of a play aloud without action or staging.

The essential idea of Readers' Theatre is that situations are written into conversational form. Narrators' parts are used to set the time & place and to form transitions between scenes.

To perform the Readers' Theatre play, students might read in small groups around the room with each student having a part, or one group might read at the front of the class.

Advantages to Readers' Theatre

- it involves students as active learners, rather than passive recipients of knowledge.
- it teaches specific content in an efficient and effective manner.
- it develops skills such as reading, listening, speaking, posture, poise, and self-confidence.
- it provides a method of learning that appeals to a wide variety of students with different levels of interest and reading ability.
- it is easily prepared and managed by the teacher.

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Readers' Theatre Example

Chow Khok and his son had a young donkey. He wanted to sell the donkey at the market. The donkey was big and would sell for a lot of money. However, the market was far away. If they walked the donkey to market, it would lose weight and they could not sell it for as much money. They agreed to carry the donkey to market by tying its legs together and hanging it on a long pole which they would carry on their shoulders.

Narrator: A long time ago in Cambodia there was a poor farmer named Chow Khok and his son. They had a fine young donkey.

Chow: If we take this donkey to market and sell it, we can make a lot of money.

Son: The market is a long way from here, Papa. The donkey will be skinny by the time we reach the market and we will not make much money.

Chow: I have a plan. We will tie the donkey to a pole and carry it to market. It will be just as fat

☞ Identify scenes

- Each scene is an important action or point of conflict.

☞ Identify characters

- Who is in the play and who is in each scene?
- Add characters for more parts in the play.

☞ Identify motivation of each character

- What is each character's purpose in each scene?
- What is it they want to do?

☞ Use narrator to introduce (and conclude) scenes

- The narrator tells the situation in which the scene takes place.
- This includes telling where the scene takes place.
- Use more than one narrator if the narrator has many lines to speak.

☞ Write dialog

- Write as people would ordinarily talk.
- Limit the number of words a person says at one time. Keep each speaking part short.

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Africa (Pages 1-6)

What the Spider Knows (Page 1)

Anansi, the spider, learns how to use magic and a big nose to hunt but is not patient enough to learn everything he needs to know. Moral: Don't think you know everything.

The Stone with Whiskers (Page 2)

The spider tricks animals into his trap until a smart rabbit tricks the spider to fall into his own trap. Moral: People who use tricks on others will eventually be tricked themselves. Also: Patience is a virtue.

The Greedy Man and the Stranger (Page 3)

A stingy man refuses to share food with a stranger. The stranger gets even by using magic. Moral: Be generous and share.

Play: *The Greedy Man and the Stranger* (Pages 4-6) This play has ten parts.

America (Pages 7-12)

The Deceived Blind Men (Page 7)

A Menomini Indian tale. Raccoons trick two blind friends into fighting one another. Moral: People should be more trusting of one another.

John Henry (Page 8)

John, a superhero, dies trying to beat a machine.

Johnny Appleseed (Page 9)

Johnny gives away apple seeds and lives close to nature.

Play: *Johnny Appleseed* (Pages 10-12)

This play has ten parts.

Asia (Pages 13-18)

The Doko – Nepal (Page 13)

A man tries to get rid of his old father by carrying him away in a doko. A doko is a large basket strapped to the back. Moral: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Juan Usong and the King – Philippines (Page 14)

Juan, a clever liar, tricks a king because he is greedy. Moral: Greed can bring grief.

The Story of Urashima Taro – Japan (Page 15)

A Japanese fisherman forgets about his parents because he falls in love with a sea princess. Moral: Have respect for your parents.

The First Monkey – Philippines (Page 16)

A boy refuses to help his mother because he would rather play than work. Moral: Don't be lazy.

Play: *The First Monkey* (Pages 17-18)

This play has three parts.

Europe (Pages 19-25)

The Three Words of Advice – Greece (Page 19)

A worker leaves home to support his family and receives some useful advice from his boss. Moral: Follow good advice.

Jack and the Beanstalk – England (Page 20)

Jack takes a chance and trades his mother's cow for some beans.

Tom Thumb – German (Page 21)

Tom, a miniature child, outwits thieves and a wolf. Moral: Everyone has some special talent.

A Judge of Horses, Diamonds and Men – Jewish (Page 22)

A wise man offers advice to a king that gets him into trouble. Moral: You will be judged on how you act, not who you are.

Play: *A Judge of Horses, Diamonds and Men*

(Pages 23-25) This play has seven parts.

Mexico (Pages 26-33)

Aztec Myths (Pages 26-27)

Aztec stories about the origins of the world.

Repaying Good With Evil (Page 28)

A man rescues a snake who wants to eat him. A debate about principle and custom.

The Legend of Agustin Lorenzo (Page 29)

A poor farmer avenges his grandfather's

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beating at the hands of authority.

The Little Guava (Page 30)

Children are abandoned but through cleverness and the help of the Virgin of Guadalupe, they survive. Similar to "Hansel and Gretl."

Play: ***The Little Guava*** (Pages 31-33)

The play has nine parts.

Southeast Asia (Pages 34-40)

Aren't We All Human – Laos (Page 34)

Moral: All people are equal but some are more skilled than others.

Big Liar–Vietnam (Page 35)

Moral: If you lie, people will no longer believe you. Similar to "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

The Old Woman and the Hare – Cambodia (Page 36)

Moral: Don't let yourself be tricked.

The Tbal Kdoong – Cambodia (Page 37)

A widow is tricked by a scoundrel pretending to be a Buddhist monk. A tbal kdoong is a rice grinder. Moral: Don't let yourself be tricked.

A Father, Son and A Donkey – Cambodia (Page 38)

A father and son take a donkey to market to sell. On the way they encounter numerous critics. Moral: Follow your own good judgement and don't be influenced by others.

Play: ***A Father, Son and A Donkey*** (Pages 39-41)

The play has twelve parts.

Resources

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University of the Philippines
Folklorists, 1882

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