



Grade

5

Reader's Theater Scripts

**Improve Fluency, Vocabulary,
and Comprehension**

TEACHER RECOMMENDED • STANDARDS & RESEARCH BASED



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Introduction

The Connection Between Fluency and Reader's Theater

What Is Reader's Theater?

With reader's theater, students use scripts to practice for a performance. The students do not memorize their lines, and costumes and props are minimal, if used at all. The students convey the meaning of the words using their voices; therefore, interpretation of the text becomes the focus of the activity. Reader's theater gives students at all levels the motivation to practice fluency. The U.S. Department of Education's *Put Reading First* (2001) says: "Reader's theater provides readers with a legitimate reason to reread text and to practice fluency. Reader's theater also promotes cooperative interaction with peers and makes the reading task appealing."

What Is Reading Fluency?

Reading fluency is the ability to read quickly and accurately with meaning, while at the same time using vocal expression (to portray feelings and emotions of characters) and proper phrasing (timing, intonation, word emphasis). The fluent reader groups words in meaningful ways that closely resemble spoken language. Fluency is now seen as a direct connection to reading comprehension (Kuhn and Stahl 2000). It bridges the gap between word recognition and reading comprehension.

The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000) identified five critical factors that are necessary for effective reading instruction. These factors are:

- phonemic awareness
- phonics
- fluency
- vocabulary
- comprehension

Fluency is particularly important for children first learning to read. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) state that readers have a limited amount of attention to focus on reading. Teachers notice this phenomenon when, after listening to a struggling reader, they find that the student cannot explain what he or she has just read. The struggling student has used all available

concentration to decode the words and thus fails to grasp the full meaning of the text.

A student who reads fluently processes the text with more comprehension. Timothy Rasinski (1990) found that grouping words into phrases improves comprehension. When the text sounds like natural speech, students are better able to use their own knowledge and experiences to enhance comprehension.

How Is Fluency Developed?

Oral reading practice is required for fluency development. Building fluency takes time and develops gradually with practice. A 1979 study by Samuels supports the power of rereading as a fluency builder. In this study, students with learning problems were asked to read a passage several times. Each time the students reread the selection, their reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension increased. The most surprising finding in Samuels's study is that these students also improved on initial readings of other passages of equal or greater difficulty. Their increase in fluency transferred to new and unknown passages.

How Can Reader's Theater Develop Fluency?

Each reader's theater script includes parts for several children to read together, therefore facilitating student participation in a limited form of paired reading, another proven fluency strategy. In paired reading, a stronger reader is partnered with a struggling reader. By listening to the fluent reader, the struggling reader learns how voice, expression, and phrasing help to make sense of the words. This strategy also provides a model for the struggling reader and helps him or her to move through the text at an appropriate rate.

Reader's theater is a simple tool that supports multiple aspects of reading and nets significant gains in reading for the students. It is not only effective in developing reading fluency, it is a motivating factor that can transform a class into eager readers. It is one activity within the school day in which struggling readers do not stand out. With teacher support and repeated practice, all students can do the following:

- read their lines with accuracy and expression
- gain confidence in their own reading abilities
- enhance their listening, vocabulary development, decoding, comprehension, and speaking skills

A Note to Teachers from a Working Teacher



From the Desk of Cathy Mackey Davis

This book can make a teacher's life easier and provide students with beneficial reading activities. After more than 20 years as an elementary teacher, I thought I'd seen everything come down the reading pike until I received extensive training on the five components of reading. The concept of direct instruction on fluency both surprised and impressed me.

These reader's theater scripts are designed with classroom management in mind. Each reader's theater has assigned roles for students, enabling the teacher to divide the class into small groups, which can be easily monitored. Students can develop fluency through choral reading, an effective strategy that helps students practice their reader's theater parts.

Each script in this book has its own ready-to-use, teacher-friendly lesson plan. The lesson plans cover three key components of reading: vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The discussion questions go beyond the literal understanding of a text in an attempt to raise the students' comprehension levels. Graphic organizers are an important part of the lessons, offering direction and bringing closure to the day's activity.

The scripts can also be an addition to classroom Literacy Work Stations. The teacher can place copies of the scripts in a Drama Station or a Fluency Station. Then students choose their parts and practice with minimal teacher intervention. The discussion questions from the lesson plans can be printed on index cards as a part of the station materials. The graphic organizers from the lessons can be enlarged on poster paper as a culminating activity for the stations.

By its very nature, reader's theater encourages students to reread and to use expression and phrasing to convey the meaning of words. It is an activity that both challenges proficient readers and motivates reluctant readers.

Cathy Mackey Davis, M.Ed.

Third Grade Teacher

Differentiation

Classrooms have evolved into diverse pools of learners—English language learners and students performing above grade level, below grade level, and on grade level. Teachers are expected to meet the diverse needs of all students in one classroom. Differentiation encompasses what is taught, how it is taught, and the products children create to show what they have learned. These categories are often referred to as content, process, and product. Teachers can keep these categories in mind as they plan instruction that will best meet the needs of their students.

Differentiating for Below-Grade-Level Students

Below-grade-level students will need help with complex concepts. They need concrete examples and models to help with comprehension. They may also need extra guidance in developing oral and written language. By receiving extra support and understanding, these students will feel more secure and have greater success.

- Model fluent reading before asking students to practice on their own.
- Allocate extra practice time for oral language activities.
- Allow for kinesthetic (hands-on) activities where appropriate. For example, students may act out the meaning of a vocabulary word.

Differentiating for Above-Grade-Level Students

All students need a firm foundation in the key vocabulary and concepts of the curriculum. Even above-grade-level students may not know much about these words or concepts before a lesson begins. The difference is that they usually learn the concepts quickly. The activities and end products can be adapted appropriately for individual students.

- Ask students to explain their reasoning for their decisions about phrasing, intonation, and expression.
- Have students design their own reader's theater scripts.

Differentiating for English Language Learners

Like all learners, English language learners need teachers who have a strong knowledge base and are committed to developing students' language. It is crucial that teachers work carefully to develop English language learners' academic vocabularies. Teachers of English language learners should keep in mind the following important principles:

- Make use of realia, concrete materials, visuals, pantomime, and other nonlinguistic representations of concepts to make input comprehensible.
- Ensure that students have ample opportunities for social interactions.
- Create a nonthreatening atmosphere that encourages students to use their new language.
- Introduce words in rich contexts that support meaning.
- Respect and draw on students' backgrounds and experiences and build connections between the known and the new.

How to Use This Book

This book includes 12 reader's theater scripts and grade-level-appropriate lessons. Within each focused lesson you will find suggestions for how to connect the script to a piece of literature and a specific content area; a vocabulary mini-lesson; activities for before, during, and after reading the script; and written and oral response questions.

Literature Connection →

Content Connection →

Vocabulary Activity →

Before the Reader's Theater →

Reading Comprehension Objective →

During the Reader's Theater →

After the Reader's Theater →

Response Questions →

Reader's Theater Scripts

- based on grade-level content
- categorized by themes and subjects to help integrate reader's theater into any curriculum
- have 3–5 student parts so that the class can be divided into small groups

Each lesson introduces a specific graphic organizer. A reproducible copy of each graphic organizer is provided in the lesson. Additionally, a PDF of each graphic organizer is available on the Teacher Resource CD.

Language Arts _____ Date _____ Graphic Organizer

Name _____

Compare and Contrast

How are these two alike?

How are these two different?

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Suggestions for Using and Displaying the Graphic Organizer

- **Make a transparency** of the graphic organizer and use it as a model during the lesson.
- **Use chart paper** to recreate the graphic organizer. Complete the graphic organizer as you teach the lesson.
- **Use the electronic copy** of the graphic organizer from the Teacher Resource CD to project onto the board or an interactive whiteboard.

Contents of the Teacher Resource CD

- PDF of each graphic organizer
- PDF of each script
- The contents of the CD are listed on page 102.



Standards Correlations

Shell Education is committed to producing educational materials that are research and standards based. In this effort, we have correlated all of our products to the academic standards of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools.

How to Find Standards Correlations

To print a customized correlation report of this product for your state, visit our

website at <http://www.shelleducation.com> and follow the on-screen directions. If you require assistance in printing correlation reports, please contact Customer Service at 1-877-777-3450.

Purpose and Intent of Standards

The No Child Left Behind legislation mandates that all states adopt academic standards that identify the skills students will learn in kindergarten through grade twelve. While many states had already adopted academic standards prior to NCLB, the legislation set requirements to ensure the standards were detailed and comprehensive.

Standards are designed to focus instruction and guide adoption of curricula. Standards are statements that describe the criteria necessary for students to meet specific academic goals. They define the knowledge, skills, and content students should acquire at each level. Standards are also used to develop standardized tests to evaluate students' academic progress.

Teachers are required to demonstrate how their lessons meet state standards. State standards are used in development of all of our products, so educators can be assured they meet the academic requirements of each state.

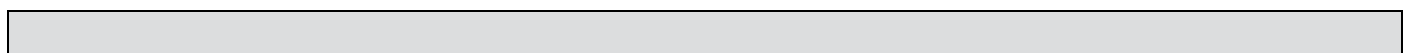
McREL Compendium

We use the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Compendium to create standards correlations. Each year, McREL analyzes state standards and revises the compendium. By following this procedure, McREL is able to produce a general compilation of national standards. Each lesson in this product is based on one or more McREL standards. The chart on the following pages lists each standard taught in this product and the corresponding lessons.

Standards Correlations Chart

Language Arts Standards	
Lesson Title	McREL Standard
<i>The Assembly Line</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>World War I</i>	Makes, confirms, and revises simple predictions

	about what will be found in text (e.g., uses prior knowledge and ideas presented in text, illustrations, titles, topic sentences, and key words).
<i>The Great Depression</i>	Uses text organizers (e.g., topic and summary sentences, graphic features) to determine the main ideas and to locate information in the text.
<i>World War II</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>Jim Thorpe</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>Madame Marie Curie</i>	Uses text organizers (e.g., topic and summary sentences, graphic features) to determine the main ideas and to locate information in the text.
<i>Harriet Tubman</i>	Understands similarities and differences within and among literary works from various genres and cultures (e.g., in terms of settings, character types, events, point of view, roles of natural phenomena).
<i>Earthquakes</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>Space Exploration</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>Plant Life</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).
<i>Electricity</i>	Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection).



Vocabulary Standards

Lesson Title	McREL Standard
<i>All scripts</i>	Use a variety of context clues to decode unknown words (e.g., draws on earlier reading, reads ahead).
<i>All scripts</i>	Understands level-appropriate reading vocabulary (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homophones, multi-meaning words).

Fluency Standards

Lesson Title	McREL Standard
<i>All scripts</i>	Uses a variety of nonverbal communication skills (e.g., eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, posture).
<i>All scripts</i>	Uses a variety of verbal communication skills (e.g., projection, tone, volume, rate, articulation, pace, phrasing).

Tips on Reader's Theater

By Aaron Shepard

Mumble, mumble,

Stop and stumble.

Pages turn and readers fumble.

If this sounds like a description of your reader's theater efforts, try giving your readers the following tips. First, have your readers follow these instructions—individually or in a group—to prepare their scripts and get familiar with their parts.

Preparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlight your parts in your copy of the script. Mark only the words you will say—not your character's name or stage directions.• Underline the words that tell about anything you'll need to act out.• Read through your part aloud. If you're a character, think about how that character would sound. How does your character feel? Can you speak as if you were feeling that way?• Stand up and read through the script again. If you're a character, try out faces and movements. Would your character stand or move in a
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	special way? Can you do that?
Rehearsing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold your script at a steady height, but make sure it doesn't hide your face. • Speak with feeling. • S-l-o-w d-o-w-n. Say each syl-la-ble clear-ly. • TALK LOUDLY! You have to be heard in the back row. • While you speak, try to look up often. Don't just look at your script. • The narrators are important even when the audience isn't looking at you. You control the story! Be sure to give the characters enough time to do what they must. And remember that you're talking to the audience, not to yourself. • Characters, you give the story life! Remember to be your character even when you're not speaking, and be sure to react to the other characters.
Performing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the audience laughs, stop speaking until they can hear you again. • If someone talks in the audience, don't pay attention. • If someone walks into the room, don't look at them. • If you make a mistake, pretend it was right. • If a reader forgets to read his or her part, don't signal to the reader, just skip over it or make something up.

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