



Readers Theatre

DEKOMP in Valdres, January 2020

Angela Fisher, HINN
(Jennifer Jønnum Brunelle)

Before we begin...

- What is Readers Theatre?
- Have you tried it?
- How was it organized?
- What was the result?



The inspiration of Readers Theatre



- Draws its inspiration from the choruses of ancient Greek theatre.
- Tragedies, comedies and satyr plays
- Narrator function
- Often sang, danced or spoke in unison.
- The members of the chorus were non-individualized and sometimes wore masks.
- In the 20th century Readers Theatre gained popularity as a method of drama that did not require actors to rehearse lines.

Readers Theatre in education



- ▶ Lines are not memorized.
- ▶ Any kind of text may be adapted for it.
- ▶ The readers may read in unison or take turns.
- ▶ Activates multiple skills simultaneously: reading, speaking and listening.
- ▶ With practice, pupils may choose their own texts to work with and organize how the texts will be read.
- ▶ There is also the potential for pupils to compose their own Readers Theatre texts.
- ▶ Other advantages?

Advantages of using Readers Theatre to teach ESL

- ▶ “Readers Theatre: a different approach to English for struggling readers,” Ion Drew and Roar Pedersen (2010)
- ▶ 1. Provides “authentic communicative purpose” (2)...”meaningful...context for the performance reading” (3)
- ▶ 2. It can be a “collective and all inclusive activity” (2-3)
- ▶ 3. Provides a reason for practice and repetition (3)
- ▶ 4. It is highly adaptable and “a wide range of texts can be used” (p.3). In other words, there is something for every ability/interest.
- ▶ Authentic texts: context and motivation
- ▶ Group participation is motivating, even for reluctant readers.
- ▶ This may be seen as discreet differentiation.
- ▶ Highly adaptable. Pupils may choose their own texts/excerpts, thus facilitating learner autonomy, which again feeds into motivation. Many stories are familiar, and thus may be used to activate prior knowledge

Reader's Theatre: Traditional model



Figure 1: The plan of a traditional model of Readers Theatre

- ▶ The rules:
- ▶ The Narrator always begins and ends
- ▶ The order: Narrator, 1, 6, 2, 5, 3, 4, Narrator
- ▶ The participants should be careful not to do anything distracting. They should sit (or stand) straight and not cross legs.
- ▶ Actors may complement the reading by simultaneously dramatizing the scenes
- ▶ See Drew & Pedersen p.6-7

Reader's Theatre: Developed model



- ▶ In the developed model, readers may be either “narrators” or “characters.”
- ▶ There will be multiple narrators in order to divide the text into appropriate chunks
- ▶ Characters are encouraged to move about and use body language as they see fit
- ▶ Have a look at an example of a reading of *The True Story of The Three Little Pigs*:
- ▶ [The True Story of The Three Little Pigs](#)
- ▶ [Reader's Theatre](#)

Now some group work...



- ▶ For this task, you and your group will design a Readers Theatre activity.
- ▶ First, choose one of your poems.
- ▶ Things to consider:
 - ▶ the context of your activity: intended age group, reading level and/or mixed levels, etc.
 - ▶ The context should inform your text selection and how you adapt the activity
 - ▶ type of Readers Theatre: traditional / developed
 - ▶ assigned roles
 - ▶ gestures and/or props
- ▶ Practice makes perfect!
- ▶ Be prepared to present your poem and justify your choices!

...and finally, some reflection



- ▶ What is your general impression after participating in a Readers Theatre activity?
- ▶ Was there anything that surprised you about it?
- ▶ Was it more or less challenging than you expected?
- ▶ How might you adapt it for your classroom?

Some final tips

- ▶ Start slow: Readers Theatre involves combining several *skills*, and just like any other set of skills, it requires *practice*. Begin with a basic model the first couple times.
- ▶ Give each group plenty of time to prepare and practice on their own.
- ▶ Do not get discouraged or give up if it does not seem to go well the first time. Some pupils take to Reader's Theatre right away, while others need time to get used to it. This is normal.
- ▶ While Readers Theatre takes practice, do not over-do it. You should not force your pupils to do it many times in a short period of time. Just like any other method, over-doing it leads to boredom and disinterest. Try it, but then let it rest and come back to it at a later date.
- ▶ Once it seems that your pupils have the hang of it, introduce some ideas from the developed method: try dividing the text in different ways, have the pupils stand or sit in different positions, incorporate gestures or props, etc. Use your imagination, but do not add too many new things at once.
- ▶ More advanced pupils can develop their own ideas to be integrated with Reader's Theatre and this should be encouraged! Make time for groups to brainstorm ideas and plan out how they will implement them.
- ▶ Eventually, Readers Theatre may become something that you can get going in a short amount of time with little planning. This can be a great advantage when you have to make last minute changes to your plan!

Intermediate task

- ✓ Read the article about Readers Theatre by Drew and Pedersen *Readers Theatre: A different approach to English for struggling readers*.
- ✓ What does LK20 say, both explicitly and implicitly, about the importance of teaching reading skills? Consider how you could use Readers Theatre for this purpose with your pupils.
- ✓ Using a poem/nursery rhyme, and cross-curricular or not, try out this teaching method.
- ✓ Older pupils could choose their own poem, or indeed write their own poem to present.



Great job!

