

**Standards,  
Benchmarks &  
Indicators Covered in  
This Unit**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

**DRAMA**

**SOCIAL STUDIES**  
varies by engagement chosen

**ELA STANDARD**

Phonemic Awareness, Word Recognition  
and Fluency

➤ **Benchmark B**

*Demonstrate fluent oral reading using sight words and decoding skills, varying intonation and timing as appropriate for text.*

**Indicator gr3:6**

*Read passages fluently with changes in tone, voice, timing and expression to demonstrate meaningful comprehension.*

**ELA STANDARD**

Writing Applications

➤ **Benchmark A**

*Compose writings that convey a clear message and include well-chosen details.*

**Indicator gr3:1**

*Write stories that sequence events and include descriptive details and vivid language to develop characters, settings and plot.*

**DRAMA STANDARD 2**

Creative Expression and Communication

➤ **Benchmark A**

*Sustain characters with consistency in classroom dramatizations.*

**Indicator gr3:2**

*Use voice, movement, space and/or physical objects to express or communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas in both improvised and scripted activities.*

**DRAMA STANDARD 3**

Analyzing and Responding

➤ **Benchmark A**

*Use dramatic/theatrical vocabulary and concepts in responding to a dramatic/theatrical experience.*

**Indicator gr3:2**

*Retell the plot sequence of a*

## *And That's the Story!*

### **Bringing History to Life Through Readers' Theatre**

#### **Overview**

Students read or retell a story from history using skills developed in Readers' Theatre exercises.

#### **By the End of this Unit, Students Will Be Able to:**

- Use gestures and facial expressions to communicate ideas.
- Combine gestures, facial expressions and sound to communicate ideas.
- Reread or retell a selected history story with fluency and expression.

#### **Student Work Product/Assessment**

The fluent rereading or retelling of the history story with appropriate gestures, facial expressions and sound.

#### **Time Required**

- Pre-engagement activities: 1-2 class periods
- Engagement: Varies
- Post-engagement activities: 1-2 class periods

#### **Required Materials**

- Classroom materials: reading book or copies of a story for all students
- Materials from Engagement Provider (when available)

#### **Appropriate Engagements**

Any history related engagement, including all those offered through The Western Reserve Historical Society, The Rock Hall, The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage and Women in History, among others.

#### **Teacher/Engagement Provider Preparation**

Teacher and Engagement Provider should discuss (via email or phone) the lesson, including details of engagement, perhaps previewing any of the history "stories" that will be told during the engagement. As available, Engagement Provider suggests books and/or other resources about the topic.

#### **Teacher Preparation**

- Divide a story into parts to be assigned to each group (or separate stories for each small group).
- As desired, use or adapt pre-visit activities sent by the Engagement Provider
- Familiarize yourself with Improvisation Rules & Set-Up, directly below:

#### **PROCEDURAL LESSON**

##### ***Improvisation: Rules & Set-Up***

**Overview:** This activity will introduce the rules and set-up for improvisation games. Once understood, students can apply them to various activities yet to come.

**Time:** 10 minutes

dramatic/theatrical work or experience.

### HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

**Gesture:** the use of motions of the body as a means of expression

**Reader's theatre:** a style of theatre in which the actors do not need to memorize their lines. Actors go through their blocking holding scripts and reading off their lines, or else sit/stand together on a stage and read through the script together.

**Sound Effect:** an imitative sound produced artificially for theatrical purposes, as for a film, play, or radio program

**Script:** the written text of a stage play, screenplay, or broadcast

**Theater:** a building or area for dramatic performances (*alternative spelling "theatre"*)

**Stage:** a raised platform; the part of a theater on which the acting takes place and which often includes the wings

**Wings:** the area at the side of the stage out of sight from the audience

**Audience:** the spectators/viewers assembled at a performance

### HELPFUL WEBSITES

- [www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/langrt.htm](http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/langrt.htm)
- <http://www.teachingheart.net/readers-theater.htm>
- [www.scriptsforschools.com](http://www.scriptsforschools.com)

### Instructional Procedures

1. Clear a space in the room and have students make a **circle** of chairs. (Pre-plan how to clear the space in an orderly fashion.)
2. The **playing area** is inside the circle of chairs. All games must take place in the playing area; you cannot go all over the room.
3. If students are sitting in their chairs and watching, they are the **audience**.
4. If a participant needs his or her chair for the game, he/she can take it into the **playing area**
5. When you say **action**, the game **starts**. When you say **cut**, the game is **over**, students must **freeze** in their place.
6. In "improvisation," there are no right or wrong answers. Participants must **stick to the rules** of the game and use their imaginations.
7. In "improvisation," you must never say **no**. Once something is spoken, it is a fact for the story and it is the actor's job to build on that fact.
8. **SIDE COACHING:** During an improvisation game, the director/teacher will sometimes find it necessary to remind the students of the game rules or set-up to keep them on focus.

## BEFORE THE ENGAGEMENT

### Pre-Engagement Class Activities

These activities should occur not more than one week before the engagement.

- Do "Readers' Theatre" Procedural Lesson (directly below).

### PROCEDURAL LESSON

#### *Readers' Theatre*

**Overview:** As a group, students will read a story aloud in *Reader's Theatre* format as they practice correct pronunciation, intonation and expression. Students will be able to read passages fluently with changes in tone, voice, timing and expression to demonstrate meaningful comprehension.

**Time:** 15-30 minutes

**Materials:** Reading text

### Instructional Procedures

**Getting Started:** Use this for the first time you present *Reader's Theatre* and any time following:

- 1) **Gestures:** Have students stand and ask them to use their *bodies* but *not their voices* to express the following statements. Remind them that this is a silent exercise.
  - Hello.
  - Come here.
  - I don't know.
  - That's surprising.
  - Good idea.
  - What time is it?
  - Let me think.
  - No.

- That's crazy!
  - Stop.
  - Okay.
  - Forget about it.
  - Be quiet.
  - Please?
  - Hey, I've got an idea!
  - Cut it out.
  - Maybe.
  - I'm sleepy.
  - Please!
  - Goodbye.
- 2) **Sound Effects:** Have the students practice this (and other) sound effects they can use in their *Reader's Theatre*. Encourage them to work as a group to sound the same.
- Groan
  - Gasp
  - Sneeze
  - Wind
  - A haunted house
  - Stomp on foot
  - Sigh
  - Cough
  - Clear throat
  - Water
  - Clap
- 3) **Combine Gesture and Sound:** Have students create a gesture *and* a sound for the following:
- A wrong answer
  - A good taste
  - A UFO
  - A strike out
  - A right answer
  - A bad smell
  - A homerun
  - End of a play
- 4) **Developing a Script**
- Divide students into groups of 4-6.
  - Give them a 1-2 page section of a story you are reading (or have just read) in class. This will now become their *script*.
  - If the script has dialogue, assign students to each character. Assign a separate student to be the narrator. You may assign a group of students to act as the narrator/chorus.
  - If the script does *not* have dialogue, divide the story into parts and assign them out.
  - Have the students read through the script once on their own.
  - Give students time to prepare their script using the skills practiced above: various facial expressions, physical gestures, vocalizations etc...
  - Students should practice within their groups several times.
- 5) **Performing a Script**
- Create a *stage area* in your classroom.
  - Have each group stand in the stage area to perform their script.
  - Other students will serve as the audience.
- 6) **Variation**
- Have students adapt new or previously written stories of their own into Readers' Theater scripts.

## FOLLOWING THE ENGAGEMENT

### Post-Engagement Class Activities

1-2 class sessions

These sessions should occur as soon possible after the engagement.

- 1) **Overview:** Students use what they have learned about Readers' Theatre to **retell** a story or narrative experienced described or depicted in the engagement. Students work in groups of 4-6 to review the elements of the story, write a narrative and perform for other groups in the class and/or other classrooms.
  - a. Each group reviews the elements of the story, including:
    - i. **Setting** (the where – place, geography; and the when – era, year)
    - ii. **Characters** (the who – proper names or groups of people)
    - iii. **Plot** (the what – action, events, reactions)
    - iv. **Implications for the Future** (the meaning, consequences for the future; is there a moral?)
  - b. Students record answers in graphic organizer.
- 2) Each group writes a narrative text of the story using the graphic organizer as writing prompt. Ask students to use descriptive details and vivid language to describe the setting, characters, and events. These narratives will be the scripts for their Readers' Theatre performances.
- 3) Lead students in a discussion of how the theatrical elements of gestures, sounds and combinations explored before the engagement help make a story or narrative memorable. Ask each group to consider where and how they will insert gestures and sound effects in their retelling of the story.
- 4) Assist each group in assigning speaking roles and a narrator if necessary, and allow time for each group to practice their performance.
  - a. Once all groups of presented their re-reading/re-telling, the class as a whole may want to merge the best elements of each into a single performance
  - b. Perform the re-telling/re-reading for other classes.
  - c. Use Reader's Theater for other historical events learned in class.

### Assessing Your Students' Work

- Use the attached rubrics (Oral Reading Performance or Story Retelling) to grade your students' performance.

**Assessment Rubrics**

**STORY RETELLING RUBRIC**

| 4<br>THOROUGH<br>UNDERSTANDING  | 3<br>SOLID<br>UNDERSTANDING  | 2<br>SOME<br>UNDERSTANDING   | 1<br>LITTLE OR INACCURATE<br>UNDERSTANDING   |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accurate recall of story elements:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Setting</li> <li>○ Character</li> <li>○ Plot</li> <li>○ Implications for future</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ All elements present</li> <li>▪ Sentences are well organized.</li> <li>▪ Gestures and sounds created and used appropriately.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accurate recall of story elements:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Setting</li> <li>○ Character</li> <li>○ Plot</li> <li>○ Implications for future</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Possible omission of 1 key element</li> <li>▪ Sentences are mostly organized.</li> <li>▪ Gestures and/or sounds used.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accurate recall of story elements:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Setting</li> <li>○ Character</li> <li>○ Plot</li> <li>○ Implications for future</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Omission of 1 or more key elements</li> <li>▪ Sentences are disorganized.</li> <li>▪ Some gestures and sounds used.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confusion of story elements and/or inability to tell what happened.</li> <li>▪ No gestures or sounds used.</li> </ul> |

Adapted from: Lorrie Shepard, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO. From the Chicago Public Schools Rubric Bank, [www.school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html](http://www.school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html).

**ORAL READING PERFORMANCE RUBRIC**

| EXCELLENT   | AVERAGE   | POOR   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Groups words logically when reading aloud.</li> <li>▪ Changes voice tone to emphasize certain content.</li> <li>▪ Alters voice and pace in accordance with text punctuation.</li> <li>▪ Uses gestures and sounds to identify characters and actions.</li> <li>▪ Can be heard by all in audience.</li> <li>▪ Enunciates each word clearly.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Usually groups words in a logical manner.</li> <li>▪ Uneven emphasis given to important content.</li> <li>▪ Tone and pace follow text punctuation fairly well.</li> <li>▪ Some use of gestures and sounds to identify characters and actions.</li> <li>▪ Loudness of voice varies.</li> <li>▪ Mispronounces some words.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reads word by word with no logical grouping.</li> <li>▪ Speaks in a monotone, with little change in pace or voice inflections.</li> <li>▪ Little or no use of gestures and sounds to identify characters and actions.</li> <li>▪ Speaks too softly to be heard by all in audience.</li> <li>▪ Slurs and mumbles words.</li> </ul> |

Adapted from: Airasian, Peter W. *Classroom Assessment*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991, p.295. From the Chicago Public Schools Rubric Bank, [www.school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html](http://www.school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html).