

Reader's Theater: An Activity for Increasing Fluency

What?

Reader's theater is a form of script reading that does not require the formal aspects of putting on a play such as props, costumes, memorizing lines. During reader's theater students stand in front of an audience and read from a script that they have practiced reading. The reading is expressive and dramatic (Rasinski, 2003).

Why?

Reader's theater is an enjoyable and engaging instructional activity that will increase reading fluency. Teachers at all grade levels can use this activity in their classrooms. The activity is appropriate for ELL students. See the attached Spanish scripts for reader's theater.

How?

The teacher must develop or select a script for use with students. The development of a script may require the teacher to add brief narration to describe the action in the story or to divide a longer narration into speaking parts. Keep in mind that the script must be at the students' independent reading level. Therefore, it is necessary to have several scripts to accommodate the various reading levels in your classroom.

Reader's theater is best implemented using a five day lesson plan. Before the first day the teacher must select or write a script and make two copies for each student in a repertory group.

- On day one the teacher introduces and reads the script to the class. The teacher provides a good model of fluent reading. The teacher

discusses some aspect of fluent reading. The teacher distributes one copy of the script students to practice at home.

- On days 2-4 the students practice their script.
- On day five students perform their script for an audience. Fellow classmates, students in another classroom, parents, principal, or other staff members can act as an audience.

When?

Reader's theater is an appropriate activity for your reading block and takes from 20-30 minutes per day.

Where?

There are many sources for reader's theater scripts.

- You and your students can write scripts.
- Children's literature books and selections from basal readers are appropriate for reader's theater.
- Check the following books.

Blau, L. (2000). *The Best of Reader's Theater*. Seattle, WA: One from the Heart.

Shepard, A. (1993). *Stories on Stage: Scripts for Reader's Theater*. New York, NY: H. W. Wilson.

Walker, L. (1997). *Readers Theater strategies for the middle and junior high classroom*. Colorado Springs, CO: Meriwether Publishing.

- Check the following web sites.
<http://www.aaronshep.com/rt>
<http://www.readers-theater.com>
<http://www.storycart.com>