The background of the cover is a purple-toned illustration. It features a gothic-style window with intricate tracery. Through the window, a castle with multiple towers and spires is visible against a hazy, starry sky. The window is flanked by two columns and has a decorative ledge below it. The overall color palette is various shades of purple and magenta.

# Reader's Theater

## Poetry Sampler

Susan Brown

*Reader's Theater: Poetry Sampler* by Susan Brown

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Portions of this book are based on text from the following works:

*One Thousand Poems for Children: A Choice of the Best Verse Old and New.* Edited by Roger Ingpen.

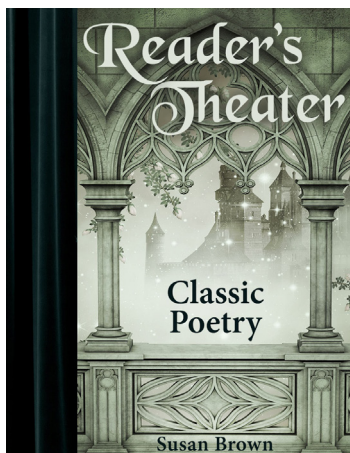
*Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters, and Journals.* Edited by Ednah D. Cheney.

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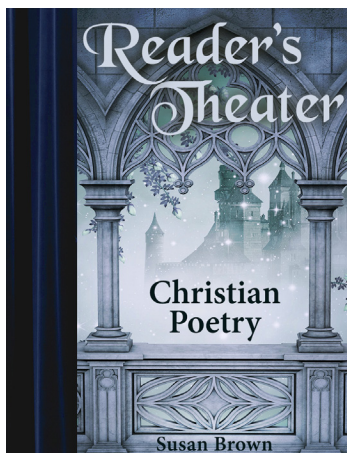
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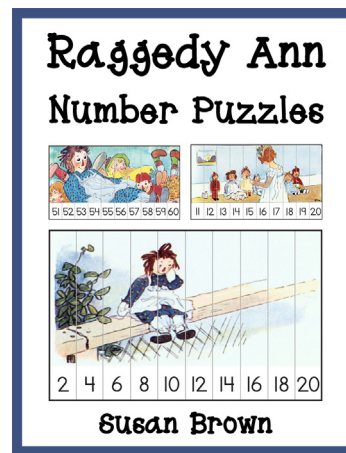
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# Introduction

## What is Reader's Theater?

Reader's Theater is the oral presentation of a written work that is performed with two or more readers. Memorization is not required because the focus of this form of drama is on *reading* the work with expression rather than reciting it. The readers help the audience to understand and visualize the text through their vocal performance.

## Benefits of Using Reader's Theater

- It gives purpose to reading.
- It helps children develop reading fluency through repetition.
- It increases comprehension since the text must be interpreted for performance.
- It motivates children to read.
- It improves not only reading skills, but listening and speaking skills as well.
- It encourages children to work together.
- Performing Reader's Theater helps increase self-confidence.

## Tips for Teaching Children How to Perform Reader's Theater

- Encourage the children to read with expression and to enunciate the words clearly.
- Teach the children how to project their voices so that they can be heard. Good posture helps with this.
- Pacing is important. Remind the children that they must be careful not to read too fast nor too slow, especially on unison parts.
- Show children how the script should be held. It's best if it is positioned below chin level so that the audience can see the faces of the performers. You may want to put the scripts in a three ring binder or attach them to construction paper or card stock for ease of use.
- Explain the importance of using facial expressions and gestures. This will make the presentation more interesting for the audience.
- Costumes and props may be used if desired, but are not a requirement.
- The positions of each reader on stage is up to you and the performers. Keep in mind that the scripts were written with the concept of having Reader 1 on the audience's left and the rest of the readers standing in number order to the right.
- Practice makes perfect, especially on unison parts. Encourage the children to rehearse their parts both individually and with their group.

## **What You'll Find in This Book**

This book contains scripts for 2 - 5 readers. The pieces are grouped into sections according to the number of readers required for each performance. Some works have been modified to make them more suitable for Reader's Theater. Some of the words in "Wild Beasts," for example, have been changed to fit the characters. While these scripts were created with Reader's Theater in mind, they could also potentially be memorized and used for other forms of dramatic presentation.

## **Where to Find More Scripts**

If you like these scripts, you can find more on our website at [www.WarmHeartsPublishing.com](http://www.WarmHeartsPublishing.com).

Also, if you would like to share your success stories with me, offer suggestions, or ask questions, please visit the Contact page on the Warm Hearts Publishing website. I would love to hear from you.

# Scripts for Two Readers

# Wild Beasts

Evaleen Stein

..... **CHARACTERS** .....

LION

BEAR

.....

LION: I will be a lion

BEAR: And I shall be a bear,

UNISON: And each of us will have a den  
Beneath a nursery chair;

LION: And you must growl and growl and growl,

BEAR: And you will roar and roar,

LION: And then, why then, you'll growl again,

BEAR: And you will roar some more!

# Thy Will Be Done

Eliza Lee Follen

## ..... CHARACTERS .....

READER 1

READER 2

.....

READER 1: How sweet to be allowed to pray  
To God, the Holy One,

READER 2: With filial love and trust to say,

UNISON: “Father, thy will be done!”

READER 1: We in these sacred words can find  
A cure for every ill;

READER 2: They calm and soothe the troubled mind,  
And bid all care be still.

READER 1: O, let that will, which gave me breath  
And an immortal soul,

READER 2: In joy or grief, in life or death,  
My every wish control!

READER 1: O, could my heart thus ever pray,  
Thus imitate thy Son!

READER 2: Teach me, O God, with truth to say,

UNISON: “Thy will, not mine, be done!”

# The Sandman

Evaleen Stein

---

## CHARACTERS

---

READER 1

READER 2

---

READER 1: The Sandman! hark, I hear him!  
He's coming up the stair,

READER 2: And everybody near him  
Is nodding, I declare!

READER 1: He's peeping in the door now,  
And first of all he spies,

READER 2: As he has done before now,  
The little children's eyes!

READER 1: Then quickly does he throw it,  
His golden sleepy-sand,

READER 2: And all, before they know it,  
Are off for sleepy-land!

# Scripts for Three Readers

# A Song from the Suds

Louisa May Alcott

---

## CHARACTERS

---

HAND

HEART

HEAD

---

HAND: Queen of my tub, I merrily sing,  
While the white foam rises high,  
And sturdily wash, and rinse, and wring,  
And fasten the clothes to dry;  
Then out in the free fresh air they swing,  
Under the sunny sky.

HEART: I wish we could wash from our hearts and our souls  
The stains of the week away,  
And let water and air by their magic make  
Ourselves as pure as they;  
Then on the earth there would be indeed  
A glorious washing day!

HEAD: Along the path of a useful life  
Will heart's ease ever bloom;  
The busy mind has no time to think  
Of sorrow, or care, or gloom;  
And anxious thoughts may be swept away  
As we busily wield a broom.

HEART: I am glad

HEAD: a task to me is given

HAND: To labor at day by day;

HEART: For it brings me health,

HAND: and strength,

HEAD: and hope,

UNISON: And I cheerfully learn to say,

HEAD: “Head, you may think;

HEART: heart, you may feel;

HAND: But hand, you shall work alway!”

# Strange Lands

Laurence Alma-Tadema

..... **CHARACTERS** .....

MR. JAY

NARRATOR

MRS. DOVE

.....

NARRATOR: Where do you come from, Mr. Jay?

MR. JAY: “From the land of Play, from the land of Play.”

NARRATOR: And where can that be, Mr. Jay?

MR. JAY: “Far away, far away.”

NARRATOR: Where do you come from, Mrs. Dove?

MRS. DOVE: “From the land of Love, from the land of Love.”

NARRATOR: And how do you get there, Mrs. Dove?

MRS. DOVE: “Look above, look above.”

# The Bluebird

Evaleen Stein

..... **CHARACTERS** .....

READER 1

READER 3

READER 2

.....

READER 1: Today at dawn there twinkled through  
The pearly mist a flash of blue

READER 3: So dazzling bright I thought the sky  
Shone through the rifted clouds on high,

UNISON: Till, by and by,

READER 2: A note so honey-sweet I heard,  
I knew that bright flash was a bird!

# Scripts for Four Readers

# All Things Bright and Beautiful

Cecil Frances Alexander

## CHARACTERS

READER 1

READER 3

READER 2

READER 4

READER 1: All things bright and beautiful,

READER 3: All creatures, great and small,

READER 2: All things wise and wonderful,

READER 4: The Lord God made them all.

READER 3: Each little flower that opens,

READER 2: Each little bird that sings,

READER 4: He made their glowing colors,

READER 1: He made their tiny wings;

READER 2: The purple-headed mountain,

READER 4: The river running by,

READER 1: The sunset and the morning

READER 3: That brightens up the sky;

READER 4: The cold wind in the winter,

READER 2: The pleasant summer sun,

READER 3: The ripe fruits in the garden,

READER 1: He made them every one.

READER 2: The tall trees in the greenwood,

READER 3: The meadows where we play,

READER 1: The rushes by the water

READER 4: We gather every day;

READERS 1 & 2: He gave us eyes to see them,

READERS 3 & 4: And lips that we might tell

UNISON: How great is God Almighty  
Who has made all things well!

# Choo-Choo Cars

Evaleen Stein

## ..... CHARACTERS .....

READER 1

READER 3

READER 2

READER 4

.....

READER 1: Turn the chairs down in a row  
Each behind the other, so;

UNISON: *Choo-choo! Choo-choo!*

READER 2: there they are,  
Passenger and baggage car,

UNISON: *Choo-choo-choo!*

READER 3: the Morris chair  
Is the engine puffing there,

UNISON: *Choo-choo! Choo-choo!*

READER 4: *Ting-a-ling!*  
Don't you hear its big bell ring?

READER 2: All aboard! Jump on! if you  
Want to take this train.

UNISON: *Choo-choo!!*

READER 4: Off we start now, rushing fast  
Through the fields and valleys, past

READER 1: Noisy cities, over bridges,  
Hills and plains and mountain ridges,

UNISON: *Choo-choo! Choo-choo! Choo-choo-choo!!*

READER 3: At such speed it must be true

READER 4: Since we started we have come  
Most a million miles from home!

READER 3: Jump off, someone! Quick! and go  
To the pantry, for, you know,

READER 2: We must have the cookie jar

READER 1: For our Pullman dining car!

# Not I

R. L. Stevenson

..... **CHARACTERS** .....

READER 1

READER 3

READER 2

READER 4

.....

READER 1: Some like drink

READER 4: In a pint pot,

READER 2: Some like to think,

READER 3: Some not.

READER 1: Some like Poe,

READER 4: And others like Scott;

READER 2: Some like Mrs. Stowe,

READER 3: Some not.

READER 1: Some like to laugh,

READER 4: Some like to cry,

READER 2: Some like to chaff;

READER 3: Not I.

# Scripts for Five Readers

# Dandelions

Evaleen Stein

## ..... CHARACTERS .....

READER 1

READER 4

READER 2

READER 5

READER 3

.....

READER 1: Hey-a-day-a-day, my dear! Dandelion time!  
Come, and let us make for them a pretty little rhyme!

READER 3: See the meadows twinkling now, beautiful and bright  
As the sky when through the blue shine the stars at night!

READER 5: Once upon a time, folks say, mighty kings of old  
Met upon a splendid field called "The Cloth of Gold."

READER 4: But, we wonder, could it be there was ever seen  
Brighter gold than glitters now in our meadows green?

READER 2: Dandelions, dandelions, shining through the dew,  
Let the kings have Cloth of Gold,

UNISON: but let us have you!

# The Honest Bird

Eliza Lee Follen

## CHARACTERS

NARRATOR 1

BIRD

NARRATOR 2

MOUSE

NARRATOR 3

NARRATOR 1: Once on a time, a little bird  
Within a wicker cage was heard,

NARRATOR 2: In mournful tones, these words to sing:

BIRD: "In vain I stretch my useless wing;  
Still round and round I vainly fly,  
And strive in vain for liberty.  
Dear liberty, how sweet thou art!"

NARRATOR 3: The prisoner sings, with breaking heart:

BIRD: "All other things I'd give for thee,  
Nor ask one joy but liberty."

NARRATOR 2: He sang so sweet, a little mouse,  
Who often ran about the house,

NARRATOR 3: Came to his cage; her cunning ear  
She turned, the mournful bird to hear.

NARRATOR 1: Soon as he ceased,

MOUSE: "Suppose,"

NARRATOR 1: said she,

MOUSE: "I could contrive to set you free;  
Would you those pretty wings give me?"

NARRATOR 3: The cage was in the window seat,

NARRATOR 1: The sky was blue, the air was sweet.

NARRATOR 2: The bird with eagerness replied,

BIRD: “O, yes! my wings, and see, beside,  
These seeds and apples, sugar, too,  
All, pretty mouse, I’ll give to you,  
If you will only set me free;  
For, O, I pant for liberty!”

NARRATOR 1: The mouse soon gnawed a hole; the bird,  
In ecstasy, forgot his word;

NARRATOR 3: Swift as an arrow, see, he flies,  
Far up, far up, towards the skies;

NARRATOR 2: But see, he stops, now he descends,  
Towards the cage his course he bends.

BIRD: “Kind mouse,”

NARRATOR 2: said he,

BIRD: “behold me now  
Returned to keep my foolish vow;  
I only longed for freedom then,  
Nor thought to want my wings again.  
Better with life itself to part,  
Than, living, have a faithless heart;  
Do with me, therefore, as you will,  
An honest bird I will be still.”

NARRATOR 3: His heart seemed full, no more he said,  
He drooped his wings and hung his head.

NARRATOR 2: The mouse, though very pert and smart,  
Had yet a very tender heart;

NARRATOR 1: She minced a little, twirled about,  
Then thus her sentiments threw out:

MOUSE: “I don’t care much about your wings,  
Apples and cakes are better things;  
You love the clouds, I choose the house;  
Wings would look queer upon a mouse.  
My nice long tail is better far,  
So keep your wings just where they are.”

NARRATOR 1: She munched some apple, gave a smack,  
And ran into her little crack.

NARRATOR 2: The bird spread out his wings and flew,  
And vanished in the sky’s deep blue;

NARRATOR 3: Far up his joyful song he poured,  
And sang of freedom as he soared.

# Appleseed John

Lydia Marie Child

## CHARACTERS

NARRATOR 1

NARRATOR 4

NARRATOR 2

JOHNNY

NARRATOR 3

NARRATOR 1: Poor Johnny was bended well-nigh double  
With years of toil, and care, and trouble;

NARRATOR 2: But his large old heart still felt the need  
Of doing for others some kindly deed.

JOHNNY: “But what can I do? “

NARRATOR 3: old Johnny said;

JOHNNY: “I who work so hard for daily bread?  
It takes heaps of money to do much good;  
I am far too poor to do as I would.”

NARRATOR 4: The old man sat thinking deeply a while,  
Then over his features gleamed a smile,

NARRATOR 3: Then he clapped his hands with a boyish glee,  
And said to himself,

JOHNNY: “There’s a way for me!”

NARRATOR 2: He worked, and he worked with might and main,  
But no one knew the plan in his brain.

NARRATOR 4: He took ripe apples in pay for chores,  
And carefully cut from them all the cores.

NARRATOR 1: He filled a bag full, then wandered away,  
And no man saw him for many a day.

NARRATOR 2: With knapsack over his shoulder slung,  
He marched along, and whistled or sung.

NARRATOR 4: He seemed to roam with no object in view,  
Like one who had nothing on earth to do;

NARRATOR 3: But, journeying thus o'er the prairies wide,  
He paused now and then, and his bag untied.

NARRATOR 1: With pointed cane deep holes he would bore,  
And in every hole he placed a core;

NARRATOR 4: Then covered them well, and left them there  
In keeping of sunshine, rain and air.

NARRATOR 3: Sometimes for days he waded through grass,  
And saw not a living creature pass,

NARRATOR 2: But often, when sinking to sleep in the dark,  
He heard the owls hoot and the prairie dogs bark.

NARRATOR 1: Sometimes an Indian of sturdy limb  
Came striding along and walked with him;

NARRATOR 3: And he who had food shared with the other,  
As if he had met a hungry brother.

NARRATOR 4: When the Indian saw how the bag was filled,  
And looked at the holes the white man drilled,

NARRATOR 1: He thought to himself 'twas a silly plan  
To be planting seed for some future man.

NARRATOR 2: Sometimes a log cabin came in view,  
Where Johnny was sure to find jobs to do,

NARRATOR 4: By which he gained stores of bread and meat,  
And welcome rest for his weary feet.

NARRATOR 1: He had full many a story to tell,  
And goodly hymns that he sung right well;

NARRATOR 3: He tossed up the babes, and joined the boys  
In many a game full of fun and noise.

NARRATOR 2: And he seemed so hearty, in work or play,  
Men, women, and boys all urged him to stay;

NARRATOR 1: But he always said,

JOHNNY: "I have something to do.  
And I must go on to carry it through."

NARRATOR 3: The boys, who were sure to follow him round,  
Soon found what it was he put in the ground;

NARRATOR 2: And so, as time passed and he traveled on,  
Every one called him

ALL

NARRATORS: "Old Appleseed John."

NARRATOR 4: Whenever he'd used the whole of his store,  
He went into cities and worked for more;

NARRATOR 3: Then he marched back to the wilds again,  
And planted seed on hillside and plain.

NARRATOR 2: In cities, some said the old man was crazy;  
While others said he was only lazy;

NARRATOR 4: But he took no notice of gibes and jeers,  
He knew he was working for future years.

NARRATOR 1: He knew that trees would soon abound  
Where once a tree could not have been found;

NARRATOR 2: That a flickering play of light and shade  
Would dance and glimmer along the glade;

NARRATOR 3: That blossoming sprays would form fair bowers,  
And sprinkle the grass with rosy showers;

NARRATOR 1: And the little seeds his hands had spread  
Would become ripe apples when he was dead.

NARRATOR 4: So he kept on traveling far and wide,  
Till his old limbs failed him, and he died.

NARRATOR 2: He said at the last,

JOHNNY: "'Tis a comfort to feel  
I've done good in the world, though not a great deal."

NARRATOR 4: Weary travelers, journeying west,  
In the shade of his trees find pleasant rest;

NARRATOR 3: And they often start, with glad surprise,  
At the rosy fruit that round them lies.

NARRATOR 2: And if they inquire whence came such trees,  
Where not a bough once swayed in the breeze,

NARRATOR 1: The answer still comes, as they travel on,

ALL

NARRATORS: "These trees were planted by Appleseed John."