

Farmyard Security

A Teacher's Guide

Written by Nancy K. Wallace, author of Readers' Theater



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A Note from the Author

If you haven't introduced your students to Readers' Theater, now is a great time to start! Opportunities for public speaking build confidence and Readers' Theater offers students the security of retaining their scripts throughout the performance. It's an excellent way for kids to comfortably enter the world of theater. Working together also promotes cooperation and a sense of community in the classroom.

Farmyard Security presents an updated version of the well-known folktale, *Chicken Little*. The script can be used for traditional Readers' Theater, Adapted Readers' Theater—which includes makeup, costumes, and scenery—or even puppetry.

A play makes a great family night program with a guaranteed audience. Parents, grandparents, and other relatives love to see their kids perform! This script includes suggestions for involving as many children as possible in the production.

Enjoy!

Nancy K. Wallace



Character Reading Levels

This play has eight speaking parts, with a wide range of reading levels, offering many opportunities for children to act. The speaking parts are listed here in descending order of difficulty. The reading level is the ATOS level based on the character's speaking parts and stage direction.

Narrator - Reading Level: 5.4

The narrator is the storyteller. He or she sits to the side of the stage on a stool. He forms a kind of bridge between the audience and the performers, adding intimacy to the play. In *Farmyard Security*, the narrator doesn't interact with the rest of the characters; he simply tells the story. This part requires excellent reading skills.

Wiley Wolf - Reading Level: 4.8

Wiley Wolf is a diplomat. He discovers immediately that by being "Mister Nice Guy" he can feed his family for a long time. He should appear suave and charming. He needs to speak slowly and precisely and be as pleasant and accommodating as possible.



Rusty Rooster - Reading Level: 4.6

Rusty Rooster doesn't really question Henrietta Hen's pronouncement that the sky is falling. He is a "chicken" too, and is afraid for his own life. He should be played by a student who can pretend to be cowardly and scared.

Calamity Cow - Reading Level: 4.4

Calamity Cow appears unconcerned at first and admires the blue sky. She is only moved to panic when Henrietta convinces her that they are in danger. She could be chewing gum loudly and trail along behind the other animals, swaying as she walks.

Panicky Pig - Reading Level: 3.6

Panicky Pig worries about food a lot. She is relieved to find out that Wolf's cave is stocked with supplies. She should be frivolous and girly.

Paranoid Puppy - Reading Level: 3.4

Paranoid Puppy is supposed to be a watch dog but he leaves his post when danger threatens. He pretends to be brave but is every bit as afraid as the rest of the animals. The student that plays him can interject a few howls to indicate how scared he really is.

Henrietta Hen - Reading Level: 2.8

Henrietta Hen is the main character. It is her misconception of what happens when an apple hits her in the head that sets the whole play in motion. While she is scatterbrained she is also determined. She takes a "mother hen" attitude with the rest of the animals. Choose someone to play this part that can exhibit both qualities.

Farmer Jones - Reading Level: 2.7

While Farmer Jones rescues the animals, he is also afraid of the wolf. He should herd the animals ahead of him as they leave the stage.

Announcer - Reading Level: 0

It is helpful to have an announcer who introduces the title of the play and each scene change. This student can carry cardstock signs with the scene numbers and titles. The announcer needs to check with the stage crew to make sure the set is ready before he announces each scene and the curtains open.



Production Tips

At a Readers' Theater production, the performers sit on stools at the front of the room. But, an Adapted Readers' Theater production or a full play requires some sets and props.

Readers' Theater

If you are producing a straight Readers' Theater, you can do this simply by providing stools, cardboard name tags for each character, and scripts.

Inexpensive natural wooden bar stools available at many home improvement and department stores make excellent Readers' Theater stools. If your budget won't stretch to purchase them, use chairs instead. The performers can also stand to deliver their lines.

Adapted Readers' Theater

Adapted Readers' Theater productions can be as involved as you would like them to be. Here are a few options to enhance your production:

Make-up & Costumes

This play offers a wonderful opportunity to use face paint to create animal faces. There are several books that offer step-by-step instructions. We have included some below! By incorporating face painting into your lesson plans in the weeks before the play, students could master the techniques before opening night and produce some spectacular results!

Chris Caudron and Caro Childs. *The Usborne Book of Face Painting*. London: Usborne Publishing, 2007.

Klutz editors. *Face Painting*. New York: Klutz, 2012.

Brian Wolfe and Nick Wolfe. *Fun Face Painting Ideas for Kids*. New York: Impact Books, 2013.



For costumes, sweat pants and shirts in different colors can be found for each animal. You can also get the costume designers and actors involved making their own accessories that were described in the book. Provide the materials below and let them get creative!

yellow felt
red felt
pink felt
brown felt
cardboard

headbands
paper cups
pink pipe cleaners
buttons
yarn

scissors
glue
thread
paper
crayons



Sets & Props

The farm set could include a barn made of cardboard at center stage, a cardboard apple tree at stage left, Farmer Jones's house, and a forest of cardboard trees.

An alternative to cardboard scenery would be to paint old sheets with a barn and farmhouse. Hang them from a curtain rod at the back of the stage. Use artificial potted plants for the forest.

Some props to gather include a hay bale and several real or plastic apples that can be dropped on the stage. Make a cardboard tractor or decorate a wagon as a tractor. Don't forget a wagon to pull behind the tractor.

Only one hay bale is called for in the script, but having several others on stage will add to the atmosphere. Add a bell around Calamity Cow's neck for a nice touch.

Lighting & Sound Effects

Several inexpensive clip-on flood lights will add professionalism to your stage—even if it is just the front of your classroom. A handheld spotlight or flashlight could follow the primary speakers.

The stage crew can also participate during the performance by adding sound effects. The script calls for a loud snapping sound as the apple falls. Provide a set of wooden claves or rhythm sticks for the sound effect crew to hit together. They will also need to provide the knocking sound when Henrietta Hen knocks on Farmer Jones's door.

Performance Tips

Once a schedule is set, emphasize how important it is for everyone to be at all the rehearsals. Even if students know their own parts, they need to learn to interact with each other as a team. When one student misses a rehearsal it inconveniences the entire cast.

Be sure to emphasize that everyone's job is important. Whether you are a costume designer, an understudy, or a performer, the show can't go on without you.

During rehearsals performers should try to respond immediately to other cast members' lines, eliminating any pauses between lines of dialogue. It is always a good idea to have several understudies prepared to step in if one of the actors is unable to perform.

Have the actors practice moving around with the scripts. Have them practice holding the script in one hand only, leaving the other hand free for acting. Right-handers hold a script with their left hand, left-handers with their right.

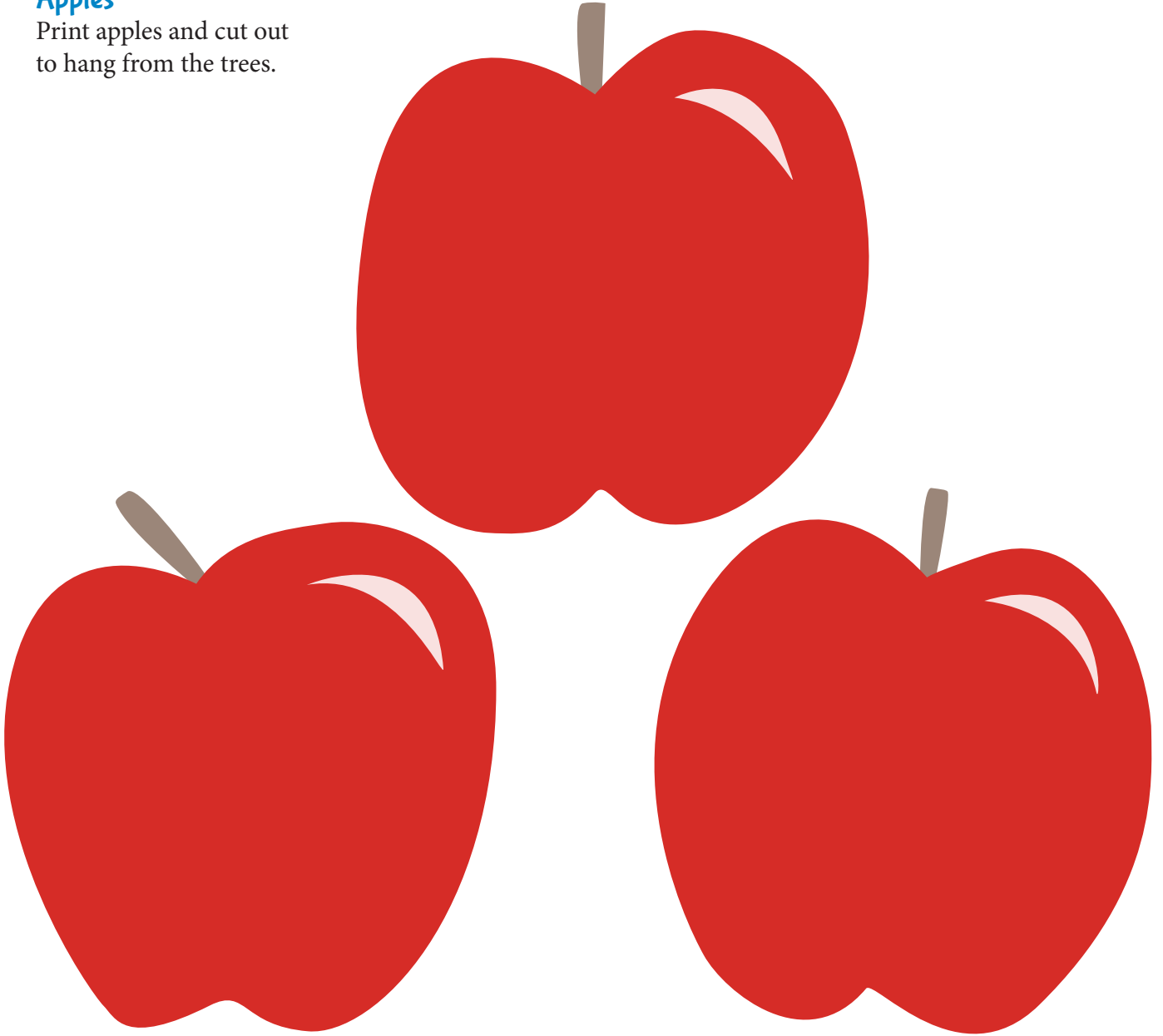
Once the narrator says "the end" on performance night, have the announcer introduce both the cast and the production crew and let everyone take a bow. This first taste of fame can be intoxicating and a huge boost to self-esteem!



Printable Props

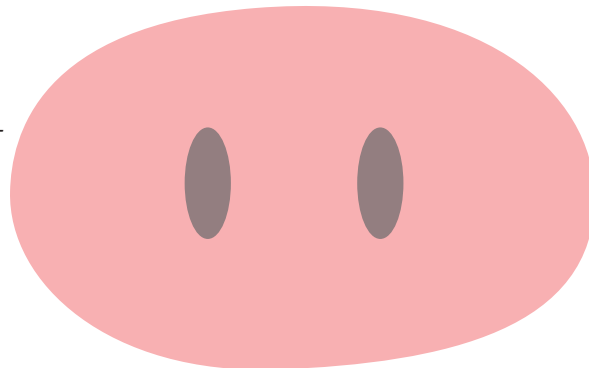
Apples

Print apples and cut out to hang from the trees.



Pig Snout

Print snout and cut out to paste onto the front of a paper cup.



Printable Props (continued)

Rooster Comb

Print both sides of comb and trim bottom to fit your head! Attach to a Popsicle stick.



Printable Props (continued)



Readers' Theater Rules

1. Be respectful and arrive on time.
2. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
3. No talking while there is a performance.
4. Be responsible and bring the items needed for rehearsal.
5. Follow adult directions.



Additional Resources

Here are some other great resources about Readers' Theater:

Aaron Shepard's Readers' Theater Guides

<http://aaronshp.com/rt/>

Conducting Readers' Theater Resources

<http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/carrick/>

The NWT Literacy Council's Readers' Theater How To

<http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/howtokit/theatre/theatre.pdf>

Readers' Theater Scripts from Pinellas County Schools

<http://it.pinellas.k12.fl.us/Teachers3/gurianb/ReadersTheater.html>

