

The Princedom of Pea

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.

The Princedom of Pea presents an updated version of a well-known fairy tale. 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

There are five speaking parts. They 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.

The Narrator - Reading Level: 5.9

The narrator is the storyteller. He sits to the side of the stage on a stool, dressed like a bard with a cloak. He forms a kind of bridge between the audience and the performers, adding intimacy to the play. Choose someone with excellent reading skills for this part.

Princess Penelope Rose - Reading Level: 4.2

Penelope isn't intimidated by Queen Patricia. She is beautiful and intelligent. The princess doesn't hesitate to say what she thinks. Her marriage to Peter changes the entire Princedom of Pea. You will need another stronger reader in this part.

Queen Patricia - Reading Level: 3.8

The queen is haughty, aloof, and sometimes downright rude! She believes she is right about everything. Select a student who can bring a real attitude to this role!

Prince Peter - Reading Level: 3.3

Peter is passive and pouty. He'd like to choose a wife but doesn't want to stand up to his mother. When he falls for Princess Penelope, he realizes he has to act. He becomes more animated as the play progresses. He steals the giant letter "P" and gloats when Penelope arrives at breakfast, sleepless and yawning. Find a student who can evolve with the part.



Herald - Reading Level: 2.3

The herald carries the Princedom of Pea's banner. He marches back and forth across the stage, delivering his spiel, every time someone mentions the Princedom of Pea. His lines are easy because he repeats the same thing over and over again. This part is a good one for the class clown. Recruit a student that can make the audience laugh every time he marches by.

The Pack of Princesses

The princesses who simply arrive at the party don't have any specific lines. They can giggle and pretend to talk quietly together while the party is going on. When Queen Patricia dismisses them they should look offended and pouty. Each princess should have a crown. Use as many girls as you like for this group.



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 and Costumes

This play offers a wonderful opportunity to use stage makeup to create drama. There are several books that offer step-by-step instructions. We have included some below! By incorporating makeup 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, students can wear their own fancy clothes. You can 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!

cardboard
gold paint
glitter paint
fake flowers
tacky glue

thumbtacks
dowels
sewing kit
felt
Popsicle sticks

Sets & Props

If painting cardboard seems too messy, rolled plastic, imitation stone walls are available from online party supply stores. A few potted plants or a piece of trellis with some plastic vines could be used for the garden scene.

Use gold paint for the giant letter “P.” Dry brush the edges with brown paint for an antiqued look. A light coat of glitter paint will add sparkle. Finish with a coat of polyurethane.

Stiffened felt makes a great banner. The glittered variety adds a little bling. Print out a giant “P” and draw around it on a contrasting color of felt. Cut the letter out and glue it on the banner with tacky glue. Sew or glue loops to the top of the banner to go over a piece of doweling.

Thumbtacks will hold the banner in place.

Lighting

Several inexpensive clip-on flood lights will add professionalism to your stage even if it is just the front of your classroom.



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 by 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

Fire

Cut out the fire and
paste onto fireplace.
Place logs in front
of fire for a more
realistic look.



Printable Props (continued)

P for under the bed

Princess Penelope

Rose's Crown

Attach to a headband or a
Popsicle stick.



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://aaronshep.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>

