

# *Readers' Theatre*

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# Why Readers' Theatre?

Readers' theatre does not rely on costumes, lighting, scenery, props, or sound and music effects. In Readers' Theatre, readers, using primarily their voices, interpret a script—they tell the story. Striving for fluent, expressive reading, your students will pay attention to punctuation and sentence structure as they read aloud. They will enlarge their vocabularies. They will articulate unfamiliar words that may come from another time or place. They will understand and communicate the theme to their audience. Reading aloud, students will sharpen their communication skills. They learn to project their voices and the emotions behind the writing. They discover the values of pacing and inflection. They practice quick response to other readers. Even the shyest, most reluctant reader is part of a group effort in sharing a story with an expectant audience.

It's as easy as one, two, three.

1. Choose and prepare the script. You will need one script for each reader so that lines can be highlighted and stage directions noted. Locate the simple props that will be needed.
2. Introduce the vocabulary, give a brief summary of the action, and choose the cast.
3. Review the script with students and then have students practice reading the script together. Watch your students blossom as confident, fluent readers!

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## A Note from the Author about Readers' Theatre

“Do I have to read out loud?”

“I hate to be the one to have to read in class . . . .”

“Oh, no. I'm the slowest reader in our room.”

Have you heard your students saying things like this?

One of our ongoing goals at Incentive Publications is the continuing pursuit of reading mastery. Not only do we want America's young people to read fluently, understand, and retain what they've read, we want them to enjoy it and realize what a tool it is for the rest of their lives. The better readers they become, the more easily realized is this goal.

Presenting *Readers' Theatre*, a collection of plays meant to be read aloud. This is a different form of theatrical presentation than we've offered teachers and group leaders in the past. Students read these plays aloud without scenery or props or costumes—or memorization. Students typically sit in their acting area (which can be an auditorium stage, a classroom—or the hall!), usually on stools so that they're positioned a little higher and are more easily seen. Students have copies of the play in binders positioned in front of them, typically on music stands. The acting challenge for each student is to convey emotion, humor, plot, and characterization utilizing only the voice, the face, and the upper body. The reading challenge is to become so familiar with the lines that the students stop dreading reading aloud, and indeed look forward to the opportunity to entertain, be silly, talk in a different voice—to take part in readers' theatre.

# *Three Bears and Three Goats*



## **Readers**

Narrator

Wee Tiny Gruff

Moderately Proportioned  
Gruff

Mondo Gruff

Jelly Troll

Big Daddy Bear

YoYo Mama Bear

Preschool Bear

Goldilocks

# Three Bears and Three Goats

## Notes to the Teacher / Director:

Here is a combination of two beloved fairy tales, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Updated—and made just a bit sillier—this version is sure to delight audiences of all ages. (You may wish to consider performing this play for elementary school audiences, either on their campus or yours, or even inviting day-care or preschool boys and girls to attend.)

In addition to the customary readers' theatre stools and music stands, you'll need three bells—one small with a small sound, one a little larger and louder, and one big, noisy bell such as a cowbell. You'll also need three pairs of wooden blocks for the Goats to knock together as they walk across the bridge. Later, Goldilocks will use one pair to make the sound of knocking at the door of the Bears' home.

Before beginning rehearsals, you may wish to discuss the following words or phrases that may be challenging or new to your cast:

- Moderately Proportioned Gruff
- magnificent
- Schwarzenegger
- Bermuda
- résumé
- Jalapeño peppers
- assembling
- arranging
- expressive
- menacing
- reputation
- touché
- allergic

Have fun with characterizations and voices in these plays. Big Daddy Bear, for instance, should have a cool, mellow voice that brings to mind the beret-wearing beatniks of jazz eras gone by. Jelly Troll should, of course, have a growly . . . well, *troll* voice, and the goats should have voices matching their sizes.

In the *Three Bears* portion of the play, a reference is made to Playstation 2, with a note to "Insert current coveted fad here." Have your cast decide the definitive possession that would cause Preschool Bear to welcome Goldilocks into their group immediately.

Have fun, and remember . . . good things come in threes!



(On stage are four stools, with a fifth to the side. The NARRATOR is seated on the stool to the side; the THREE GOATS GRUFF and the TROLL are on the other four. There are music stands in front of them on which their scripts rest, in notebooks. Each GOAT has a pair of wood blocks and a bell. They open their script-books together, and the NARRATOR begins reading.)

**NARRATOR** Hello ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our readers' theatre production, *Three Bears and Three Goats*. We thank you for taking off work, arranging a baby sitter, or whatever you had to do to be with us today!

Let me tell you a little bit about readers' theatre, in case this is your first readers' theatre play ever to see in your whole life.  
We actors . . .

**CAST** (Throwing up their hands, bowing, etc.) Ta da!!!

**NARRATOR** . . . will be acting out two well-known and well-loved fairy tales for your pleasure today. Only, we will be sitting on stools, using only our voices . . .

**WEE TINY GRUFF** Magnificent voices that they are!

**NARRATOR** . . . and our faces . . .

**MODERATELY PROPORTIONED GRUFF** Attractive faces, indeed!

**NARRATOR** Some more than others . . .

**MODERATELY PROPORTIONED GRUFF** Hey!

**NARRATOR** and our expressive hands and upper bodies . . .

**MONDO GRUFF** I'll say they're expressive . . . oh no, I'm upset! (He pantomimes flailing his hands all around as though showing distress.) And now I'm worried! (Wringing hands and cringing) But now I'm happy! (Throwing up his arms and stretching hands out wide to show a very happy GOAT)

**NARRATOR** There's a difference between being expressive and being a ham.

**MONDO GRUFF** (To his fellow actors) Who's he calling a ham? I'm a goat, not a pig! The very idea!

**NARRATOR** Anyway . . . you're about to enjoy a different kind of theatre than you usually see . . . we hope you enjoy it!



## **Three Bears and Three Goats** *(Script pg 2)*

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**JELLY TROLL** Say, can we get on with things? My mind's starting to wander.

**NARRATOR** Yes, Jelly Troll, we can begin.

**JELLY TROLL** Thank you.

**NARRATOR** Once upon a time, there were three billy goats called Gruff.

**WEE TINY GRUFF** *(Raising his hand)* I have a question.

**NARRATOR** Wee Tiny Gruff?

**WEE TINY GRUFF** Yes. I want to know why they were all called Gruff. I mean, weren't there enough names to go around in those days?

**NARRATOR** Well . . . I guess it was their last name, like Smith or Jones or Schwarzenegger.

**MODERATELY PROPORTIONED GRUFF** I always thought it had to do with the fact that they were gruff. You know, like they had bad tempers.

**NARRATOR** I honestly never thought about it. May we continue?

**MONDO GRUFF** I'm insulted that someone would think that I'm gruff. I'm a gentle soul . . .

**JELLY TROLL** All right, already! Who cares why they were all called "gruff"? Let's just do the play.

**WEE TINY GRUFF** Jelly Troll, for someone named after a pastry, you aren't very sweet.

**NARRATOR** Once upon a time, in a hilly country with lots of lush green meadows, there lived three billy goats . . . who happened to share the last name of "Gruff."

**WEE TINY GRUFF** I still wonder why.

**NARRATOR** When spring came . . . *(The GOATS GRUFF all start to make bird chirping sounds.)* . . . they wished that they could go up the side of Mount Bermuda and eat the green, sweet grass they had heard was there. The only problem was . . . *(GOATS make "Dun, da dun dun" menacing music sounds.)* . . . there was a bridge they had to cross in order to get to Mount Bermuda, and a mean old troll lived under it.



**MODERATELY PROPORTIONED GRUFF** I wonder why he lived *under* the bridge. Why not on top of it, or beside it in a little tent?

**NARRATOR** I supposed he wanted to hide his gross ugliness from the world.

**JELLY TROLL** OK, now, this is just getting cruel. I am a troll, and trolls are not generally considered handsome . . .

**MONDO GRUFF** Except for *Shrek II* when Shrek gets enchanted and becomes like a handsome man for a while.

**JELLY TROLL** I knew I was going to hear the name Shrek before we even got three pages into this play. And, for your information, Shrek was an ogre, not a troll.

**MONDO GRUFF** I thought he was a troll! All this time I've been comparing the two of you.

**NARRATOR** And so . . . (*Looking menacingly at his actors who smile and look innocent*) . . . one spring they decided that they would gather their courage and head for Mount Bermuda, even if they had to face the evil troll.

**JELLY TROLL** Oh, so now I'm evil.

**CAST** Shhhh!

**NARRATOR** And so they discussed who would go first . . .

**MONDO GRUFF** My fellow Goats Gruff, I think we all agree that it's time we stand up to that troll and try to make our way to the green pastures of Mount Bermuda.

**MODERATELY PROPORTIONED GRUFF** I've heard that the grass there is as green as you can imagine.

**WEE TINY GRUFF** I've heard that it's as green as all the green crayons in a 64-crayon box!

**ALL GOATS** (*With awe and wonder*) Wow.

**MONDO GRUFF** I don't think it would be wise if we all try to go together. The troll will hear us for sure.

**MODERATELY PROPORTIONED GRUFF** Maybe we should take turns and see if one of us can sneak over the bridge.