

# Reader's Theater Sample Activity

A reader's theater is a scripted play based on the current book. Book club members:

- Read the script
- Discuss character traits, feelings and motivations
- Act out the script
  - › Practice speaking fluently
  - › Match their intonations and expressions to the feelings of the characters

**Facilitator Note:** For initial Readers Theater sessions, find pre-made scripts online through an internet search.

You may choose to keep things simple – eliminating props, scenery and costumes by using paper cut-out puppets that book club members can move around smaller sets while acting out the roles. Or you can choose to use costumed actors and present your Readers Theater as a final event for Session 3: Celebrating and Sharing the Book.

## Step-by-Step Instructions

### **Step 1: Introduce Readers Theater Using Pre-Written Scripts**

- **Consider** showing youth a video example of Readers Theater.
- **Distribute** scripts to small groups.
- **Assign** roles to youth and **encourage** them to read through the script.

**Facilitator Note:** Youth do not need to memorize their lines for Readers Theater, but it is still important to practice reading lines. Reading the text as a group helps youth practice their intonation and timing.

### **Step 2: Practice and Prepare**

**Facilitator Note:** Youth may start read-throughs sitting at desks in small groups, then progress to standing and adding movement to practice rounds.

- **Invite** youth to practice reading their roles together in small groups.
- **Encourage** youth to make notes on their scripts that identify which emotions they want to convey as they read their lines.
- **Ask** youth to decide as a group what visual items are most important to help the audience understand the story.
  - › Encourage youth to choose simple elements that are most important to the text.
  - › Every character may not need a full costume or props.
- **Reserve** time during each practice session to work on simple costumes, props and scenery to use in youths' presentation.

**Step 3: Dress Rehearsal**

- **Stage** a dress rehearsal for youth where small groups perform, using their costumes and props to bring the story to life.
- **Reflect** on the presentation after the dress rehearsal to make any adjustments to props, timing, etc.

**Step 4: Final Presentation**

- **Invite** youth to perform their Readers Theater for other Club members, staff and family. (**Alternative:** You may choose to record the presentation to share later.)
- **Celebrate** with snacks or games after the presentation.

**Facilitator Note:** To write your own scripts with youth, use the following ideas.

- **Choose** a story that can be easily divided into parts by character, like chapter books or short stories that contain a lot of dialogue.
- **Share** the text with youth, either with handouts or on an overhead projector.
- **Read** through the text together and **ask** youth to identify possible roles for group members, including:
  - › Speaking characters
  - › Silent characters
  - › Narrator(s)
  - › Sound effects
- **Write** the possible roles on a whiteboard or flipchart paper as you read through the text together.
- **Consider** dividing longer texts into sections and **assign** each to small groups.
- **Distribute** the base texts to youth for assigning roles within their groups.
- **Encourage** youth to read through the entire text and highlight any roles that may have been overlooked.
- **Invite** youth to participate in creating a script from their group's assigned text.
- **Provide** an example and a blank outline to guide them.
- **Print** a copy of the completed script for each participant.
- **Instruct** youth to highlight their lines on their copy of the script and to note any feelings or gestures to add to make their lines come to life.

**Optional Modifications**

Consider including an enrichment activity based on the text. For example, have youth:

- Make a soundtrack or playlist for the book
- Design a movie poster for the book
- Write a letter to a character or the author
- Create a social media profile for a character
- Cook a food from the text