

# Introduction to Readers Theater for EFL Classrooms

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# Overview

- Introduction
- How to use RT: Basic Procedures
- Exploiting RT: Bringing it to life
- Special considerations
- Evaluating RT
- Summary
- Online Resources

# What is Readers Theater?

- RT is an oral presentation of drama, prose or poetry by two or more readers.
- Readers first read and familiarize themselves with the original text, then transform it into a script involving several characters.
- The script is then prepared and performed for an intended audience

# *RT is group storytelling*



# Who does RT, and why?

- RT is a **social activity** for some, not unlike singing in a community choir or playing on a community football team.
- *Lightening Larry*, read by the Chamber Readers  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uwHp4lrbxA&feature=related>



# Why use RT in the ESL/EFL Classroom?

- RT is a rich social activity that learners enjoy
- RT offers “built in” scaffolding (scripts)
- RT inspires practice through meaningful repetition
- RT fosters development of a learner's external and internal "reader's voice"
- RT strengthens both oral and reading fluency

# The value of repetition

One should aim not at being possible to understand, but at being impossible to misunderstand.

- Quintilian

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# The value of repetition

One should aim not at being **possible** to understand, but at being impossible to misunderstand.

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# The value of repetition

One should aim not  
at being **possible**  
*to understand,*  
but at being **impossible**  
*to misunderstand.*

- Quintilian

# What can RT look like in an EFL setting?

- *The Stinky Tofu Man*, read by Kang Chiao Bilingual School in Taiwan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6X6M-THp2I&feature=related>



# What ages and levels can participate in RT?

- Early/young readers can do RT, but
  - Use a well-known text
  - Use illustrations to support reading
  - Consider the value of “digital” performance as well as face-to-face performance.



*Caps for Sale*, by Esphyr Slobodkina

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-REfvXVITA&feature=related>

# Basic Procedures for RT

- Select a text
- Practice – Explore – Practice (cycle)
  - Spoken Vocabulary (pronunciation)
  - Places to pause
  - Repeated text
  - Opportunities to express contrast
- Perform
  - For a live audience
  - For a virtual audience

# Select a Text

- Know your learners' interests
- Look for a text that is just slightly more advanced than your students' reading level.
- Select an **authentic text** and divide it into the number of parts for which you have readers.
- OR
- Choose a **ready-made** Readers Theater script

# RT-ready Scripts

www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html

Google

Headlines

Gmail

Yahoo!

BofA

CVC

CVC Blog

Facebook

del.icio.us

post to del.icio.us

Meetup

Music Together ...

TED

## Readers Theatre Scripts



### BROWSE AND DOWNLOAD SCRIPTS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

- The list is in alphabetical order.
- The numbers represent the number of parts in the script.
- The list ends with Texas Bluebonnet excerpts.

LEARN MORE  
ABOUT READERS  
THEATRE

[Click Here](#)



### A - Readers Theatre Scripts

America (8) POEM

Animal Trainer, The (3)

Ant and the Grasshopper (5)

Ant and the Grasshopper (6)

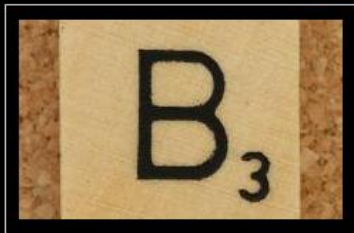
Arthur's Christmas (10)

Atherton: The House of Power (8)

A Christmas Story

-Flagpole Scene (4)

-Ralphie Shoots His Eye Out (5+)



### B - Readers Theatre Scripts

Bad Case of Stripes (18)

Bears, Bears, Bears (6)

BFG (6)

Big Al (8)

Billy Goats Gruff (6)

Billy Goats Gruff (6)

Birbal's Trip to Paradise (6)

Bok Chito: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom (8)

Brave Irene (4)

Bremen Town Musicians (8)



### C - Readers Theatre Scripts

Chicken Little (7)

Clown Statue (8)



# Aaron Shephard: RT author

www.aaronsherp.com/rt/RTE.html

Headlines ▾ Gmail Yahoo! BofA CVC CVC Blog Facebook del.icio.us post to del.icio.us

## **RTE #20 ~ The Magic of Mushkil Gusha: A Tale of Iran**

Told by Aaron Shepard

Though a woodcutter's luck could hardly be worse, help is closer than he knows.

GENRE: Folktales, fables  
CULTURE: Iranian (Persian), Middle Eastern  
THEME: Thankfulness, sharing  
READERS: 10  
READER AGES: 9–13  
LENGTH: 8 minutes

- [Aaron's Extras](#)

## **RTE #21 ~ Help! Hilary! Help!**

By Aaron Shepard

Hilary gets the chance to show just how helpful she can be.

GENRE: Tall tales, humor  
CULTURE: American  
THEME: Helpfulness, heroines  
READERS: 12 or more  
READER AGES: 6–9  
LENGTH: 3 minutes



# Color-coding your scripts

	Buttercup	Squeal	Spencer	Lucy	Mother	Slink
<p><b>What is Our Story?</b> Characters tell readers HOW to read their lines. Our goal is clarity in both dialog and parentheses and appears below a line of dialogue. Our aim is not read aloud.</p> <p><b>Example (yelling, Look out!)</b></p>						
Narrator	Down on an old farm, near a great pond, there lived a duck family. Mother and Father Duck eagerly waited for their first ducklings to be born.					
Mother	(surprised) Our nest has seven eggs! Three were only six. Where did that large egg come from?					
Narrator	As Mother Duck examined her eggs, she was excited to see they were beginning to hatch. Lucy the Dairy Cow and Squeal the Pig stood nearby. Even Slink the Field Weasel, the local news reporter, was in on the action.					
Lucy	(worried) Look at the big one! He seems kind of ... odd.					
Squeal	A duck is yellow, not gray!					
Mother	(worried) He is a bit funny looking.					
Slink	(laughing) That is the ugliest duck I've ever seen!					
Mother	(upset) That's enough from you, Slink!					
Squeal	What is his name?					
Mother	I think I will name him Spencer.					



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	Buttercup	Squeal	Spencer	Lucy	Mother	Slink
Narrator	The next morning, Mother Duck took her ducklings to the pond.					
Mother	Time for a swim, my little ducks! Buttercup, you swim very well!					
Spencer	I can swim too! See, Mother? I can swim just like Buttercup!					
Mother	Do you like the pond, Buttercup?					
Buttercup	Yes! I like it.					

| Spencer | I like it too, Mother! See ... I can make circles in the water. Watch me! | | | | | |
Mother	Oh, yes ... well ... that's nice. Spencer, try to keep up. Come along now, and follow me.					
Spencer	(with worry) I'm swimming as fast as I can, Mother!					
Mother	(angry) Spencer! Why can't you swim like the other ducks?					
Narrator	The Duck family paddled away, but Spencer couldn't keep up. So, he swam to shore alone. His big eyes filled with tears as he watched his family disappear.					
Squeal	What are you going to do, Spencer?					
Spencer	(sadly) I don't know. I know I don't belong here. I will never belong.					
Squeal	(very kind) Yes, you do! We will help you.					
Lucy	We must help Spencer.					

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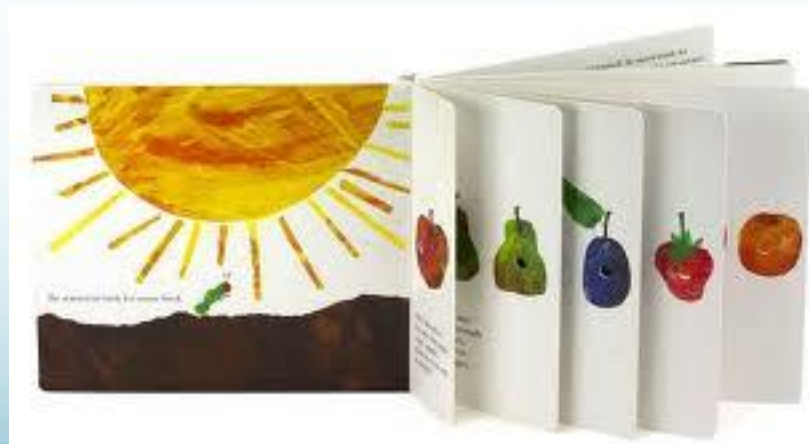
# An authentic text:

# The Very Hungry Caterpillar

-by Eric Carle



In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf. One Sunday morning, the warm sun came up, and POP! Out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar. He started to look for some food.



# The Very Hungry Caterpillar

-by Eric Carle

**A:** In the light of the moon

**B:** a little egg

**A:** lay on a leaf

**B:** One Sunday morning,

**A:** the warm sun came up, and

**BOTH:** "Pop!"

**B:** Out of the egg came a tiny

**A:** And very hungry

**B:** Caterpillar.

**BOTH:** He started to look for some food.

# Day 1: Introduce the text

- Hand out character name tags (or some other identifying accessory) and scripts.
- Help learners identify their parts in the script.
- Read the script 2 times as a group; provide pronunciation of unfamiliar words as needed.
- Have learners exchange scripts with someone else.
- Read the script 2 more times; give learners the opportunity to enjoy reading a new part.



Reader 1: In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf.

Reader 2: One Sunday morning the warm sun cam up...

Reader 3: and POP, out of the egg came a tiny, very hungry caterpillar.

Reader 1: He started looking for some food.

Reader 5: On Monday he ate through one apple. But he was still hungry.

Reader 4: On Tuesday he ate through two pears, but he was still hungry.

Reader 2: On Wednesday he ate through three plums, but he was still hungry.

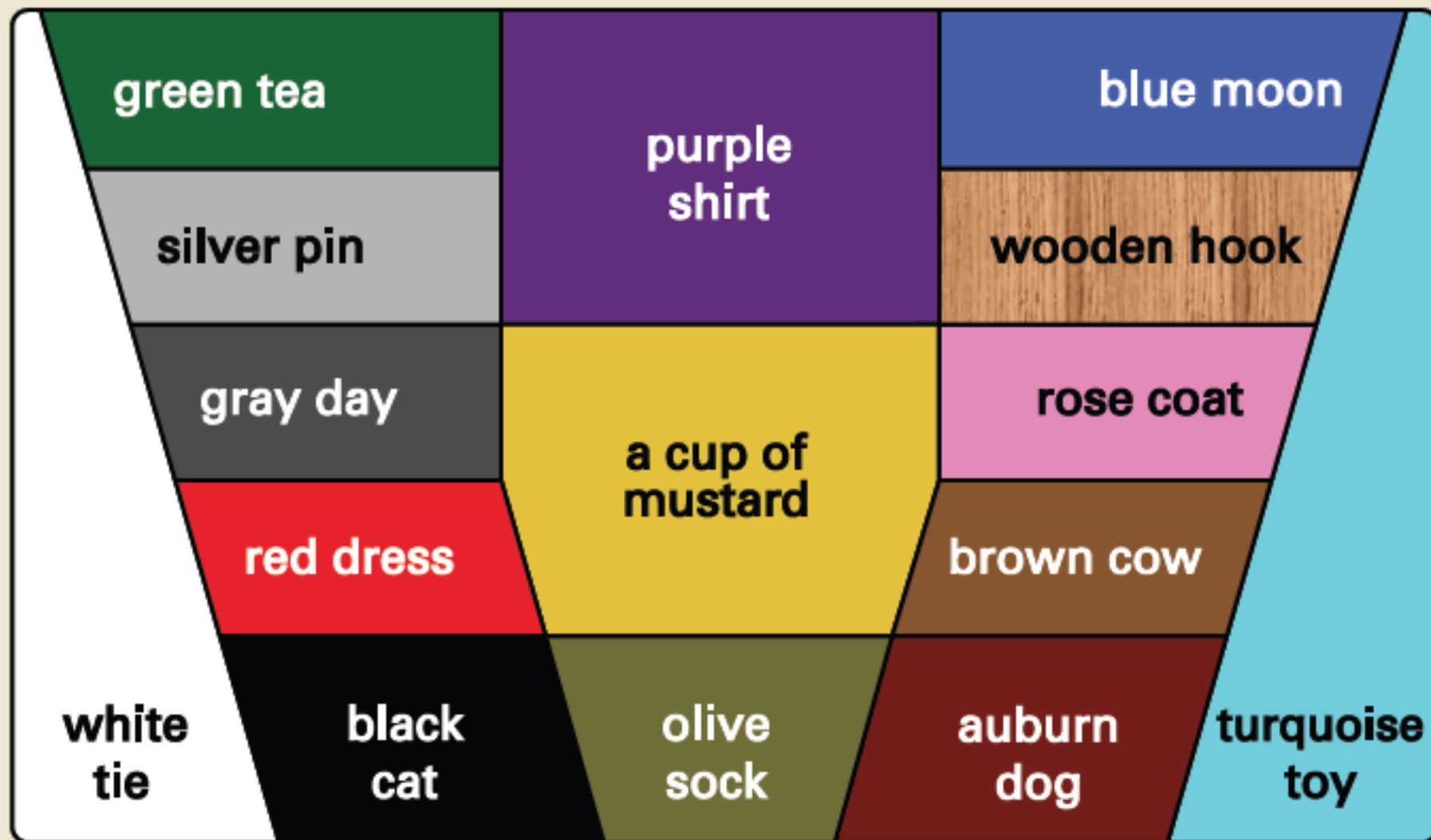
Reader 3: On Thursday he ate through four strawberries, but he was still hungry.

Reader 5: On Friday he ate through five oranges, but he was still hungry.

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r

w



# After that: Look for Opportunities

- Day 3: Pausing and intonation
- Day 4: Expressive repetition
- Day 5: Contrastive intonation
- Day 6: Use of volume
- Day 7: Facial expression and gesture



# Pausing and Intonation

- Reader 5: On Monday//he ate through one apple.// But he was still hungry.
- Reader 4: On Tuesday//he ate through two pears,//but he was still hungry.
- Reader 2: On Wednesday//he ate through three plums,//but he was still hungry.
- Reader 3: On Thursday//he ate through four strawberries,//but he was still hungry.
- Reader 5: On Friday//he ate through five oranges,//but he was still hungry.





# Contrastive Intonation

Reader 5: On Monday he ate through one apple. But he was still hungry.

Reader 4: On Tuesday he ate through two pears, but he was still hungry.

Reader 2: On Wednesday he ate through three plums, but he was still hungry.

Reader 3: On Thursday he ate through four strawberries, but he was still hungry.

Reader 5: On Friday he ate through five oranges, but he was still hungry.



# Expressive repetition

Reader 5: On Monday he ate through one apple. But he was still hungry.

Reader 4: ~~On Tuesday he ate through~~ two pears, but he was still hungry.

Reader 2: ~~On Wednesday he ate through~~ three plums, but he was still hungry.

Reader 3: ~~On Thursday he ate through~~ four strawberries, but he was still hungry.

Reader 5: ~~On Friday he ate through~~ five oranges, but he was still hungry.



# Put it all together

- Reader 5: On Monday he ate through one apple. But he was still hungry.
- Reader 4: On Tuesday he ate through two pears, but he was still hungry.
- Reader 2: On Wednesday he ate through three plums, but he was still hungry.
- Reader 3: On Thursday he ate through four strawberries, but he was still hungry.
- Reader 5: On Friday he ate through five oranges, but he was still hungry.



# Gesture and Facial Expression



Focus gestures on *content* words: nouns, verbs, adjectives  
Give special gestures to repeated words and phrases.

# Gesture and Facial Expression

## Sick (by Shel Silverstein)

“I cannot go to school today,”  
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.  
I have the measles and the mumps,  
A gash, a rash and purple bumps.  
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,  
I’m going blind in my right eye.  
My tonsils are as big as rocks,  
I’ve counted sixteen chicken pox.  
And there’s one more—that’s seventeen,  
And don’t you think my face looks green?  
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue—  
It might be instamatic flue.



Excerpted from *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, by Shel Silverstein.  
Visit Shell Silverstein’s website at <http://www.shelsilverstein.com>

# Evaluating RT skills

POINT VALUE:      2 = YES                      1 = SOMETIMES                      0 = NO				
SKILL	YES/ USUALLY	SOMETIMES/ SOME READERS	NO	POINTS
Each reader has proper posture				
Changes the volume (loud and soft)				
Varies the pitch (high and low)				
Uses effective pauses (punctuation)				
Uses an appropriate tone of voice (firm, nasal, screechy, somber, high pitched, whispery, etc.)				
Shows personality of characters				
Speaks clearly				
Makes facial expressions				
Uses hand and body gestures				
Makes some eye contact with audience				
Each reader is ready to speak when it is his/her turn				



# Summary

- RT is a rich, skills-integrative learning activity
- RT improves both oral and reading fluency
- RT is an authentic read-aloud activity
- RT is appropriate for all ages and levels
- RT can be adapted for short-term use or long-term, performance-oriented use

# Online RT Resources

- Karen's RT links:
  - <http://delicious.com/katmail68/readerstheater>
- The Best Class:  
<http://www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html>
- Aaron Shepherd's RT site:  
[www.aaronshep.com](http://www.aaronshep.com)
- ReadersTheater.com: a commercial site with some great ideas that you can adapt on your own



# A final thought: RT for Professional Development?

- Think about the potential RT holds for professional development among EFL teachers.
- What might EFL teachers gain from participating in RT together?
- This is one of the post-webinar questions we will discuss in the Ning site in the days that follow.

# Thank you!



Karen Taylor de Caballero

# See you on Ning!