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.

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
The value of repetition

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

- Quintilian
The value of repetition

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

- Quintilian
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
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
## 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.

### A - Readers Theatre Scripts

**Amore's Communities (8)**

**Animal Trainer, The (3)**

**Ant and the Grasshopper (6)**

**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 (16)**

**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 (2)**

**Clown Statue (8)**
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

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! There 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.

(worried) Look at the big egg! He seems kind of... odd.

Lucy
A duck is yellow, not gray!

(worried) He is a bit funny-looking

(Squawk) That is the ugliest duck I've ever seen!

Mother
(sadly) That's enough from you, Slink!

Squeal
What is his name?

Mother
I think I will name him Spencer.

Narrator
The next morning, Mother Duck took her ducklings to the pond.

Mother
Three 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!

(Squawk) 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
(very kind) Don't worry, 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 kindly) Yes, you do! We will help you.

Lucy
We must help Spencer.
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.
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.
Day 2: Teach Spoken Vocabulary

- green tea
- silver pin
- gray day
- red dress
- white tie
- black cat
- olive sock
- a cup of mustard
- purple shirt
- wooden hook
- rose coat
- brown cow
- auburn dog
- turquoise toy

The Color Vowel Chart
www.colorvowelchart.org
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.
Focus gestures on *content* words: nous, 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.

# Evaluating RT skills

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

- 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!