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## READERS THEATER

### 1. FREE YOUR IMAGINATION.

Readers Theater is often defined by what it is not – no memorizing, no props, no blocking, no costumes, and no sets. However, Readers Theater can create images by suggestion and vocal characterization that could never be portrayed with traditional staging. Space and time can be shrunk or expanded and fantastic worlds can be created and enacted without the physical limitations of conventional theater. Let your imagination soar.

### 2. SELECT A SCRIPT.

In general, look for stories that are simple and lively with a lot of dialogue and action. Or find scripts that can be adapted to include lively and quick pacing with room for lots of imagination and creativity in character or scene delivery.

### 3. CHARACTERS AND ROLES.

Make your script more interesting by assigning multiple characters, narrators, sound affects (vocalization) in a fast-paced or well-paced scene or setting.

### 4. CUTS AND CHANGES.

You can also make your script more interesting by cutting certain parts that slow down the pacing or complicate the visual scene. For instance, consider cutting unnecessary tag lines like “he said” or “she said”. Perhaps you’ll need to cut or change long descriptions or narrations that slow the action down. You can also smooth the script out and liven up its pace by converting stage directions to narration.

### 5. SCRIPT FORMAT.

Scripts should be neat and easy to read. Readers are supposed to look up often from their scripts but they will have trouble doing so if they can’t find their place because it is too crammed with text or if the text is too spread out. Use large type and easily readable font. Keep clean margins. Lines should be flush left and not “justified” at the right but left uneven.

### 6. SCRIPT HANDLING.

The tricky part of handling scripts is to handle them so they can be referred to easily but don’t seriously restrict flow or distract the audience. If held, the script should be held in only one hand leaving the other hand free for acting. If the script is placed on a stand, the height of the stand should not block the view of the readers’ upper body and faces.

### 7. THE SET.

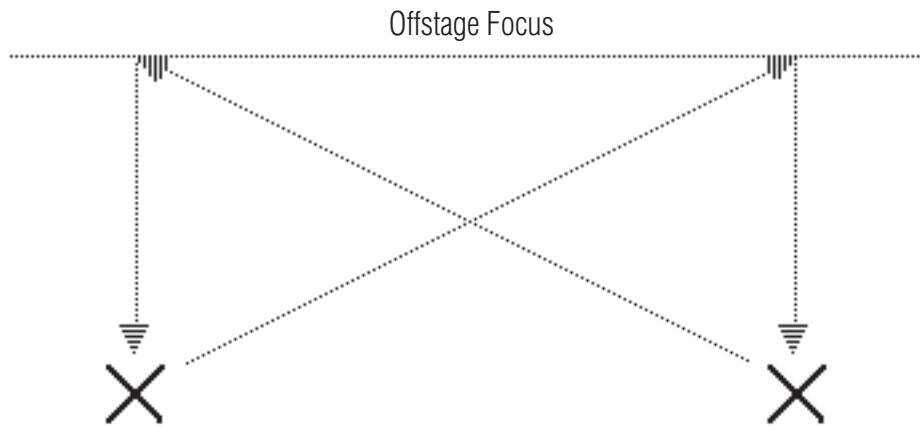
In Readers Theater, you don’t construct sets – you suggest them. The set is brought to life by descriptions, mime-like movements, and sound effects (vocalizations). If a door opens, the audience should see and hear it by a mime movement and the squeak of the door by vocalization. Arrange the set in an interesting and dynamic way by placement of readers or assignment of roles.

### 8. SOUND EFFECTS.

Sounds are an interesting way to suggest imagery to your scene by vocalization. Add sounds where possible and most effective. Help the illusion and power of suggestion by giving sound to explosions, wind, bees, roosters, floor creaks, breaking glass, the thud of blunt objects... whatever.

### 9. Focus.

Most actors in Readers Theater use an offstage focus. So rather than using onstage focus where actors talk directly to one another as in conventional theater, use an off-stage focus where actors look out to the audience. One great trick is to imagine a screen or mirror set up between the actors and the audience that is as wide as the stage and set up at the front edge of the audience. On this screen, actors imagine a mirror image of all the readers. Then instead of talking straight to each other, they talk to each other’s “reflected” image. With offstage focus you can create illusions of distance or height. Two characters can shout and wave to each other as if a mile apart. Or one reader can look up while the other looks down to create the illusion of a person in a second-story window talking to others in the street.



## 10. BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS.

Beginnings are pretty easy. One reader/narrator can introduce the story with title, author, setting, etc. (but don't spoil the plot). But you want to be sure that the ending is definite and "solid" as well. "And they lived happily ever after" is an easy ending. You can create the same type of ending with any words by reading them in a "slow three" (happily-ever-after). You can also communicate a definite ending by having all actors close their scripts, face the audience, and bow their heads all together.