

## How to Create Reader's Theatre Performance Piece

Follow the easy steps below to create a Reader's Theatre Performance Piece keeping in mind that the director and actors may not be familiar with the scene or the story. So, be as clear about your intention for the piece as you can possibly be. You must be so completely familiar with the scene that you can describe exactly what the performers need to do to dramatize the scene.

- Read through your favorite book to discover a scene that interests you.
- Reread the scene several times to discover how that scene has been constructed. While rereading consider the setting, characters, dialogue, narrative, back story, and mood.
- Create a **list of characters** present in the scene. Using one word or a short phrase, describe the character. Remember to include a narrator. A narrator communicates stage direction and a character's inner monologue – what the character is thinking, not saying.
- Briefly describe the **setting**. Reader's Theatre is generally performed in a pantomime-like format without a stage and props. However, should you desire to elaborate and describe a setting filled with scenery and props that would be fine, too.
- Draft your **presentation** by looking closely at the structure of your chosen scene. Any description has to be communicated through your narrator. Any dialogue has to be communicated through a specific character. Your characters also need stage directions expressing the dramatic actions or voice inflections.
- As a sample formatting structure consider the example printed on the second page of this document taken from page 61 of Barbara O'Connor's *The Fantastic Secret of Owen Jester* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux).
- Some of the formatting details that you will want to consider are:
  - **Designating speech cues** – telling which character speaks
  - **Internal dialogue** – the narrator telling what a character is thinking
  - **Dramatic action** – tells what action or expression a character should be demonstrating



**Presentation:**

Narrator: Owen found something.

Speech cues

Owen: (Dramatize observing a strange discovery)

Speech cues

Narrator: He walked around it, studying it carefully. He couldn't believe his own eyes! There was an enclosed compartment with three large windows in the front and one round, bubble-shaped window on each side.

Internal  
dialogue

In the back of the enclosed compartment was a hollowed-out space. Strapped inside the space were four large tanks, like the kind that scuba divers use.

Owen: (Excitedly) A submarine!

Narrator: Owen peered through the windows. Inside was an instrument panel with a few glass-covered dials, some switches, and a joystick. In front of the instrument panel were two small seats.

Dramatic  
action

Owen: A submarine just big enough for two people!

Dramatic  
action

- Lastly, take note of the page formatting. Scripts written in this manner, with the speakers listed on the left side of the page and the dialogue spaced to the right, are easier for performers to read and act out.

Now that you know how to write a Reader's Theatre Performance Piece make a few promotional posters, light up the stage, pop a few bags of popcorns and let the show begin!

Lights

Camera

Action!!!!

