

Reader's Theater Exercise 27:

Improve Reading With Expression With Student Demonstrations

This exercise includes a series of simple and fun activities that help students become more aware of how they can improve their own expressive reading.

Expressive reading is an essential component of reading fluency. **The National Reading Panel defines reading fluency as reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.** Expression is so important because it helps a reader comprehend and retain what he or she just read. Some of the most important components of expressive reading are **vocal inflection, tone, tempo, and body language.**

Vocal inflection is so powerful that it can change the meaning of a sentence, as your students will see in part of this exercise! Emotion and tempo, or how you bring your voice up and down and vary your pace and volume, directly convey what mood you or your character are feeling when speaking. **When you have something to say, the tone of your voice makes up 38% of the impact of the message you are trying to communicate, and body language makes up a whopping 55%! Comparatively, the words you use only have a 7% impact!** (Positive Path Networks) Actions are an extension of the voice and add power and vitality to words. Without body language, conversations are boring and less effective. The same goes for oral reading during Reader's Theater activities!

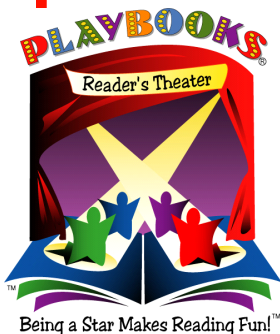
Over-acting is also a great warm-up to expressive reading because it helps proper expressive reading become natural. **This exercise includes an overacting activity and more to provide entertaining expressive reading practice to help your students make the most of fluency-building lessons.**

Summary: On the following page are three classroom activities featuring student demonstrations.

The first activity shows how bringing your voice up on certain words has an amazing impact on the meaning of the sentence.

The second activity shows how body language and tone can contradict or modify the meaning of the words you say, and usually, your body language is the message that comes through and is most convincing!

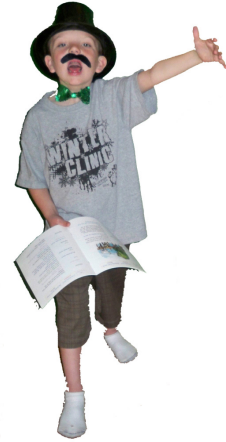
The third activity shows how over-acting when reading aloud helps students be more comfortable with expressive reading. Once they have practiced exaggerating their gestures and voices, using proper expression will be easier to do. Laughter sheds inhibitions and breaks down social barriers, leading students to be confident in their abilities to speak in front of others. Remember, it is always important to discuss how laughing **with** and not **at** other students represents a positive and supportive audience.



Being a Star Makes Reading Fun!™

Activities For Reading With Expression

1. **Vocal Inflection** - Ask for six volunteers or call on six students to come to the front of the class, and ask each to read the sentence below individually. Each student should bring his or her voice **up** on a different word in the sentence. Write the sentences on the board so all your students can see them. After the read-through, point out how the meaning of the sentence is different depending on which word is emphasized! Repeat the exercise with different students reading the sentences after you have explained how your class should pay attention to the meaning of the sentence each time. Give participants a reward of your choice.



I didn't say she liked him!
I **didn't** say she liked him!
I didn't **say** she liked him!
I didn't say **she** liked him!
I didn't say she **liked** him!
I didn't say she liked **him**!

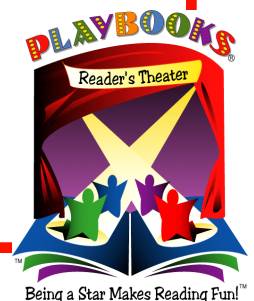
2. **Matching Body Language and Tone With Words** - Ask for five volunteers or call on five students to come to the front of the class, and ask each to read a sentence from the list below. Tell the students to use body language and tone that express the emotion or mood shown to the right of the sentence. Clearly, adding body language and emotion to the sentences changes the meaning from what you might think it was if you saw only the words! Then, **ask your class which they believe**: the **body language** or the **words**? Give participants an award of your choice.

I'm not mad. (**anger**)
This is a lot of fun! (**boredom**)
That was brilliant! (**sarcasm**)
What's your sign? (**flirtatious**)
I can wait all day. (**annoyed**)

3. **Over-acting as a Warm-Up** - The next page in this document is a student handout to be used for this activity. Students sit in groups of six and the handout is passed around the table so each student can write his or her name next to one of the sentences.

Each student performs his or her sentence, using exaggerated voice, facial, and body expression to depict the character listed. They may use the tips shown under the sentences, or use their own ideas. Remind the students to have fun with this over-acting game!

Once everyone is done reading, the students may vote for the best performer in their group, who can win a reward of your choice.



Group Expression Exercise

Reader

“Thanks for letting me borrow this outfit; it’s fantastic!”

Stand up at your table and read the sentence above as if you were a....

Proud Muscle Man

Actor tip: Clench your fists and slowly raise and lower your arms as you speak. Try to show off your muscles and pose as you talk in a deep voice.

Reader

“What was that noise? It startled me!”

Stand up at your table and read the sentence above as if you were a....

Itchy Hula Dancer

Actor tip: As you say your lines, scratch your head and body while swaying your hips and arms.

Reader

“Who could have sent me this lovely Valentine?”

Stand up at your table and read the sentence above as if you were a....

Escaped prisoner

Actor tip: Put your hands together as if they are in handcuffs. Frown and look worried as you say your lines. Partway through each phrase, pause to look over your shoulder, then breathe a sigh of relief and continue.

Reader

“Please stop taking my pencils out of my pencil box!”

Stand up at your table and read the sentence above as if you were a....

Far-sighted grandma

Actor tip: Squint as you read your lines. Talk in a high-pitched, shaky voice and pretend to pinch the cheeks of the other readers.

Reader

“Don’t worry, I’ll save you!”

Stand up at your table and read the sentence above as if you were a....

Friendly Vampire

Actor tip: Pretend to show your fangs when you say your lines. Talk in an evil tone, but smile as much as you can. Try to roll your "r"s when you speak, using a Transylvanian accent.

Reader

“I haven’t eaten in weeks! I’m starving!”

Stand up at your table and read the sentence above as if you were a....

Tarzan with a sore throat

Actor tip: Beat your chest and yell your lines like Tarzan, but with a hoarse voice. Put your hand to your throat to show that it is sore.

