



## Reader's Theater Exercise 18: Recognizing and Expressing Character Emotion

This Reader's Theater Exercise is designed to improve student comprehension through focusing closely on reading expression. Lines from the Playbook® story, *Ucky Duck*, are provided for students to practice showing emotion and meaning while reading aloud.

It is important to remember that fluency is not only comprised of reading quickly and correctly. **The National Reading Panel defines fluency as reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.** Clearly, expression is very important for helping students to understand and absorb meaning from the text. **So often, students learn to read a series of words automatically and accurately, but when asked about what they just read, they will be unable to explain what the text meant.**

**Asking students to read aloud with appropriate expression and emotion helps them instantly increase comprehension, because they must pay attention to the content in order to complete the task.** Students introduced to reading aloud with expression on a regular basis may carry over that skill into independent silent reading as well. **Analyzing emotion and meaning as they read will become a habit that serves them well as they move forward in school.** If students are hurrying through their lines, it can be helpful to suggest they slow down and put time into portraying the text with proper expression and meaning.

**Teacher Directions:** Optionally, go to <http://www.playbooks.com/free.shtml> to download a free mini version of the story, *Ucky Duck*, for your students to read. The following activity can be completed with or without first reading the story.

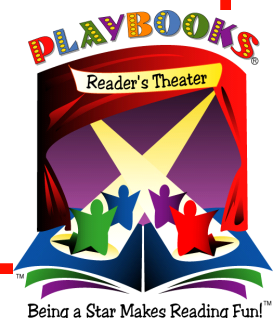
Divide the class into groups; three or five students per group works well for this activity. Instruct your students to take turns reading aloud the sentences on the student activity sheet on the next page. Each student should get a turn to read three or five sentences based on the above numbers of group members.

When your students read the sentences, they should be sure to use their vocal tone to indicate the emotion they think the character is feeling at that point in the story. After all the sentences have been read, each student should describe the emotions they think the characters are feeling for each sentence, using the lines provided.

If you have time, you may direct the students to first read through the sentences with a flat, non-expressive tone of voice in order to show the contrast when they next read the sentences expressively.

By focusing on interpreting the emotions of the characters, students will increase their comprehension and oral reading skills, both contributing to improved fluency.

**“Reading is Fun” Bonus Activity:** Turn to page 3 of this packet and pass out the student activity sheet. “Reading is Fun Week” is recognized May 10 - 16 this year and was started by the children’s literacy organization, Reading is Fundamental (RIF). **Remind your students how much fun reading can be by encouraging them to “ham it up” with these *Ucky Duck* quotes designed for over-acting!** Students should use their facial expression, body language, and vocal tone to read the lines with a specified emotion and character type.





## How Do They Feel?

**Directions:** Your teacher will divide the class into groups. In your group, take turns reading aloud the sentences below from the Playbooks® story, *Ucky Duck*. Use the tone of your voice to show how you think the characters feel as they say their lines in the story. After you have finished reading aloud or listening to each sentence with your group, use the lines below each sentence to describe the emotions you think the character feels in the sentences.

1. **Mother Duck:** Oh my! Look at my pretty little ducks! They have just come out of their shells!

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2. **Slink the Fox:** That is the ugliest duck I've ever seen! What kind of bird is gray with brown spots?

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3. **Spencer the Ugly Duckling:** When will I fit in? When will I ever belong? I don't want to go away.

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4. **Slink the Fox:** Yep, it's just like I said. I saw that duckling, and I said, "What a story, what a story." And I was right!

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5. **Mother Duck:** Good job, Buttercup. You swim very well!

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6. **Slink the Fox:** Hey! Look at those swans. They're the real kings and queens of the pond.

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7. **Lucy the Cow:** I do declare! That duckling is a bit large. You know? He's kind of on the heavy side, if you ask me. In fact, I think he's the biggest duck I have ever seen!

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8. **Squeal the Pig:** This is great! Spencer has found his real family.

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9. **Spencer the Ugly Duckling:** I can make circles in the water. Watch me!

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10. **Mother Duck:** Oh, yes ... well ... that's nice. Spencer, try to keep up.

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11. **Spencer the Ugly Duckling:** Well, I may not be the same, but I am a duck.

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12. **Squeal the Pig:** Please do not write a story that will make Spencer sad.

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13. **Lucy the Cow:** I'm planning to come up with something. I just need to think about it for a while.

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14. **Mother Duck:** Follow me into the water, little ducks!

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15. **Slink the Fox:** He's certainly not like the rest of the ducklings, that's for sure!

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## ~ ~ Reading is Fun! ~ ~



**Directions:** In groups, take turns reading aloud the sentences below from the Playbooks® story, **Ucky Duck**. This time, you get to be a little bit silly! Each sentence is labeled with an emotion or description and a character type. Read the sentence as if you were that character, using your face, voice, and body movements. For example, if the emotion and character type is **excited bat**, you might say the sentence with a fast, squeaky voice while quickly flapping your arms like wings. If you're not sure what to do, read the hint given under each sentence.

- 1. I believe Slink is right. You'll fit in, just you see. You'll find a duck who looks just like you.**  
(caring pirate)  
*Hint: Say "argg" and "matey" between words in a soft, sweet, gentle voice.*
- 2. The animals on the farm say I am too nosy. I just like to know what is going on!**  
(clumsy tap dancer)  
*Hint: Tap dance while saying the line, but flap your arms around as if you are losing your balance, and kick your legs out at funny angles.*
- 3. I know I should look like a duck, act like a duck, and talk like a duck, but I don't know how! Why am I different?**  
(giggling parrot)  
*Hint: Squawk loudly between words, making your voice sound rough like a crow. Laugh while saying your line in a squawking voice.*
- 4. Grand idea, darling. Grand idea. Let's get started!**  
(hungry lion)  
*Hint: Lick your lips, show your teeth, and smile slightly while you look at other people in the eyes as if they would make a nice meal.*
- 5. Everything in the pond is my business, and I have some reporting to do!**  
(mad policeman)  
*Hint: Yell your line while frowning at other people and pretending to hold out handcuffs. Try to sound bossy, like you are in charge.*
- 6. I don't want to look just like Buttercup. I am a boy, you know.**  
(crying baby)  
*Hint: Open your mouth very wide and cry loudly while squeezing your eyes shut. When you talk, talk sadly in a baby voice and hiccup between words or frown if you can.*
- 7. Something looks funny about that beak.**  
(itchy hula dancer)  
*Hint: Move your hips as if you are dancing the hula, but at the same time pretend to scratch yourself and sound uncomfortable as you say your sentence.*
- 8. Slink?! Has he seen you? I hope he didn't take pictures!**  
(nervous bee)  
*Hint: Run around in a zig-zag pattern as you say your line, buzzing and swinging your head back and forth. Make quick, sudden turns in different directions.*

