Infusing Multiculturalism into Health Lessons Using Readers Theatre

Readers Theatre — is a literature-based reading, which communicates story through oral interpretation.

Readers Theatre as a Teaching Strategy

• In-class circle reading
  1. Script is read aloud, taking turns without assigned roles
  2. Characters and story are discussed
  3. Students become comfortable with words, images
  4. Roles are selected
  5. Story is performed

• Instant reading
  1. Scripts are passed out
  2. Students read scripts silently
  3. Parts are assigned to various students
  4. Assigned characters assemble in front to perform
  • Minor props/costumes can be made available
  5. Discuss story and characters and lesson
  6. Redo the performance if there is benefit to be gained
  4. Students work cooperatively to make improvements to performance
  5. Discuss how characters feel to improve performance
Readers Theatre as a Teaching Strategy

Cooperative reading

1. Students read scripts silently, parts are assigned
2. Students rehearse their parts, seek help with difficult words, tone etc.
3. Students perform script
4. Students rehearse their parts, seek help with difficult words, tone etc.
5. Students perform script

Staged Readings

1. Scripts are read, students are cast for parts by tryout
2. Story is staged similar to a formal play
3. Practices are used to perfect performance
4. Costumes and props are commonly used
5. Story is discussed, lessons reviewed

Script ideas can be generated through the use of:

- Colleagues with knowledge of other cultures – guest appearances
- Students from other cultures
- News stories from other cultures
- Review children’s literature from around the world
Script based upon the book: *I'm New Here* by Anne Sibley O'Brien

**Context: 5th - 6th grade Health Class, Topic Welcoming new students, Anti-bullying Theme**

**Susan**  Hi, did you just move here?

**Debeshi** Correct, ten days back

**Susan** What’s your name?

**Debeshi** Debeshi. What’s your name?

**Susan** I’m Susan
Do you want to sit by me? You can put your jacket in the closet. Mrs. Hanney will assign you a hook.

**Debeshi** Sure, but who is Mrs. Hanney?

**Susan** She’s our teacher. You’ll like her. She is very nice.

**Debeshi** I hope so, I’m new here so I’m scared and I’m sad. I miss my friends back in India.

**Susan** Why are you scared?

**Debeshi** Back in India, I knew the right words and I had many friends. Here, I am confused and alone.

**Susan** What is confusing? How can I help?

**Debeshi** In India, we speak English, but in a different way. The same words even sound kind of different.

**Susan** What do you mean? How can the same words be different?

**Debeshi** For example, in India, we say “Zed” and here you say “Zee”

**Susan** Hmm, what else?

**Debeshi** In India we call it a “torch” and here you call it a “flashlight”

**Susan** Oh, I see - so if I wanted to play flashlight tag with you, you would wonder what this flashing light is all about?

**Debeshi** Correct, and that’s why I’m so confused

**Susan** Well, I’ll help you figure things out. So will Katie and James. If you sit here, we can all be friends and maybe you won’t be lonely. Hey Katie, get James, I want you guys to meet Debeshi, she just moved here from India and is going to be in our class.

**Katie** Hey James! Come over here and meet the new kid, Susan says she’s from India!

**James** Wow! All the way from India? What’s your name?

**Debeshi** That’s correct, I’m Debeshi

**James** Do you need help hanging up your jacket?

**Debeshi** Thank you, that’s going to be a great help, but Mrs. Hanney hasn’t assigned me a hook yet.
Susan  We can get the hook in a minute, let’s get you a seat first. It’s not too warm over here by the windows. Can you see the board from here? I see you wear glasses.

Debeshi  Yes, I can see the board from here. Does Mrs. Hanney put all the work on the board?

Katie  Mrs. Hanney writes all of the day’s activities on the upper left of the board. The homework assignments go below that. The writing she does during the lessons will be on the middle board.

Debeshi  Do you get a lot of homework assignments here? Back in India, we used to get a lot of homework assignments since grade one.

James  Depends on what you think is a lot. We get about a page of math and either social studies or science each night. Is that a lot?

Debeshi  I think that’s doable. Okay, when do we get to play and eat lunch?

Katie  We have recess at 11:30 and lunch from 12:00 to 12:30.

Debeshi  What is recess? Is this a break or something?

Susan  Debeshi said that even though they speak English in India, they don’t use all the same words as us.

James  Oh, I see – you’ll have to let us know when we use words that don’t make sense. Recess is playtime. We get to go outside if it is not too cold or raining. If we stay inside, we have games we can play here in the classroom.

Debeshi  Does it snow here? What do you do here when it snows? I so wanted to build a snowman, but it never snowed where I came from.

Katie  Yes, we get lots of snow. We can build a snowman during recess. The only thing Mrs. Hanney won’t let us do is have a snowball fight.

James  Yeah, I’d love to have a snowball fight. I’m not interested in building a snowman.

Debeshi  What’s a snowball fight? Why won’t Mrs. Hanney let you have one?

Katie  Snowball fights are when people make small balls out of snow and throw them at one another. They are not allowed because someone might get hurt.

James  Oh come on! We have snowball fights all the time and no one gets hurt.

Susan  We are allowed to play fun games at recess that don’t hurt anyone. What games did you play back in India?

Debeshi  We played with the swings, the seesaw and the slides and we also played tag.

Katie  We can do all of those things here too. We also play 4-square, basketball, and just hang out.

Debeshi  Oh that’s great! I just can’t wait for today’s recess. Maybe I can make more friends.

James  Here comes Mrs. Hanney! We need to sit down and be quiet so she can take roll call.

Katie  That means taking attendance

Debeshi  Oh, we say the same thing in India too

Susan  Hopefully, we will have more things the same than different

Debeshi  This is a great start! I’m starting to feel more like at home.