

# TEACHER WORKSHOP: BRING LITERATURE TO LIFE THROUGH READING

**Language Arts: Grades 1-8**

**Written by:** Jason Finch, George Washington Academy, St. George Utah and Kelli Park, Timpanogos Academy, Lindon, Utah

## **I. ABSTRACT**

- A. Have you ever wondered how to get your students to read a variety of different types of literature? Or have you not been able to find the time to fit in a meaningful read aloud where you have student “buy-in”? Have you struggled to know how to incorporate more nonfiction reading to support your Science and History/Geography content? Have you been wondering how to incorporate Reader’s Theater and perhaps how to put on a school play? Come find answers to these questions from teachers who have risked everything to bring literature to life through reading. The engaging strategies in this workshop will give fellow teachers additional ideas and teaching strategies they may implement the moment they return to their classroom.

## **II. OVERVIEW**

- A. Concept Objectives
1. Teachers will walk away with practical teaching techniques and strategies to enhance an already full curriculum.
- B. Content
1. Embark on a “Reading Expedition” to develop strong readers by having students read a variety of genres in literature.
  2. Sell a book through Book Talks and increase student “buy-in” for read alouds.
  3. Incorporate Read Alouds in Science and History/Geography through the use of picture books.
  4. Developing Theme Studies and Author Studies that can be used across the curriculum.
  5. Incorporate Reader’s Theater to bring to life various types of literature, and eventually work toward putting together a school play.
- C. Skill Objectives
1. In order to help motivate students to diversify what they are reading, teachers will embark upon a “Reading Expedition,” and learn how to use this tool in their classroom.
  2. Teachers will receive a Reading Expedition handout and help students choose a book to read for each genre listed.
  3. Teachers will learn how to create a welcoming read aloud atmosphere by choosing books that students would like to have read based on a teacher “Book Talk.”
  4. Teachers will learn how to perform an enticing “Book Talk” to their class on books that hold a common thread. Teachers can choose books of their choice, or books that students in their classes have shown interest in.
  5. Teachers will learn another strategy to best utilize time in class for additional integration and how to use literacy across a variety of content areas in a variety of topics.

6. Teachers will comprise a list of possible Theme and Author Studies on their grade level that can possibly be used in conjunction with a Core Knowledge or State Core Content Area.
7. Teachers will learn how to use a Reader's Theater to best utilize all students in reading.
8. Teachers will participate by reading in a Reader's Theater.

### III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

#### A. For Teachers

1. *Reading Instruction: The Two Keys*, by Matthew Davis, Ph.D.
2. *Drama in the Primary School*, by Lauri Scrivens
3. *Reading Workshop: Read Aloud*, by the Springfield Illinois Public School District 186.  
<http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/resources/languagearts/readingwriting/readaloud.htm>
4. *The Power of Reader's Theater*, by Jennifer O. Prescott, Scholastic Instructor Magazine,  
<http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/readerstheater.htm>
5. *Readinga-z.com*. Reader's Theaters based on leveled scripts. Website:  
[http://www.readinga-z.com/guided/theater\\_list.html](http://www.readinga-z.com/guided/theater_list.html)

### IV. A "Reading Expedition"

#### A. Objectives

1. In order to help motivate students to diversify what they are reading, teachers will embark upon a "Reading Expedition," and learn how to use this tool in their classroom.
2. Teachers will receive a Reading Expedition handout and help students choose a book to read for each genre listed.

#### B. Materials

1. Appendix A

#### C. Key Vocabulary

1. Fantasy
2. Adventure
3. Realistic Fiction
4. Historical Fiction
5. Non-Fiction
6. Biography
7. Classics
8. Newbery Award
9. Additional key words may be: Mystery, Science Fiction, Poetry, Folk Tales, Fables, etc.

#### D. Procedures/Activities

1. Explain to the students that there are different literature genres. Introduce them to the word genre and tell them that genres consist of different types of writing written to achieve a different purpose. The different genres include fiction, realistic fiction, non-fiction, biographies, fantasy, etc. Tell your students they will begin exploring these different genres by going on a "Reading Expedition." Now it is their turn to explore.

2. Show students the Reading Expedition chart (Appendix A), and explain how it is going to work. You may say, “As a class we are going on a ‘Reading Expedition’ where you decide your fate. Each time you finish reading a book in a specific genre write the title on the corresponding line of your ‘Reading Expedition’ Chart. Everyone will begin on the same color of chart. As time goes on and you finish a chart, you get a new color and new expedition can commence. Each expedition you finish has a treasure. You are working to reach the final treasure found at the bottom a rainbow.” You as a teacher can decide what the treasure might be. For the first finished expedition the prize may be small and each subsequent expedition that is finished, the prizes increase in value. Every new chart a child completes may represent a new level of understanding about a particular genre, and your expectations of their knowledge may increase. Leveling them by color, such as the order the colors are found in a rainbow, is a great way to keep track and motivate students. For example, you may choose to have the first expedition chart on red, chart #2 on orange, chart #3 on yellow etc. You may want to display each expedition chart in your classroom, or have students keep them at their desks in folders or binders.
3. It is important that you require a brief synopsis, or some other collaborating activity for each story read before you allow your students to write the title of the book down on their chart. This will help you assess whether or not that child has an understanding of a particular kind of genre, and has actually read the book.
4. Continue rewarding and congratulating students as they work towards completing their “Reading Expedition.” There is no end to the amount of expeditions that students can complete. The goal is to provide opportunities for students to read different types of literature than they would normally choose, and learn that the final reward at the end of the rainbow is knowledge, and the power of books!

## V. Read Alouds

### A. Objectives

1. Teachers will learn how to create a welcoming read aloud atmosphere by choosing books that students would like to have read based on a teacher “Book Talk.”
2. Teachers will learn how to perform an enticing “Book Talk” to their class on books that hold a common thread. Teachers can choose books of their choice, or books that students in their classes have shown interest in.

### B. Materials

1. At least three and no more than four related books. For example, you may choose to select three Newbery Award books that are all Realistic Fiction. You may choose three books where a girl is the heroine, three fantasy books, three sea adventure or three survival books, etc. Do not feel obligated to try and find read aloud books that tie into the curriculum. Although it is nice, it is not necessary.

### C. Key Vocabulary

1. Read Aloud
2. Cool Down
3. Active Listeners

### D. Procedures/Activities

1. First, choose three books that interest you and have some common thread. **AVOID READING A BORING BOOK!** If you get into a book and the story is going nowhere and you and the students are feeling disinterested, discontinue

reading the book. Invite those who wish to continue the book to do so on their own.

2. Give a “Book Talk” on each of the books. If you have previously read the book (which is highly suggested, if not necessary), you already know the basic plot line and content of the story—this makes the book talk a little easier. Hold the book for all to see. Most books have a brief synopsis of the book with some additional comments by experts in the field. Begin by reading the back cover as well as any extra comments.
3. Secondly, find an enticing, descriptive page (usually the first page of chapter one) and begin reading. Just when it starts to get interesting, STOP! Reading the cover is the bait and reading the actual text is the hook. Go on to the next book and follow the same procedure as before. By then, students will be pulling their hair out trying to decide which book to have as their read aloud. Place the names of the books on the board and have students lay their heads down and cover their eyes. Next, have them vote for their top two choices. Count the votes and eliminate the book that was deemed to be the least favorite. Do the heads down, arms up vote one more time and this time have students only vote for one book. Now, you have successfully chosen a class favorite.
4. Once a winning book has been selected, create an ambiance conducive to the student’s imagination. You may choose to close the door, turn off the lights, or gather students around on the floor. Eliminate distractions. Occasionally, allow students to draw during read aloud as long as it is not a distraction from the book. You may have them illustrate their feelings, a scene or a character in the book. This provides a way for students to create a picture of what they are visualizing in the text, and it may also help strengthen their comprehension. You may even choose to have them share their thoughts and feelings after read aloud. Only allow students to lay their heads down on their desk during read aloud if you feel they are fully attentive. They need to be actively listening.
5. Take the winning book and begin reading.

\*\*\*Giving students the option of choosing a read aloud book after you have selected a theme or genre allows them to feel as if they are a part of the decision. Yet at the same time, it introduces them to new types of books that they generally wouldn’t pick for themselves. This exposure to different types of books greatly increases the likelihood of this type of book being chosen by the students in the future. Also, student “buy-in” significantly boosts attention levels during read aloud time.

## **VI. Theme Study**

### **A. Objectives**

1. Teachers will learn another strategy to best utilize time in class for additional integration and how to use literacy across a variety of content areas in a variety of topics.
2. Teachers will comprise a list of possible Theme and Author Studies on their grade level that can possibly be used in conjunction with a Core Knowledge or State Core Content Area.

### **B. Materials**

1. For a Theme Study: Locate several books (at least 5 or more) on one topic. For example, if you are studying Volcanoes in Science, search and find as many books on volcanoes as possible.

2. For an Author Study: Locate several books (at least 5 or more), written by the same author. For example, if you are studying how to write a mystery or you are working on a mystery unit you may want to collect books by Chris Van Allsburg.
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Theme Study
  2. Author Study
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. In a Theme Study, students are exposed to a myriad of books under one theme. Likewise, in an Author Study students are exposed to the literary elements that a particular author uses in his/her work. When setting up a study area, gather books from your school library, classroom library, as well as the public library and place them in a large basket where the book covers are visible and inviting. If you have centers, a center can be designated as the Theme Study or Author Study area. Some teachers find it beneficial to have a blanket that the students can lay out on the floor to sit, read and discover books in the Theme Study/Author Study area. Instruct students that these books are not to leave the area and are to be placed back in the baskets when they are done.
  2. You may have more than one basket of books available at a time (three baskets of books are ideal). This allows plenty of time for students to discover and build content in the Theme Study and learn the author's style in an Author's Study.
  3. In an Author Study, you may want to create an activity where students are looking for similarities and differences in the books. Their ideas can be listed and turned in for a grade. In a Theme Study, you may want students to write down new things they have learned or interesting facts they have found out about the subject.
  4. Theme and Author Studies can be implemented as long as you like and in nearly all content areas. This is a great way to integrate across the curriculum. It is best to change the topics as you move on to other content areas.

## VII. "Reader's Theater"

- A. *Objectives*
1. Teachers will learn how to use a Reader's Theater to best utilize all students in reading.
  2. Teachers will participate by reading in a Reader's Theater.
- B. *Materials*
1. You will need a Reader's Theater script.
  2. Chairs. One for each reader.
  3. A music stand (if possible) for the narrator(s).
  4. Small costume pieces such as vests, jackets, hats, bow ties, etc (costume pieces are optional, yet they tend to make the readers feel more at ease).
  5. Highlighters, light colored markers, or colored pencil.
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Reader's Theater
  2. Narrator
  3. Script
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. If the entire class is doing the same Reader's Theater, divide the students into equal groups. You may have to assign two parts to one person depending on the number of readers in the script. If you are using a variety of Reader's Theater

scripts, divide your students into groups according to the amount of readers needed. \*Note it is difficult to have one person in two different Reader's Theater groups at the same time. It is easier for one person to take two roles and change his/her voice and/or costume pieces to represent the different characters.

2. Hand out scripts and allow students to choose their parts. You may need to draw straws if more than one person wants the same part. Then, have students mark their lines with a highlighter, light marker or colored pencil.
3. Allow a few days for students to practice reading their lines alone and with the group which allows them time to perfect their own part. Let them become familiar with what they are to read. This helps reduce anxiety some students may feel when reading in front of the class. It is important to let students know this is a Reader's Theater and not a play, which helps eliminate unnecessary pressure. It is not expected that they use a stage, memorize lines, or physically act out scenes. In a Reader's Theater, students are to read their scripts and only leave the chair where they are sitting when their part is being spoken. It is basically a glorified read aloud. Challenge students to use expression when reading their parts. It is especially important to challenge advanced or confident readers to use expression so they are working to improve and develop new skills. A good way to do this is to model expression, voices, etc. for your students. Don't be afraid; it is important for students to see adults getting into their reading in this way! It makes it exciting!
4. After students have had ample time to familiarize themselves with their part, it is time to perform. Provide chairs for the Reader's Theater, or have each student bring their own chair to the front. All chairs are to be facing the same direction. A good way to do this is to place all chairs facing the readers' right, with the backrest of the chairs on their left. This makes it easier for students to turn around to the front when they are speaking and turn their backs to the audience when they are not speaking. This will draw the audience's attention to the people who are speaking and not to those who are not involved with the scene. If a character is in a scene, and doesn't necessarily have a talking part, he/she may face front or stand and make silent gestures according to the script they are reading.
5. Narrators should stand to either side of the chairs. In the case of two narrators, one narrator should be at each end of the chairs.
6. Scripts are to be kept low so the reader's face is not covered. Voices need to be loud and clear for all to hear. Make students aware of this when parts are being decided, so they can be prepared ahead of time. This will allow for little or no disruption during the actual theater.
7. When costumes pieces are being used, they are to be put on prior to the Reader's Theater. If the students have more than one part and need to change a costume piece, they are to change while their backs are to the audience. In this case, costume pieces need to be very easy to change or trade so this won't take away from the presentation.
8. After the Narrator says "The End," all participants stand and bow to their audience.
9. After you have performed multiple Reader's Theaters with your students, and they seem to feel comfortable with performing in front of their peers, take the jump and try a play!

#### E. *Resources*

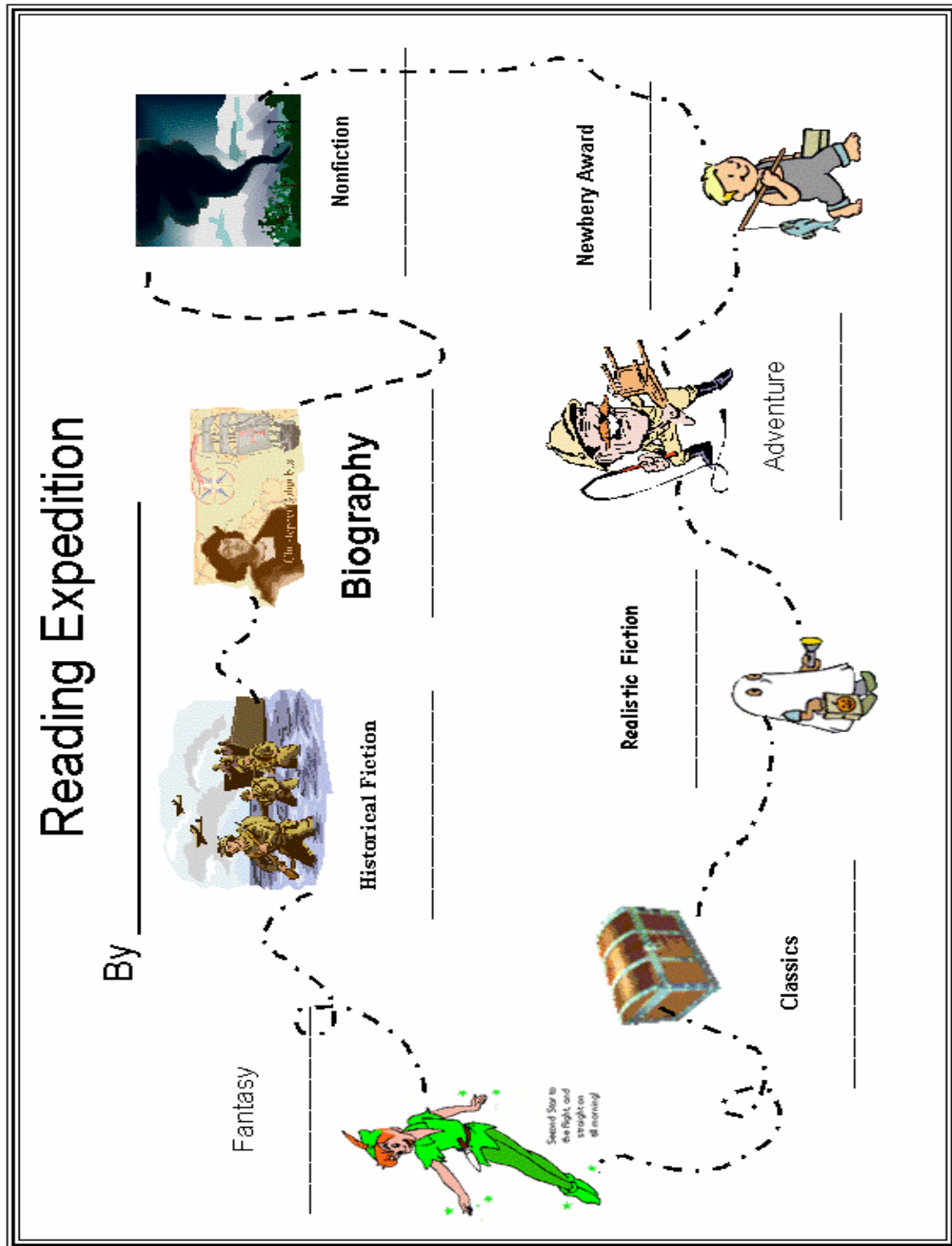
1. “Reader’s Theater Editions” are free scripts for reader’s theater (or readers theatre) adapted from stories. They are written by [Aaron Shepard](#) and other authors. They consist of mostly humor, fantasy, and world tales from a variety of cultures. A full range of reading levels is included, with scripts aimed mostly at ages 8–15. Website: <http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html>
2. Reading A-Z offers reader's theater scripts adapted from leveled readers. Look for new scripts each month. These reader's theaters provide simple, leveled play scripts that students can perform in the classroom without the need for props, costumes, or a set. Website: [http://www.readinga-z.com/guided/theater\\_list.html](http://www.readinga-z.com/guided/theater_list.html)

### VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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# Bringing Literature to Life through Reading

## Appendix A: Reading Expedition



# Bring Literature to Life through Reading

## Appendix B: Theme Study and Author Study Brainstorm

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Create a place in the classroom where a Theme or Author Study may take place. Place books in a large basket where they are easily seen and can be accessed by anyone at anytime.

Think of possible areas in the curriculum where you can do a theme study. Write your ideas down in the columns and then simply search your classroom, school or public libraries, etc. for books under the theme.

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### Possible Science Theme Studies:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

### Possible History/Geography Theme Studies:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

### Possible Writing Trait Theme Studies:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

### Possible Author Studies:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

**Bring Literature to Life through Reading**  
Appendix C: Reader's Theater – The True Story of the Three  
Little Pigs

**The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs**

By Jon Scieszka

Adapted to Reader's Theater by Jason Finch

**Cast of Characters:** Narrator #1  
Narrator #2  
Wolf  
Pig #2  
Pig #3

**Narrator 1:** Everybody knows the story of the “The 3 Little Pigs,” or at least they think they do.

**Narrator 2:** But nobody knows the real story, because nobody has ever heard the wolf's side of the story.

**Wolf:** I'm the wolf. Alexander T. Wolf. You can call me Al.

**Narrator 1:** He doesn't know how this whole Big Bad Wolf thing got started, but it is all wrong.

**Wolf:** It is not my fault wolves eat cute little animals like bunnies and sheep and pigs. That's just the way we are.

**Narrator 1:** But like I was saying, according to him, the whole Big Bad Wolf thing is all wrong.

**Narrator 2:** The real story is about a sneeze and a cup of sugar.

**Narrator 1:** Way back in Once upon a time time...

**Wolf:** I was making a birthday cake for my dear old granny.

**Narrator 1:** He had a terrible sneezing cold and he ran out of sugar.

**Wolf:** So I walked down the street to ask my neighbor for a cup of sugar.

**Narrator 2:** Now this neighbor was a pig.

**Narrator 1:** And he wasn't too bright, either.

**Narrator 2:** He had built his whole house out of straw.

**Wolf:** Can you believe it? Who in his right mind builds a house made out of straw?

**Narrator 1:** When he knocked on the door, it fell right in.

**Wolf:** Little Pig, Little Pig, are you in?

**Narrator 2:** No answer.

**Narrator 1:** When he was about to leave, he could feel a sneeze coming on.

**Wolf:** Well, I huffed and I snuffed and I sneezed a great sneeze.

**Narrator 1:** The house fell down.

**Narrator 2:** It was then he found the pig, dead as a doornail.

**Wolf:** It seemed a shame to leave a perfectly good ham dinner just lying there, so I ate it up.

**Narrator 1:** He still didn't have the cup of sugar...

**Narrator 2:** So, he wandered on to the next neighbor's house who was also a pig. He was a little smarter too.

**Narrator 1:** But, not much.

**Wolf:** He had built his house out of sticks, I mean honestly!

**Narrator 1:** He rang the door bell.

**Wolf:** Mr. Pig, Mr. Pig, are you in?

**Pig 2:** Go away wolf. You can't come in. I'm shaving the hairs on my chinny chin chin.

**Narrator 1:** Just as the wolf was about to leave, he could feel a sneeze coming on.

**Wolf:** I huffed and I snuffed and I tried to cover my mouth, but I sneezed a great sneeze.

**Narrator 2:** And you're not going to believe it, but this guy's house fell down just like his brother's.

**Narrator 1:** When the dust cleared there was the second Little Pig – dead as a doornail.

**Wolf:** Wolf's honor.

**Narrator 1:** Now you know food will spoil, so he did the only thing there was to do.

**Narrator 2:** He had dinner again.

**Wolf:** I was getting awfully full, and I still didn't have that cup of sugar for my dear old granny's birthday cake.

**Narrator 2:** So he went to the next neighbor's house. This guy was the First and Second Little Pig's brother.

**Narrator 1:** He must have been the brains of the family.

**Wolf:** He built his house out of bricks.

**Narrator 2:** The wolf knocked on the brick house.

**Wolf:** Mr. Pig, Mr. Pig, are you in?

**Narrator 1:** And you know what that rude little porker answered?

**Pig 3:** Get out of here, Wolf. Don't bother me again!

**Narrator 1:** He was just about to go home and maybe make a nice birthday card instead of a cake, when he felt another sneeze coming on.

**Wolf:** I huffed and I snuffed and I sneezed once again.

**Narrator 2:** Then the third Little Pig yelled,

**Pig 3:** And your old Granny can sit on a pin!

**Wolf:** Well, when somebody talks about my granny like that, I go a little crazy.

**Narrator 2:** When the cops drove up, he was trying to break down the pig's door.

**Narrator 1:** And the whole time he was huffing and puffing and making a real scene.

**Narrator 2:** The rest, as they say, is history.

**Narrator 1:** That's it. The *real* story.

**Narrator 1 and 2:** He was framed.

**Wolf:** But maybe you could loan me a cup of sugar?

# TEACHER WORKSHOP TIMELINE: BRING LITERATURE TO LIFE THROUGH READING


**Language Arts: Grades 1-8**

**Written by:** Jason Finch, George Washington Academy, St. George Utah and Kelli Park, Timpanogos Academy, Lindon, Utah


Timeline for an Implementation Workshop, 2 hours (120 minutes)

\*A Projector will be needed for this workshop. Tables for teachers to sit around would also be nice for group activities.


5 minutes:

-  Introduction to the presenters, Jason Finch and Kelli Park



5 minutes:

-  Get to know the audience by asking “How many” questions, i.e. “How many of you teachers teach grades 1-3?” or “How many are from low income schools?” Or “How many like chocolate?” Etc.


5 minutes:

-  Briefly touch on the importance reading plays on an average day in school. Cite current research on reading. Give basic expectations in reading aloud, and provide read aloud research. What are the experts saying?





20 minutes total:

-  10 minutes: Picking a “Read Aloud” book and demonstrating a “Book Talk.”
-  10 minute Activity: Teacher practice. Teachers will practice giving a “Book Talk” from one of the books at their table to their colleagues.



15 minutes: Think, Pair, Share Activity


-  Teachers think about wonderful read alouds they have had in their classroom. Then teachers at their tables pair up and discuss those great read alouds. Teachers then share their ideas with the other cohorts at their tables. Knowing what other teachers have read in their classrooms and learning how their students responded to the literature is a great way to know what to look for when looking for quality read alouds.

25 minutes total:



-  5 minutes: Incorporating read alouds in Science and History
-  5 minutes: Introduction to Theme and Author studies. Theme and Author studies provide additional opportunities for students to develop additional domain knowledge in individual content areas.
-  10 minutes: What is a Theme Study and what do I do? How do I compile an Author Study? Where do I get the books? What are the students’ expectations in a study?
-  5 minute Activity: Teacher Brainstorm. Teachers brainstorm content areas and subjects where a Theme Study can be incorporated as well as in an Author Study.

25 minutes:



-  5 minutes: What are the experts saying about Reader’s Theater? What are some of the benefits?
-  10 minutes: How to put on a Reader’s Theater in the classroom.

-  10 minutes Activity: Teacher practice. Teachers divide and assign parts to the Reader's Theater, "The True Story of the Three Little Pigs." Teachers read their parts in the script while practicing character voice and expression.

15 minutes Sum up and Conclusion:

-  5 minutes: Sharing Time: Discuss the following experiences with plays - "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"
-  10 minutes: Putting on a Class Play. Basic Guidelines and timeframes: Breaking it down from beginning to show time. Time to discuss blocking, fake front, selection of cast, etc.

5 minutes Sum up and Conclusion:

-  5 minutes: Additional Ideas from audience, questions, etc.
-  5 minutes: Reiterate the importance of "Bring Literature to life through Reading!"