

# THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

music by W.A. MOZART adapted by JOHN DAVIES

## LANGUAGE ARTS: Readers Theater

### Students Will

- Read “The Story of the Opera” and “The Characters”
- Practice reading with fluency and expression as they rehearse and perform Scene V from the opera in a readers theater format
- Optional: Draw from “The Story of the Opera” to write a readers theater script for a different part of the opera, then rehearse and perform it for the class

### Copies for Each Student

- “The Story of the Opera”
- “The Characters”
- “Tips on Reading” Article
- Readers Theater Script

### Copies for the Teacher

- “The Story of the Opera”
- “The Characters”
- “Tips on Reading” Article
- Readers Theater Script

### Getting Ready

Decide which section(s) of the lesson you wish your group to complete. Be sure students are familiar with “The Story of the Opera” as it relates to content of this lesson.

Gather materials:

- Pencils & Highlighters
- Blank scratch paper

### Instructional Time

One – two 45-minute class periods

### Introduction

Introduce the lesson to your class. Review Aaron Shepard's "Tips on Reading" which provides tips on preparing, rehearsing, and performing (<http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/Tips1.html>). Encourage students to apply these strategies in their preparation and performance. Divide the class into groups (4 students per group if using the Scene V script, varies if assigning different parts of the story). Provide enough copies of the script and highlighters for all students, or necessary preparation materials if students are writing their own script.

### Guided/Independent Practice

Assign a role to each student in the group (for all groups of four) and pass out scripts, or begin the writing process if students are writing their own scripts. Have students highlight their part, and explain that text inside brackets

describes action and should not be read aloud. Groups can then begin reading their scripts aloud. Provide guidance as needed. Once students have read through their scripts several times and have added appropriate expression and intonation, have them start adding stage movements. (You can appoint one person in the group as a “director” to guide this step.) After sufficient time has passed, and the groups are ready, have each group perform their scene for the class.

### **Evaluation**

- Did the students read “The Story of the Opera?”
- Did the students read and apply what they learned from Aaron Shepard's "Tips on Reading" to their scene?
- Did the students perform their scene for each other?

### **TEKS**

#### **English Language Arts and Reading**

##### **Grade 5**

(1) Reading/Fluency. Students read grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. Students are expected to read aloud grade-level stories with fluency (rate, accuracy, expression, appropriate phrasing) and comprehension.

##### **Grade 6**

(1) Reading/Fluency. Students read grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. Students are expected to adjust fluency when reading aloud grade-level text based on the reading purpose and the nature of the text.

### **Theatre**

##### **Grade 5**

(2) Creative expression: performance. The student interprets characters using the voice and body expressively and creates dramatizations. (A. C. D.)

##### **Grade 6**

(2) Creative expression: performance

The student interprets characters using the voice and body expressively and creates dramatizations. (A. B. C. D. E. F.)

**Correlates:** Music, Drama

**Gardner’s Intelligences:** Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

**Bloom’s Taxonomy:** Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

### **Sources:**

*The Three Little Pigs* Libretto by John Davies

### **Online Resources:**

[www.operatales.com](http://www.operatales.com)

<http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/>

# The Story of the Opera

*The Three Little Pigs* is a one-act opera adapted by John Davies from the traditional fairy tale featuring music by Wolfgang A. Mozart.

The story begins with three little pigs at their mother's house. Despina, a little girl pig who loves going to the library, is reading a book. Her brothers, Cherubino and Don Giovanni, have not yet learned how useful the library can be. But they are about to find out, for Wolfgang Bigbad, the Big Bad Wolf, is on his way. Despina explains that it is time for them to build their own house, and immediately her two brothers begin to argue about the choice of building materials. Cherubino claims that straw is the best; however, Don Giovanni is sure that sticks would be better. They turn to Despina to settle the argument and she tells them that she is going to the library to check out books that will teach her about building houses. The boys laugh as if it is the most ridiculous idea they have ever heard!

Despite Cherubino and Don Giovanni's doubts, they follow Despina as she makes her way through the woods to the library, where Wolfgang Bigbad himself is pacing back and forth in front of the building. He hasn't eaten all day and would love to get his paws on a small pig, or better yet, two or three! When he sees the three little pigs, he "hides" himself by pretending to be a statue in order to surprise them. Despina goes directly into the library while the boys play outside. Soon they realize that the "statue" is really Wolfgang Bigbad! Cherubino sees that Don Giovanni is terrified, and makes him approach the "statue" to invite him to dinner. The "statue" (Wolfgang) nods his head to accept the invitation.

Meanwhile, Despina has found all of the books she needs, and the three pigs prepare to build their houses. Don Giovanni has built his house of sticks, which Wolfgang blows down. Cherubino has gone ahead with his plans to build a straw house, but it proves to be even less "huff-proof, puff-proof" than his brother's because Wolfgang blows it down, too! Now that both of the boys' flimsy homes are gone, they run to the safety of Despina's house, which she has made of bricks. Wolfgang, now very, very hungry, cannot blow it down! He tries every trick he can think of to get into Despina's sturdy home, but it is no use!

In the end, after their scary, hair-raising encounter with Wolfgang, Cherubino and Don Giovanni both wholeheartedly agree that Despina's idea of going to the library and reading books is a pretty smart thing to do after all.

## The Characters

**Despina:** (soprano or mezzo) A little girl pig who loves the library.

**Cherubino:** (mezzo or tenor) Despina's older brother.

**Don Giovanni:** (bass or baritone) Despina's younger brother.

**Wolfgang Big Bad:** (bass or baritone) The Big Bad Wolf, himself.

Link to Musical Excerpts:

<http://www.operatales.com/three-little-pigs.shtml>

# “Tips on Reading”

By Aaron Shepard

## Preparing

First, here are instructions your readers can follow – individually or in a group — to prepare their scripts and get familiar with their parts.

- Highlight your speeches in your copy of the script. Mark only words you will *speak*—not the identifying role tags or the stage directions. (Yellow non-fluorescent marker works best.)
- Underline the words that tell about anything you’ll need to act out—words in either the stage directions or *other* readers’ speeches. If you’re given extra stage directions later, write them in the margin in *pencil*.
- Read through your part silently. If there are words you don’t understand or aren’t sure how to pronounce, look them up in a dictionary. If there are words you must remember to stress, underline them. If there are places you’ll need to pause between sentences, mark them with a couple of slashes (//). For instance, a narrator must sometimes pause to help the audience know there’s a change of scene or time.
- Read through your part out loud. If you’re a character, think about how that character would sound. Should you try a funny voice? How would the character feel about what’s happening in the story? Can you speak as if you were feeling that?
- Stand up and read through the script again. If you’re a character, try out faces and movements. Would your character stand or move in a special way? Can you do that? If possible, try all this in front of a mirror.

Even before you give your readers their scripts, you can help them by reading to them the script or its source story. Effective modeling will give them a head start against any difficulties. You might also want to discuss the difference between characters and narrators. (“In the story, character parts are *inside* the quotation marks, and narrator parts are *outside*.”)

## Rehearsing

Here are pointers your readers should remember in both rehearsal and performance.

- Hold your script at a steady height, but make sure it doesn’t hide your face. If there’s anyone you can’t see in the front row of the audience, your script is too high.
- While you speak, try to look up often, not just at your script. When you do look down at it, keep your head up and move just your eyes.
- S-L-O-W D-O-W-N. Say each syl-la-ble clear-ly.
- TALK LOUD! You have to be heard by the little old deaf lady in the back row.
- *Speak with feeling*. Audiences love a ham!
- Stand and sit straight. Keep your hands and feet still, if they’re not doing anything useful!
- Face the audience as much as you can, whether you’re moving or standing still. If you’re rehearsing without an audience, pretend it’s there anyway and remember where it is.

- Narrators, you're important even when the audience isn't looking at you. You control the story! Be sure to give the characters enough time to do what they must. And remember that you're talking to the audience, not yourself.
- Characters, you give the story its life! Remember to *be* your character even when you're not speaking, and be sure to react to the other characters.

To help your readers get full vocal power, have them check their breathing. To do this, they should place their hands on their stomachs and inhale. If they're really filling their lungs, their hands will be pushed *out*. (The diaphragm muscle gives the lungs more room by pushing down on the stomach, making it expand forward.) If their hands move *in*, it means they're filling only the top parts of their lungs.

Tongue twisters and other vocal exercises can help your readers speak more clearly. You might even warm them up with such exercises before your rehearsals and performances.

To help your readers hold themselves straight, ask them to imagine a string tied to their chest, pulling up.

## **Performing**

Before an actual performance, discuss with your readers the "what-ifs."

- If the audience laughs, stop speaking till they can hear you again.
- If someone talks in the audience, don't pay attention.
- If someone walks into the room, don't look.
- If you make a mistake, pretend it was right.
- If you drop something, try to leave it at least till the audience is looking somewhere else.
- If a reader forgets to read, see if you can read their part instead, or make something up, or maybe just skip over it. But *don't* whisper or signal to the reader!
- If a reader falls on their bottom, pretend they didn't.

Finally, a couple of reminders for the director: Have fun, and tell your readers what they're doing well!

# Reader's Theater Script

## *The Three Little Pigs*

(A One Act Opera)

### Scene V The Brick House

*[Free standing brick door. A small interior wall with a chimney. Wolfgang should be able to fall down the chimney by jumping off a chair placed upstage of the wall. A small wooden table and chairs. Flowers, shrubs and trees to suggest the outside.]*

**Despina:** Don Giovanni and Cherubino ran as fast as they could to my beautiful new brick house, but when they got there, I wasn't home. You see, I was returning my books. By the time I got back to my house, Wolfgang was already kicking up a terrible fuss. He even tried to climb down my beautiful new brick chimney, which, of course, was a VERY BIG – VERY BAD – mistake.

*[Cherubino and Giovanni run unto the brick house]*

**Cherubino:** Where is Despina?

**Giovanni:** She isn't here.

**Wolfgang:** *[Knocks softly on the door.]*

**Cherubino:** Who is it?

**Wolfgang:** *[trying to mimic Despina's voice]*

It's me, Despina. Open the door.

**Giovanni:** There she is.

*[Giovanni goes to the door and opens it. He yells when he sees Wolfgang Big Bad and slams the door shut.]*

**Cherubino:** What's going on? Hey, Giovanni, what's wrong? Why does your face look like that? Why did you yell?

**Giovanni:** AH!!! He's here! Keep him away! Don't go near the door! He's standing just outside... he... the statue... who nodded... I could see him in the doorway, I could hear each marble shoe.

**Cherubino:** I have never heard such nonsense! Tell me what's wrong with you!

*[Wolfgang knocks hard on the door.]*

**Giovanni:** There! Listen!

**Cherubino:** Someone's knocking – answer it.

**Giovanni:** No way!

**Cherubino:** Seriously – answer the door!

**Giovanni:** Never!

**Cherubino:** Listen! It's only Despinetta. I'll prove that she's the one who's standing there.

**Giovanni:** It's the statue from the library, I would know him anywhere.

**Wolfgang:** *[in normal voice]* Don Giovanni do you remember that you asked me to come to dinner?

**Cherubino:** Who would ever have believed it? Hey, Giovanni, let him in now, it's the statue from the library. We must do the best we can.

**Giovanni:** I don't dare! I'm sure he'll eat us!

**Wolfgang:** Open the door!

**Cherubino:** You're right - get going! *[looks for a place to hide]*

**Giovanni:** I've a feeling, I'm sick to my tummy, 'cause that wolf thinks that piggies taste yummy. As a matter of fact I feel crumby and I want to go home to my mummy.

**Wolfgang:** Open the door Pig and let me come in!

**Cherubino:** Not by the hair of my chin chinny chin!

**Wolfgang:** *[louder]* Open the door Pig!

**Giovanni:** It's too late – Big Bad Wolf is going to eat us! There is no hope! Help! Oh help!

*[While Wolfgang searches for the back door, Despina unlocks the front door with her key and enters the house. She locks the door and is unafraid because she knows her house is strong.]*

**Wolfgang:** *[even louder]* Let me in! Open the door!!

*[Wolfgang sees the chimney and starts climbing to the top of the house]*

**Cherubino:** No! Not by the hair of my chin chiny chin!

**Wolfgang:** Open up! Or I'll huff... and I'll puff...

**Giovanni:** We're all going to die!

**All:** Ahhhh!!!

*[Wolfgang falls down the chimney and is knocked unconscious.]*

**Despina:** Here is the moral of our story.

**Cherubino:** When you fear a thing that's scary...

**Giovanni:** Just take your questions to the library.

**Despina:** Good for you and good for me.

**All:** Good for piggies...

**Giovanni:** One

**Despina:** Two

**Cherubino:** Three.

**All:** The End!