



MARIST CLS  
SPRING 2025  
CLASS #1

# THE MAGIC OF READERS THEATRE

**READERS THEATRE IS MOST OFTEN  
DEFINED BY WHAT IT IS NOT.**

- NO MEMORIZING
- NO BLOCKING
- NO PROPS,
- NO SETS
- NO COSTUMES



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## READERS THEATRE – WHAT IT IS

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**READERS THEATRE** IS A FORMAL STYLE OF THEATRICAL PRESENTATION IN WHICH ACTORS PRESENT WRITTEN MATERIAL WITHOUT COSTUMES, PROPS, SCENERY, ETC.

ACTORS USE ONLY SCRIPTS, FACIAL, & VOCAL EXPRESSION TO HELP THE AUDIENCE UNDERSTAND THE STORY.

READERS THEATER IS ALSO KNOWN AS "THEATRE OF THE MIND"



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- THE FORMAL READERS THEATRE FORM IS SIMILAR TO RECITATIONS OF EPIC POETRY IN FIFTH-CENTURY GREECE.
- DRAMATIC READINGS HAVE BEEN POPULAR IN THE U.S. SINCE THE EARLY 1800'S.
- THE FIRST USE OF "READERS THEATRE" IS ATTRIBUTED TO EUGENE O'NEILL, JR. HE ESTABLISHED A READERS THEATRE GROUP WHICH PRESENTED *OEDIPUS REX* AT THE MAJESTIC THEATRE ON BROADWAY IN 1945.
- IN 1949, THE NATIONAL READERS THEATER, *THE DRAMA QUARTET*—CHARLES LAUGHTON, AGNES MOOREHEAD, CHARLES BOYER, AND CEDRIC HARDWICKE—TOURED TO 35 STATES, FOR 500 PERFORMANCES OF SHAW'S *DON JUAN IN HELL*, SEEN BY MORE THAN A HALF-MILLION PEOPLE.



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LIKE STORYTELLING, READERS' THEATRE CAN CREATE IMAGES BY SUGGESTION THAT COULD NEVER BE PORTRAYED REALISTICALLY ON STAGE. SPACE AND TIME CAN BE SHRUNK OR STRETCHED, WORLDS CAN BE CREATED. READER'S THEATRE FREES THE PERFORMERS AND THE AUDIENCE FROM THE PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS OF CONVENTIONAL THEATER, LETTING THE IMAGINATION SOAR.



**KEY ELEMENTS OF READERS THEATER:**

**DEEP CHARACTER ANALYSIS:**

ACTORS STUDY THE CHARACTERS' MOTIVATIONS, BACKSTORIES, AND RELATIONSHIPS TO DELIVER A MORE LAYERED PERFORMANCE.

**VOCAL VARIETY:**

DIFFERENT VOCAL QUALITIES LIKE PITCH, PACE, AND INFLECTION TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN CHARACTERS AND CONVEY EMOTIONS EFFECTIVELY WITHOUT MOVEMENT.

**SUBTLE PHYSICALITY:**

INCORPORATE SUBTLE GESTURES AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS TO ENHANCE THE STORY WITHOUT DISTRACTING FROM THE FOCUS ON THE TEXT.

**ENSEMBLE DYNAMIC:**

ACTORS/CHARACTERS INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER, CREATE A COHESIVE PERFORMANCE THROUGH LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO EACH OTHER.

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## **FORMAL READERS THEATRE STYLE**

THE SIMPLEST AND MOST TRADITIONAL:

- READERS ARE ARRANGED IN A ROW OR A SEMICIRCLE, STANDING OR SITTING ON HIGH STOOLS. TYPICALLY, NARRATORS ARE PLACED AT ONE OR BOTH ENDS, AND MAJOR CHARACTERS IN THE CENTER. ALL ARE COSTUMED IN BLACK.
- SCRIPTS ARE SET ON MUSIC STANDS.
- READERS LOOK STRAIGHT OUT TOWARD THE AUDIENCE OR AT AN ANGLE, RATHER THAN DIRECTLY AT EACH OTHER.
- SCRIPTS ARE PLACED SO THEY CAN BE REFERRED TO EASILY BUT DON'T SERIOUSLY RESTRICT MOVEMENT OR DISTRACT THE AUDIENCE.
- ACTORS MAY HAVE TO RUN A FINGER DOWN THE PAGE TO KEEP THE PLACE. LOOK DOWN AT THE BEGINNING OF A SENTENCE AND "HOLD" THE TEXT BEFORE LOOKING UP AND SPEAKING.





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WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU GET FROM YOUR EYES?  
WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU GET FROM YOUR EARS?  
IS YOUR SENSE OF VISUALIZATION SATISFIED?



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READERS THEATER CAN ALSO DRAMATIZE NON-DRAMATIC LITERATURE (SHORT STORIES, POEMS).

IT TYPICALLY INCLUDES A "NARRATOR" ROLE WHICH MIGHT BE A CHARACTER IN THE STORY OR A NONPARTICIPATING WITNESS. OR STORYTELLER.

WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU? WHAT CLUES WILL YOU BE LISTENING FOR IN THE NEXT EIGHT WEEKS?

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- WEEK #1 – 4/2 – INTRODUCTION – SAMPLE READINGS
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- WEEK #2 – 4/9 – MICHEL TREMBLAY – FOR THE PLEASURE OF SEEING HER AGAIN
- 
- WEEK #3 – 4/16 – JEFFREY HATCHER - MURDERERS
- 
- WEEK #4 – 4/23 – JULIA CHO–THE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE
- 
- WEEK #5 – 4/30 – GLEN GERBER– UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
- 
- WEEK #6 – 5/7 – MONOLOGUES & LYRICS
- 
- WEEK #7 – 5/14– TECTONIC THEATRE PROJECT – THE LARAMIE PROJECT
- 
- WEEK #8 – 5/21 – COLD BUFFET / CLASS BRINGS MATERIAL AND ACTORS WILL READ “COLD”





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**TODAY'S MENU**

- **HE SAID, SHE SAID – DAVE BARRY**
- **A NUMBER – CARYL CHURCHILL**
- **FITZROY – MARK ST GERMAIN**
- **BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA - ANNA OUYANG MOENCH**
- **LOST – MARY LOUISE WILSON**
- **POEMS BY BILLY COLLINS**