

Dramatizing a scene from a Reader

Before asking children to dramatize pages or a chapter from your Reader, it is important to think about practical issues. What part of the Reader do you select, and how can you check that children remember it? How should you allocate roles and adapt the dialogue? Let's look at each of these issues in more detail.

Choosing a scene

In a film or stage play, a 'scene' is part of the plot where all of the action takes place in the same location (for example, in a shop) or the dialogue is of a similar type (such as an argument). When acting out a scene from a Reader, it is important to understand where the scene begins and ends.

Select a part of the reader that is self-contained. Stories in lower-level *Macmillan English Explorers* and all levels of *Macmillan Children's Readers* consist of illustrations and accompanying text. Episodes in the story tend to start and finish when you turn the page, so it is easy to choose distinct scenes to dramatize.

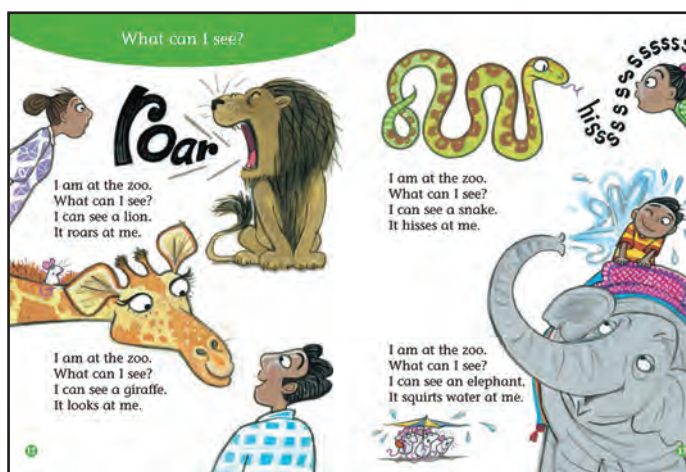
For example, this is the start of a nine-page café scene from *A Fun Day Out* (*Little Explorers*, B), which could be used as a mini-play. The menus contained in these pages could be photocopied and used as props.



A Fun Day Out

For very young readers, who are unable to read the words on the page, you could also use the rhyme or chant in some Readers as a 'scene'.

The higher levels of *Macmillan English Explorers* are written as continuous text, like a story that a child would read in his or her own language. For this reason, changes of scene may not occur at the end of pages. Here it may help to photocopy pages and mark scenes, or take the relevant chunk of the story and type it up. If you are acting out a longer scene, the chapter headings will help you divide up the book.



The chant from *At the Zoo* (*Little Explorers*, A)

Acting out a scene

- 1 Make sure that children have enough time to prepare their lines before you act out the scene in class. If your classroom is big enough, different groups can practise the scene in different corners of your classroom. Circulate, monitor and help as necessary.
- 2 Introduce minimal props from the start. Small props can provide useful cues when children act out a scene.
- 3 Remind children that acting is as much about movement and positioning on the stage as it is about speaking the lines. Focus children's attention on the stage directions when they rehearse. Children should spend as much time getting this right as they spend on their lines.
- 4 Groups of children perform their scenes in front of the class. Make sure that the rest of the class is settled, comfortable and watching the scene quietly. If the performers get stuck, try to cue them in a way that does not interrupt the action.
- 5 Encourage positive feedback on performances, and make sure that this feedback does not focus on individual children. For example, you could ask:
 - What the best part of the scene was.
 - What children enjoyed or found difficult about playing their parts.
 - Who was the most interesting or best story character (not actor).
 - How the children (as a class or a group) could improve the scene.

Involving the whole class

With very young children in storytelling classes, it is possible to dramatize the story as a whole class. The teacher reads out the story or scene from the story, and the children mime the actions or use puppets to mime the actions. With older children, it is nice to allocate parts to specific children. Older children could also put on a puppet show. In this case, it is important to allocate parts in a way which involves the entire class.

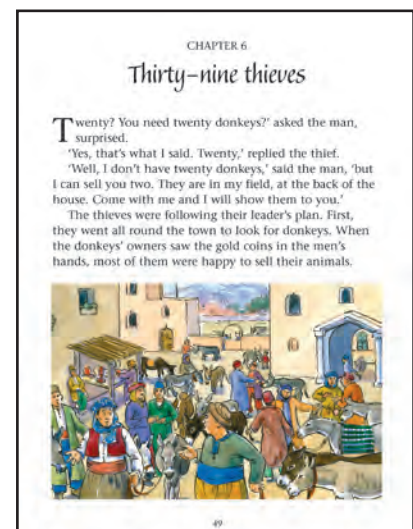
If you have a small class, you may be able to dramatize a scene as a whole class with older children, allocating the following types of parts:

- The main actors
- Several narrators in the form of a chorus
- Children to make sound effects
- Children to perform non-speaking parts (if available), such as animals

Dramatizing this chapter from [Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves](#) (*Explorers*, Level 5) would involve lot of non-speaking parts, animals and sound effects.

Most Readers will only have a few parts in each scene, so the class needs to be divided into groups. Make sure that the size of each group corresponds to the parts available. Here are three ways to allocate scenes:

- Ask each group to practise and perform the same scene.



**Ali Baba and the
Forty Thieves**

- Take the scene and divide it up into 'frames' (parts of the scene, often illustrated separately in the Reader). Allocate each frame to a different group. This is particularly easy if you are using *Macmillan Children's Readers*, where the stories are told in frames.
- Take different scenes of a similar length or type and allocate each scene to a different group in the class.

It's important to allocate roles in a way which is both fair and allows children to use their individual talents. Naturally, teachers tend to nominate stronger speakers for bigger speaking parts, but over time this can be demotivating for other children. Two alternatives are to:

Allow children to choose the roles within their groups, but monitor and give advice.

Choose roles completely at random. For example, ask children to hit a balloon around the room, turn your back and call 'stop' to select children for each major part. For example, if you have four groups of children and you are allocating the roles for [Nicholas Nickleby](#) (*Explorers*, Level 6), you could do this to choose the four children who will be Nicholas.

