Happy Birthday, New Mexico! Readers’ Theater
Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher

Grade Level: 3-5+

Elements of Reading/Drama Addressed: Fluency, Expression, Oral Language, Vocabulary, Cooperation, Characterization, Vocal Projection

NM Language Arts Core Content Standards:
Key Ideas and Details

Grade 3
2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Grade 4
2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
3. Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Grade 5
2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
3. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Fluency

Grades 3, 4, and 5
4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
   a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
   b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings
   c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

NM Fine Arts/Drama Standards Addressed:

Standard 1: Learn and develop the essential skills and meet technical demands unique to dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts.
   K-5 Benchmark 1A: Use body and voice to portray character.

Standard 2: Use dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts to express ideas.
   K-5 Benchmark 2A: Develop classroom dramatizations that express various moods or emotions (e.g., happy/sad, funny, scary, mysterious, etc.).

Standard 4: Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the creative process.
   K-5 Benchmark 4A: Collaborate to design, plan, rehearse and perform dramatizations.

Standard 8: Contribute to communities by sharing expertise in dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts and by participating in the activities of cultural institutions.
   K-5 Benchmark 8B: Assume roles for an audience that demonstrate characterization & tell a story.
Lesson Objectives: Students will:

- Examine historical events from the past century of NM history
- Utilize fluency skills and expression when reading
- Cooperate and collaborate on an oral presentation

Materials:

- Copies of *New Mexico Centennial Happy Birthday!* Scripts, one for each reader—*mounted in a binder or folder for a performance where appropriate
- Students arranged in groups of 4
- Readers’ Theater Checklist

Vocabulary: Centennial, historical event, state, territory, dialogue, hand gestures, facial expressions, vocal variety, characterization, readers’ theater

Teaching Process:

- Discuss the idea of a centennial. What are some of the historical events that have happened in New Mexico?
- Discuss the concept of readers’ theater—explain that it is not meant to be a full stage production like a play but a story is told through the dialogue of the characters, with very little physical movement. Hand gestures, facial expressions, and vocal variety are how to convey the story.
- As a whole group, read through the script. Discuss any points that might need clarification or explanation.
- Divide the class into groups of 4 and assign each group a scene.
- Allow time for groups to rehearse. Groups may want to determine who will be which reader in each group or you can assign readers for each group. Encourage them to read-through the group’s scene several times, attempting different ways of saying their lines where appropriate.
- During rehearsal, encourage students to establish who their character is and how and why that character is saying the line they are.
- Groups perform for each other.

If there is to be a performance for an invited audience, please NOTE: When preparing students to perform, there are several configurations for readers (the configurations should be rehearsed):

- Standing with backs to the audience until it is time for their scene, then all readers for that scene turn to the audience to perform.
- Seated with hands quietly in lap, performers stand for their scene.
- Groups on alternate sides of the performing space and scenes are “back and forth”, with groups rotating off one side to allow the next group to use that space.

All groups take the performance space at the end of the final scene for a bow.

Assessment: Teacher observation, Readers’ Theater Checklist

Modifications:

- Use the script in as guided reading text but not to be performed.
- Students work in small groups to write their own scripts based on historical events, scientific theories, mathematical processes, retelling scenes or stories from literature.