Scene 1—Finally Becoming a State—1912

4 Readers

Time: Cold January afternoon, 1912

Place: Plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico

At Rise: A group of people, waiting for word of an event.

READER 1: (to the others) Greetings! Hello from the state of New Mexico!

READER 2: Don’t you mean the territory of New Mexico?

READER 3: Not this time!

READER 4: Haven’t you heard? We are now a state of the United States.

READER 1: The 47th to be exact.

READER 2: (skeptical) Oh, I’ve heard this story before….

READER 4: Well, I’m happy to report the story has changed!

READER 2: What do you mean?

READER 3: You know how for a very long time…

READER 1: (interrupting) 62 years….

READER 3: New Mexico has been a territory of the United States?

READER 2: Yeah….

READER 4: A territory that didn’t get much respect from Washington, DC.

READER 1: Because we have a very different culture than other states.

READER 3: And we are looked at as “the Wild West”.

READER 4: And many of us speak a different language than the rest of the United States.
READER 1: And even some of us New Mexicans didn’t want to be part of the United States.

READER 2: Yeah, so?

READER 3: Well, that has changed!

READER 2: Wait—I’ve heard that before. My grandpa tells me that even back in 1850, New Mexico was supposed to be a state—we had a constitution and everything.

READER 1: Sure, but…

READER 2: And the people of the United States were kinda worried about us being a state.

READER 3: Yeah, but….

READER 2: And even the people living here weren’t sure what it would all mean with taxes and laws and stuff if we became a state.

READER 4: Things are different now. People around the United States see that we have things to offer them…

READER 3: (interrupting) And they have things to offer us, so….

READER 1: (clears throat) As of 11:35 this morning—New Mexico time, United States President William H. Taft signed a proclamation making the territory of New Mexico the state of New Mexico.

READER 2: Really?

READER 4: Yep! And we beat Arizona!

READER 3: Yeah, they aren’t supposed to become a state for a long time…..

READER 1: At least a month!

READER 2: Really? That’s great!

READER 4: (to Reader 2) Well, what do you think?

READER 2: I think we ought to wish Happy Birthday to the state of New Mexico! It’s the polite thing to do.

READERS--ALL: Happy Birthday New Mexico!
Scene 2—Infancy to Adolescence

4 Readers

Time:  Mid to late 1940’s

Place:  Teenaged “hang out” of the era, i.e. malt shop

At Rise:  Four “teenagers” seated in a semi-circle, discussing the issue of “Progress”.

READER 1: Can you believe it?

READER 2: Believe what?

READER 1: The things we are asked to do.

READER 3: What do you mean?

READER 4: Yeah, like what things?

READER 1: Well, ever since New Mexico became a state, we’ve had to take on some of the work of the rest of the United States

READER 2: That’s what it means to be a state.

READER 3: We all have to contribute…

READER 4: And give to the country to make it all a better place.

READER 1: I agree, but we’ve had some pretty big things we’ve had to do.

READER 2: I know what you mean. We were only 5 years old when we were called to help in World War 1.

READER 3: That’s kinda young to be in a war.

READER 4: Yeah, but we helped win the war.

READER 3: But it’s still a war.

READER 2: (changing the subject) Hey, did you know that because of our climate, a lot of people moved to New Mexico because of their health? That’s big!

READER 1: That’s right! A lot of our hospitals started because people with tuberculosis came here to live—and their lives were saved!

READER 3: That’s better news than war.
READER 4: And some of the people who moved here were great artists.

READER 1: Really? Like who?

READER 4: Mable Dodge Luhan, Georgia O’Keeffe, …. 

READER 3: (interrupting) She didn’t move here until 1940.

READER 4: Well, there were other ones…. 

READER 2: What about some of the important things that happened because of where we are…

READER 3: Like?

READER 2: Well, like the Gila Wilderness in southern New Mexico. It was the first national wilderness area—in the whole nation—right here in New Mexico!

READER 4: And don’t forget we are part of the Four Corners!

READER 2:Yep! The only place in the US where four states come together in four right angles!

READER 3: Oh yeah! And what about Route 66?

READER 1: Did you know that it goes from Chicago to Los Angeles—right through Albuquerque?

READER 2: And at one time, it even went up La Bajada Hill and into Santa Fe.

READER 1: But that part was too hard to drive so they changed the route and made it go from Tucumcari to Santa Rosa to Albuquerque to Grants and Gallup.

READER 3: Zounds! Talk about a lot of open space!

READER 2: Yeah, and speaking of open space, that’s one of the reasons New Mexico was chosen to be the place where the atomic bomb was created…

READER 1: And set off for the first time—but let’s not talk about that—war again…

READER 4: Yeah…. (all are silent)

READER 1: It’s hard growing up…..

READER 2: (agreeing) Sure is…..(all nod their heads)
Scene 3—Important Contribution

4 Readers

Time: A Saturday afternoon, pleasant summer day

Place: Grandpa’s garage

At Rise: Group of teenagers helping clean and straighten Grandpa’s garage.

READER 1: (deep breath) Boy, Grandpa sure has a lot of stuff!

READER 2: Yeah, well he and Grandma have lived here a long time. People collect and keep stuff when they are in one place for a long time.

READER 3: It’ll be nice when we can get these boxes on the shelves. Grandma wants to park the new car in here so it lasts.

READER 4: Why does it need to “last”?

READER 3: She said I could have it when I graduate!

READER 4: Great! Then you can drive me everywhere!

READER 2: (looking through a box) Hey, check this out!

READER 1: (looks) What? What is it?

READER 2: Newspaper clippings from a long time ago.

READER 3: (looking at some of the stuff) Not all these clippings are old.

READER 1: Some of these are from pretty recent stuff.

READER 4: (looks through the stuff) It’s all about Navajo Code Talkers. What’s Navajo Code?


READER 1: Yeah, men from the Navajo Nation who developed a code.

READER 4: A code for what? Was it secret?

READER 2: VERY! They used their language to create a code so they could send messages that the enemy couldn’t break.

READER 4: What enemy?

READER 3: During World War II, when the US was fighting the Japanese, the Marines needed to send secret messages.
READER 1: And the Marines decided to use the Code Talkers because Navajo was an unwritten language and has different sounds and stuff.

READER 2: And the Japanese were never able to break the code.

READER 4: (reading an article) Hey, this one says that in May of 1942, 29 Navajos went to Camp Pendleton in California and they created the code.

READER 3: (holding some papers) And they also created a dictionary.

READER 2: Oh no, not another dictionary.

READER 3: No, this one helped the soldiers translate the codes that were sent.

READER 1: (looking over #3’s shoulder) This says the first letter of the English word was given a Navajo word.

READER 3: So if the letter in English was “a”, the word in Navajo was wol—la—chee because it means “ant”. Ant for “a”.

READER 4: (also reading over # 3’s shoulder) Yeah, but this one also says that most English letters had more than one Navajo word.

READER 2: Sounds complicated!

READER 1: No wonder the code was never broken!

READER 3: But why do you think Grandpa has all these articles?

READER 2: Well, some of the Navajo Code Talkers were from New Mexico. Maybe he knew some of them.

READER 3: But why the more recent articles?

READER 1: Well, this one says the Code Talkers are getting older. Maybe they aren’t going to be around much longer.

READER 4: That’s sad. Maybe we ought to do something to remember them.

READER 2: That’s a great idea!

READER 1: Yeah, let’s start with the stuff in this box. I want to find out all I can! I’m gonna read this stuff.

READER 3: After you help us with the garage!

READER 1: (sighs, rolls eyes) Oh, okay!
Scene 4—Hotfoot Teddy!

4 Readers

Time: Fall morning

Place: The Rio Grande Zoo, the bear enclosure

At Rise: Students on a field trip

READER 1: I’ve always liked the zoo. It’s so cool to see the animals up close instead of just pictures in books.

READER 2: Yeah, and sometimes when the animals are dangerous…

READER 3: (interrupting, scared) There are dangerous animals here?!?

READER 2: (calming) They are in cages and stuff so they aren’t dangerous to us.

READER 3: Phew!

READER 4: (reading a sign) This says “The black bear was designated the official state animal of New Mexico in 1963”.

READER 1: They’re so cute.

READER 2: Cute until one takes your arm off because it’s hungry! CHOMP!

READER 4: No, that won’t happen! This says they like “nuts, berries, grasses, and roots”.

READER 3: Yeah, but they’re still cute. Especially when they are over there and we are over here….

READER 1: Hey! Weren’t we supposed to find out about famous animals from New Mexico? I mean, not just the state animal, but something about any who are famous?

READER 2: But why would an animal be famous. I could see a musician, or an actress or something…

READER 3: Yeah, but an animal? (thinking) Maybe an animal ate a famous musician or actress….

READER 4: No…that didn’t happen.

READER 2: Well, what then? What New Mexico animal did anything famous?
READER 4: Have you ever heard of Smokey Bear?

READER 3: You mean Smokey THE Bear?

READER 1: Smokey Bear! Yeah! Someone added “the” because it sounded better.

READER 3: Oh….

READER 2: Why is Smokey th—Smokey Bear famous?

READER 4: Well, the sign says that back in the 1940s the Forest Service had a bear on its posters to tell people to watch out for forest fires.

READER 1: And they wanted people to be careful and not start fires in the first place.

READER 3: Well, duh!?!?

READER 1: In 1942, the movie Bambi came out and Bambi was used to help tell people about fires.

READER 4: But the makers of the movie only let Bambi be used for a year.

READER 2: So after a year, they needed someone new?

READER 1: Yep!

READER 3: And that’s when they just used a drawing of a bear.

READER 1: Then, back in 1950, there was a fire here in New Mexico.

READER 4: It was south of Albuquerque, in the Lincoln National Forest.

READER 2: (reading a sign) It says that fire fighters found a small black bear cub stuck in a tree. He was trying to get away from the fire.

READER 3: (also reading) His paws and (giggle) “behind” had been singed in the fire.

READER 2: They called him Hotfoot Teddy.

READER 1: Then someone thought he would be a good symbol for forest fire—well, to prevent them.

READER 4: He was taken to a zoo in Washington DC and became Smokey Bear!

READER 2: This says he died there in 1976—of old age.

READER 3: And they buried him in Lincoln Forest.

READER 1: (sigh) Smokey Bear is home. That’s a good reason to be famous.
Scene 5—Hollywood on the Rio Grande

4 Readers

Time: Spring, early 21st century (about 2009)

Place: Ms. Holli Wood’s classroom (grade level can vary)

At Rise: Students in Ms. Wood’s class, working on a “talent” assignment

READER 1: Okay, so our assignment is to discover our talent—what does that mean?

READER 2: Well, what are you good at?

READER 3: I can eat three hot dogs in a minute!

READER 4: That's not a talent.

READER 3: Let’s see you do it!

READER 4: (sighs) Oh brother…No, our talent needs to be like an artsy thing we can do.

READER 2: Yeah, like singing or acting or dancing. Something that can make you famous.

READER 1: Oh, like something that could get us on American Idol or…what 's that dancing show—So You Think You Can Dance?

READER 3: Kind of…but I have to ask…who is gonna choose someone from New Mexico? I mean, we aren’t known for music or dancing or acting.

READER 4: Oh, little do you know! Sure we’re known for stuff like that.

READER 2: Yeah, we have all those movies and TV shows being filmed here…

READER 1: (interrupting) We got stuck downtown in traffic the other day because they were filming some TV show.

READER 4: That’s all the stuff that's happening now. But did you know “Hollywood” came to New Mexico a loooonnnnggg time ago?

READER 1: (not believing) Like what?

READER 2: Well, do you know Buddy Holly?

READER1: Buddy who?

READER 2: Buddy Holly. He was a rock and roll singer in the 50’s.

READER 3: Is he on Guitar Hero?
READER 4: No…silly….Well, I don’t know…..He did the kind of music that we had at the school dance last month.

READER 3: Oh, the “retro” dance. That was so cool…..

READER 1: So what song was his?

READER 2: He did “Peggy Sue”. Did you know he recorded it at a studio in Clovis? It’s still there and it’s called the Norman Petty Studio.

READER 3: (singing) Pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty Peggy Sue---cool!

READER 1: Okay, so there’s one singer. What else happened? That was a long time ago.

READER 2: Well, didn’t you go to Elephant Butte last weekend?

READER 1: With my uncle. But it rained and we had to go to T or C and stay at a hotel. What does that have to do with being famous?

READER 3: Oooo! I know! There used to be a town in New Mexico called Hot Springs.

READER 4: And something famous happened to it.

READER 1: What?

READER 4: In the 1950s there was this radio show—it was a game show. It was called *Truth or Consequences*….

READER 2: (interrupting) Like the town?

READER 3: (smiling) Kinda. During the show, the host said he would do one of the shows from a little town in America if that town was willing to change its name to Truth or Consequences.

READER 4: So people in Hot Springs, New Mexico got together and decided to change the name of the town to Truth or Consequences. We call it T or C for short.

READER 3: And sure enough, the radio show people showed up and broadcast the first coast-to-coast show from there.

READER 4: They still celebrate the name change and the radio broadcast during the first week in May.

READER 1: That’s all real cool, but I still don’t know what my talent is…

READER 2: Maybe asking questions? (smiles)

READER 1: Funny….Hey, maybe that’s it! Maybe I could tell jokes…..

READER 2: And I’ll be your “straight man”……
Scene 6—New Mexico; a Land with Lots of “Space”

4 Readers

Time: A Wednesday evening, 6:00; the year is 2025

Place: The news set of a local TV station

At Rise: Two news anchor persons seated at the broadcast desk, two reporters at a different location.

READER 1: Thank you for that report on the effects of school lunches on fourth graders.

READER 2: Our next story is also kind of “out of this world”.

READER 1: It has to do with the International Space Agency’s study of how New Mexico has become the world’s leader in the exploration of the outer reaches of our solar system.

READER 2: We now turn to our Roswell station.

READER 3: Thank you, Albuquerque! Well, the members of the ISA have come here because of the work of Robert Goddard.

READER 4: That’s right! The ISA toured the museum where they could see models of rockets. Robert Goddard was able to successfully launch these liquid-fueled projectiles into the New Mexico skies.

READER 3: And they were amused to learn that these launches led to the US space program. “Who thought that that technology would come from the middle of the desert,” was one of the ISA leader’s comments.

READER 1: (interrupting) Excuse me, Roswell. Albuquerque here. I have a question. What did the members of the ISA think of the “Roswell Incident”?

READER 2: Did they believe it happened?

READER 4: Well, actually, one of the ISA folks had begun his career at Area 51, where the debris from the “crash” was supposedly taken, but said he still couldn’t comment on the incident.

READER 3: Yes, apparently there is still a temporary halt on that information until 2047—one hundred years after the “crash”.

READER 2: Roswell, can you tell us what else the ISA members explored?
READER 4: Sure, Albuquerque! The members were also anxious to learn about the work done at the Lovelace Clinic there in Albuquerque.

READER 3: They wanted to know what medical tests were done on the first NASA astronauts and how those tests help choose the Mercury Seven—those seven lucky men who worked to put a man in orbit around the Earth.

READER 4: Aaahh, those were the “good old days”.

READER 2: Roswell, did they have a chance to learn about individuals who were pioneers in the early manned missions to the moon?

READER 4: They sure did! Ed Mitchell from Artesia—the sixth man to ever walk on the moon…

READER 3: And Harrison Schmitt, from Silver City, who was one of the last two men to walk on the moon before we resumed our lunar exploration ten years ago, in 2015.

READER 1: Roswell, Albuquerque again. Has there been any discussion from the ISA members about the expansion of Spaceport America, International?

READER 4: Why, yes there has been. Ever since tourists could pay for and experience space travel, the ISA has been on the forefront of supporting and expanding the idea.

READER 3: And now they are looking to continue their expansion efforts to include all seven continents…

READER 1: (interrupting) Including Antarctica? But with all that ice, won’t that pose quite a challenge?

READER 3: Well, that is one of the reasons they are here in New Mexico. They want to find people who are ready to solve that problem and others.

READER 4: And encourage students in the schools around New Mexico to keep studying science and asking questions about their world and how it works.

READER 2: Well, Roswell, on that note, it seems the ISA’s visit is productive

READER 1: And that the people of New Mexico have much to look forward to in the future!

READER 2: Thank you Roswell for your report.

READER 1: And when we come back from our commercial break, we’ll have the latest highlights on the local Spaceball tournament.

Written by Erin K Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher