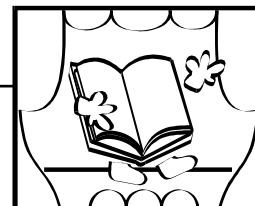


Readers' Theater



Hattie Big Sky

by Kirby Larson

(Arranged for Readers' Theater by CYRM Committee Members, for classroom use only.)

Characters: Narrator 1 Narrator 2 Narrator 3 Narrator 4 Narrator 5
 Hattie Perilee Chase

Narrator 1: It was hustle and bustle getting everyone washed and dressed and breakfasted. Finally, gear, children, and cat were loaded into the wagon. With a small thrill, sixteen-year-old Hattie crunched through the snow and swung herself up next to Perilee, her new neighbor. Hattie was on her way to her new home.

Narrator 2: Karl clucked at the horses, and they started off. Hattie was grateful for the ride out to Uncle Chester's homestead. But what with Hattie and her cat, Perilee, the three little ones, Karl, and Hattie's moving in items, there was hardly room to breathe in that wagon. Not that you could do much breathing in the stinging January air. Everyone snuggled deep under blankets. Karl's face was a chapped red mask as he drove, steady on, through the flat, treeless countryside of Montana.

Chase: Mama, look over there!

Narrator 3: The wagon road had twisted down into a shallow coulee. They were tucked between two banks of a long-ago river. On the near side of the left bank, a wolf posed against the bitter blue sky.

Hattie: Are - are wolves a problem here?

Chase: I'm not afraid of wolves. I'd shoot one if it came too close.

Hattie: Have you ever had to? Shoot one?

Narrator 4: Nowhere in the vast array of purchases Hattie bought from Mr. Hanson, the owner of the general store, was a gun. Maybe her Uncle Chester had one lying around. Not that she'd know how to use it.

Perilee: They won't bother you. They get hungry, like that one there, and they go after calves or sheep. Not sweet young Iowa schoolgirls.

Narrator 5: Hattie wrapped her shawl more snugly around her face, as if that piece of wool could protect her from wolves and whatever other dangers lay ahead. All that peeked out were her eyes, watering from the cold. She'd figured out the trick of breathing in through the woolen scarf to warm the sharp air before it stabbed her lungs. Her feet felt like clumps of ice; two pairs of woolen socks provided a meager shield against this Montana cold. She turned toward Perilee to find her studying her.

Perilee: Your Uncle Chester's eyes were that same hazel color. Course, he didn't have no hair, but I suspect it was chestnut, like yours, when he was younger.

Hattie: What was he like?

Perilee: Quiet. But if he ever said something, folks would listen. And Lord, did he read – that man was a regular library. But there was a sadness in him. Never knew what the trouble was, but no matter how big his smile or loud his laugh, you could hear the hurt underneath.

Hattie: Was he alone? When he died, I mean?

Perilee: A man like Chester? No, he was not alone. Me and Karl were there. Leafie Purvis and Rooster Jim, too. He talked about you, Lord almighty, right up till the very end. He'd be so pleased to know you had come.

Chase: There it is! Mr. Wright's home!

Narrator 1: Hattie looked in disbelief. The structure wasn't much bigger than Uncle Holt's tool shed back in Iowa, and was put together with about as much care. Gaps in the siding revealed black tar paper, like decay between haphazard teeth. Two wood-block steps led up to a rough-hewn door. A small window, the only window, stared dully at Hattie. Karl slowed the wagon.

Perilee: Home sweet home! We'll help you get your things inside, sugar. But we can't stay. It's getting dark. We need to get on home.

Hattie: Home sweet home. My home!

Perilee: Oh, dear. No one plugged the keyhole.

Narrator 2: Even in the gloom, Hattie could see an icy slash of snowy white that the wind had forced through the keyhole and across the cabin floor. It was as if Nature herself had drawn a line to keep Hattie out. Hattie fought back the urge to throw herself on Perilee's mercy and beg to go home with them.

Chase: You can sweep the snow up, boil it, and make coffee.

Perilee: Out of the mouths of babes.

Hattie: I sure can. Thank goodness I packed a broom.

Perilee: That's the spirit. I know it don't look like much. Claim shacks never do. After you get proved up, you can work on a proper house. Trust me, this is a castle compared to a sod house. Soddies are warm in the winter and cool in the summer, but oh, the bugs! And dirt! Dirt everywhere!

Narrator 3: After Hattie's supplies were unloaded, Karl, Perilee and their children said goodbye. Mr. Whiskers, Hattie's cat, complained about his new surroundings.

Perilee: I'd leave him inside for a few days.

Hattie: He's a pretty tough old puss. He can handle the cold.

Perilee: No, dear. Because of the mice.

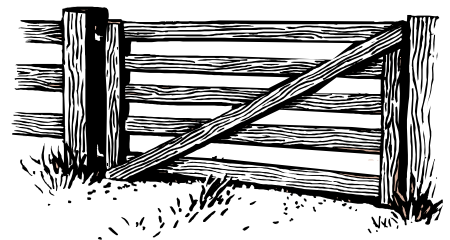
Hattie: In the house?

Perilee: Your Uncle Chester was none too neat. And the house has been vacant for awhile, and –

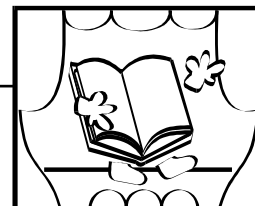
Hattie: No more ands!

Perilee: Sugar, you are a stitch!

Narrator 4: With a jingle of the harness, they were off. Hattie watched until they were a speck on the horizon.



Readers' Theater



Heat

by Mike Lupica

(Arranged for Readers' Theater by CYRM Committee Members, for classroom use only.)

Characters: Narrator 1 Narrator 2 Narrator 3 Narrator 4
 Narrator 5 Michael Manny Ellie

Narrator 1: Up close, she was the most beautiful girl Michael had ever seen. This, he knew, was an observation coming from a boy who had no real interest in girls, other than his usual observation about them, which was how different they were from guys.

Michael: How old are you?

Narrator 2: Ellie jumped as if Michael had yelled directly into her ear.

Manny: Someday, my friend's dream is to host his own interview show on television. I would say like Total Request Live, except he doesn't watch MTV. No baseball highlights.

Michael: Very Funny.

Ellie: I turned twelve last month.

Narrator 3: Her accent, Michael noticed, was slightly heavier than his own. But pretty somehow. The way she was.

Michael: Where are you from?

Manny: The interview continues.

Ellie: The Bronx.

Narrator 4: At the same moment both Michael and Manny said ...

Manny
& Michael: Which part?

Narrator 5: All three of them laughed. Ellie pointed to her left, at the cars going north on the Deegan.

Ellie: Up there. But how come you two get to ask all the questions?

Manny: We don't. Your turn. And don't worry, I'm like Radio Shack, if you've got questions, I've got answers.

Ellie: I have no idea what you're talking about.

Michael: Join the club.

Ellie: Okay. Keep it simple. Who are you guys?

Narrator 1: Manny then tried to tell her both his and Michael's life stories in the space of about five minutes. What his father did, where he lived, where they went to school. How Michael and Carlos and Papi had come over on the boat.

Narrator 2: Everything except what had happened to Papi. When he finally stopped, just to take a breath, Ellie said to Michael...

Ellie: You're Cuban? Really?

Michael: Cuban American now. That's what I'm taught to say. Where are you from?

Ellie: Oh, I'm from the Caribbean, too.

Manny: Ellie Garcia. From somewhere in the Bronx, somewhere in the Caribbean before that. The girl who shows up out of nowhere to throw like a boy.

Ellie: And you, Mr. Manny Cabrera, talk more than any of my girlfriends.

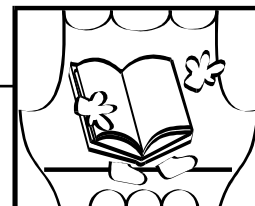
Narrator 4: Michael laughed too loudly at that one. Manny gave him his shut-up look. Michael asked Ellie if she could hang around for a while.

Ellie: Does that mean you're asking me to play baseball?

Narrator 5: She reached into his glove, took the baseball out, smiled at him one last time, again looking to Michael like there was some joke she wouldn't let him in on.

Ellie: I'll pitch.

Readers' Theater



Rules

by Cynthia Lord

(Arranged for Readers' Theater by CYRM Committee Members, for classroom use only.)

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|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Characters: | Narrator 1 | Narrator 2 | Narrator 3 | Narrator 4 |
| | Narrator 5 | Narrator 6 | Catherine | David |

Narrator 1: A new family is moving in next door, and Catherine has always wanted a friend in the neighborhood, and a next-door friend would be best of all. The movers are there and Catherine asked when the family would be arriving. Eight-year-old David interrupts and yells.

David: If someone says 'hi' you say 'hi' back! That's the rule!

Narrator 2: Catherine's hands squeeze to fists. Sometimes she wishes someone would invent a pill so her brother, David, would wake up one morning without autism, like someone waking up from a long coma, and he'd say, "Jeez, Catherine, where have I been?"

Narrator 3: And he'd be a regular brother like Catherine's friend, Melissa, has – a brother who'd give back as much as he took, who she could joke with, even fight with.

Catherine: Here's another rule. If you want to get away from someone, you can check your watch and say, "Sorry, gotta go." It doesn't always work, but sometimes it does.

David: Sorry, gotta go?

Catherine: That's right. I'll add it to your rules.

Narrator 4: The men carry a mattress, still in plastic, up the walkway next door. Catherine and David get into the car.

David: Wear your seat belt in the car. That's the rule.

Catherine: That's right.

Narrator 5: Catherine clicks the seat belt and opens her sketchbook to the back pages. That's where she keeps all the rules she is teaching David so if her someday-he'll-wake-up-a-regular-brother wish doesn't ever come true, at least he'll know how the world works, and she won't have to keep explaining things. Some of the rules in her collection are easy and always, such as:

Narrator 6: *Say "excuse me" after you burp.*

Narrator 1: *Don't stand in front of the TV when other people are watching it.*

Narrator 2: *Flush!*

Narrator 3: But some rules are more complicated, sometimes rules, such as:

Narrator 4: *You can yell on a playground, but not during dinner.*

Narrator 5: *A boy can take off his shirt to swim, but not his shorts.*

Narrator 6: *It's fine to hug Mom, but not the clerk at the video store.*

Narrator 1: And then there are rules that are more hints than anything, but matter just as much, such as:

Narrator 2: *Sometimes people don't answer because they didn't hear you. Other times it's because they don't want to hear you.*

Narrator 3: Most kids don't even consider these rules. Sometime when they were little, their mom and dad must've explained it all, but Catherine doesn't remember her parents doing it. It seems she'd always known these things.

Narrator 4: Not David, though. He needs to be taught everything. Everything from the fact that a peach is not a funny-looking apple to how having long hair doesn't make someone a girl.

Narrator 5: Catherine adds the new rule to her list:

Narrator 6: *If you want to get away from someone, check your watch and say, "Sorry, gotta go!"*

David: It's Mom! Let's go to the video store!

Narrator 1: Mom is on the porch, locking the front door. Catherine will get in trouble if Mom finds out she let David think they were going to the video store. Mom always tells Catherine that she is depending on her, and tells Catherine that David won't learn to be independent if everyone lets him behave and speak the wrong way.

Catherine: You're going to occupational therapy, at the clinic.

David: Let's go to the video store!

Narrator 2: The video store is David's favorite place, better than the circus, the fair, or even the beach. David may not have the sorry-gotta-go rule down, but he's got this rule perfect:

Narrator 3: *If you say something over and over and over, maybe they'll give in to shut you up.*

Catherine: You're going to occupational therapy. Maybe...

Narrator 4: Maybe is all it takes. David twists towards Catherine as far as his seat belt allows, his eyes flashing. Catherine covers David's mouth with her hand so the movers don't hear him scream as the car drives off.

