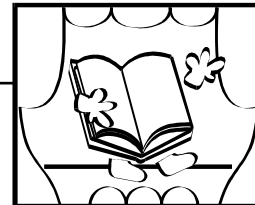


Readers' Theater

Alabama Moon

by Watt Key



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

Characters: Moon Pap Narrator 1 Narrator 2
 Narrator 3 Narrator 4 Narrator 5

Narrator 1: On the morning Pap broke his leg, the north wind was tossing the tops of the trees and gray clouds raced over our heads. Pap was always alert when the wind stirred the forest floor and cart-wheeled the leaves.

Narrator 2: We were checking traps along a beaver dam only a mile from the lodge. I think Pap was too busy looking around for signs of people to pay attention to where he was going. He slipped on the dam and his shin caught between two branches.

Narrator 3: I jumped down after him and jerked at the branches until his leg came loose. I went and found some sticks to use for a splint, and we bound his leg with the leather shoelaces from my moccasins.

Narrator 4: That afternoon, I got Pap back to the shelter in the wheelbarrow. I helped him up on the hide pile and stayed next to him to give him water, as he needed it. Pap didn't like doctors, and he didn't like medicine that you couldn't find in the forest, so there wasn't much else for me to do.

Narrator 5: In the dim light of the grease lamp, I saw parts of Pap's bone coming through his shin. Seeing bone and blood and wounds was nothing to me. I dealt with them almost every day killing, skinning, and butchering animals. I only hesitated so that Pap would tell me what to do.

Pap: Get a rag and wipe it off. Boil some water and put the rag in the water before you do.

Narrator 1: I went to the wood stove and did as he said. When I returned and began to gently wipe his leg, I watched his face. I saw his expression change when the rag went over the jagged portion of bone.

Moon: Does it hurt?

Pap: Just keep wipin'.

Moon: You want me to go get Mr. Abroscotto?

Pap: Nothin' he can do you can't do yourself, boy.

Narrator 2: I nodded and kept wiping. I stayed up with him that night after the wound was cleaned. After a while, Pap didn't seem to be concerned that we stay quiet anymore.

Pap: Tell me again why we live out here.

Moon: Because we never asked for anything and nobody ever gave us anything. Because of that, we don't owe anything to anybody.

Pap: Who is it that thinks we owe them something?

Moon: The government.

Pap: That's right. And what's gonna happen to everybody that relies on the government?

Moon: When the war comes, they're not gonna be able to take care of themselves.

Pap: They'll have forgotten how to grow food and trap game, how to make their own clothes and shelter.

Moon: How to find their own medicine in the forest.

Pap: That's right.

Moon: How to shoot rifles.

Pap: That's right. All of those things.

Moon: And I know how to do it all.

Narrator 3: He nodded. I stood, walked over to the stove, and put some more wood into it. Even when Pap let us burn it all night, the heat was rarely enough to keep our breath from streaming in front of our faces.

Pap: I'm not gonna get better.

Moon: You're gonna die? Tonight?

Pap: No, but soon. Somethin' like this leg won't heal. Think about it. Think about a deer that breaks its leg. What happens?

Moon: But you're not a deer!

Pap: There's no difference. We're all animals.

Narrator 4: I felt like I would get sick on the floor.

Moon: What will I do?

Pap: That's what I'm gonna tell you.

Narrator 5: Pap said that it might not be long before Mr. Wellington ran me off the property. I would have to find someone else to live with. Pap said there were many other people like us all over the country. He said there were more now than ever. Most of them were out west, in Montana, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming.

Narrator 1: Alaska was even better. A man could still homestead in Alaska. He could get to places where no one would find him. People could still make a living off trapping up there. Hides were worth something in Alaska. I'd have to find my way there.

Moon: But how?

Pap: You'll figure it out. You can't rely on me anymore. Just remember the things I taught you. Take cover durin' the day and move at night. Use the stars. Don't trust anybody. Write me smoke letters if you get lonely.

Moon: Do you talk to Momma with smoke letters?

Pap: Sometimes I do.

Moon: Does she say anything back?

Pap: She does, but not in the way you'd think.

Moon: How will I get answers from the smoke?

Pap: You just do what I tell you.

Narrator 2: For the first couple of days I tried to keep our regular routine each morning while Pap was sick. I rose before daylight and checked our traps. I brought back what I caught, skinned it, butchered it, and prepped the hide. I hauled water from the creek and cut needles for tea. In the late afternoon, I did my reading lessons.

Narrator 3: But it was hard to keep my mind on these things with Pap lying in the shelter getting worse. Suddenly it seemed like there wasn't a reason for doing anything. Mr. Abroscoffo hadn't bought our hides in years. We had plenty of water stored up already, and if Pap was going to die soon, why did we need more? And how would I find a place like Alaska on my own?

Narrator 4: I couldn't clean Pap's wound without him twisting about in pain. Finally, he told me to stop worrying over it and leave it alone.

Pap: It won't do it any good. It's too far gone to trouble over.

Moon: It's not too much trouble, Pap. I don't mind.

Pap: Leave it be. Put that rag away.

Moon: What if we cut it off?

Pap: Too late. Infection's up my whole leg.

Moon: I can't live by myself, Pap!

Pap: Shut up, boy. You don't cry, you hear me?

Narrator 5: I wiped my eyes and nodded at the floor. I put my arms around his neck.

Moon: I can't do it, Pap. I can't make it to Alaska. I can't fight the government. I like it here. I don't see why I can't get Mr. Abroscotto to come help you.

Pap: He'll just get the law down on you.

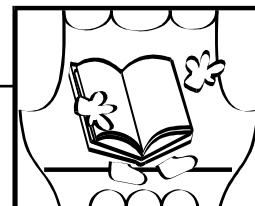
Moon: I can run from the law. I can get away.

Pap: You'll be alright. I don't wanna hear any more about it.

Narrator 1: After watching Pap die, I found that his finally being gone had made things easier on me. I still felt a deep, lonely hole, but as much as I missed him, I could now concentrate on what he'd told me to do and get started in Alaska.



Readers' Theater



Blood on the River: James Town 1607

by Elisa Carbone

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

Characters:	Captain Smith	Samuel	Magistrate	Reverend Hunt
	Captain Newport	Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3
	Narrator 4	Narrator 5		

Samuel: London, England, October 1606.

Narrator 1: Some would say I'm lucky. Others would say I'm doomed. I escaped the gallows – that is why I am lucky. The magistrate mumbled something about having a son my age, pulled me out of my dark jail cell after just two days, and marched me down to the orphanage.

Magistrate: His name's Samuel Collier, age eleven, son of dead peasants. Can you take him?

Narrator 2: Reverend Hunt nodded to the magistrate and showed me to my bed in a row of neatly made beds. Reverend Hunt is a tall, quiet man with broad shoulders and more patience than anyone I have ever known. He tells me I have a lot to learn about right and wrong.

Reverend Hunt: It was wrong to steal the locket. It was no longer yours – it belonged to the pawnshop owner.

Narrator 3: He says I need to make decisions based on love, not on anger.

Samuel: I loved my mum and wanted her locket back, so I *was* acting out of love.

Reverend: The locket would not have brought your mother back.

Narrator 4: I know he is right, and I know the real reason I stole it is that I was angry at the bosses at the poorhouse, angry at our landlord, angry at the world. But how can I make decisions based on love when there is no one left to love?

- Narrator 5: The orphanage was not a bad place – better than sleeping on the streets. Maybe if I'd been less of a danger to the other boys they'd have let me stay. But the boys started calling me "thief" and "jail rat" and I knew only one way to settle the argument: with my fists. Collin's nose spurting bright red blood was quite an accomplishment. But I think Richard's tooth only fell out because it was already loose when I punched him.
- Narrator 1: As for being doomed, if I am doomed then so is Richard. We are the two boys Reverend Hunt decided to bring with him on his journey to the New World. Richard is to be the reverend's servant, and I am to serve a man called Captain John Smith.
- Narrator 2: It is early on a December morning as we walk from the orphanage to the docks. My new shoes clomp on the cobblestones. The shoes are too big – passed on from an older boy who died at the orphanage last month – but Reverend Hunt says I can't go barefoot in the New World.
- Narrator 3: The New World. The boys – Collin and the others – think we will die there. They even begged Reverend Hunt not to go. The reverend explained to them the real importance of the mission – to bring the good news of Christ to the native people who live in Virginia.
- Narrator 4: He says we'll also look for survivors from the Roanoke colony, the settlers who went to Virginia with Sir Walter Raleigh over twenty years ago. That is why Reverend Hunt wants to go. But I want to go for the gold. They say it washes up on shore with every tide.
- Narrator 5: I scan the throng of men milling around the docks. I wonder where he is, this Captain John Smith. Reverend Hunt says he is a soldier, an officer – not a ship's captain but a captain in the English military. And he is a commoner, a yeoman, so I don't look for him among the gentlemen.
- Narrator 1: I am to be Captain Smith's page, which means I'm supposed to serve him *and* learn from him. I don't argue with Reverend Hunt, but inside I scoff at the idea. Me, an apprentice to an officer? I've never been teachable in my life. Except my mum teaching me how to read – that I sat still for. But my father tried to teach me smithing, and when I ruined a piece of iron, out came his fist. I won't have some man I hardly know trying to beat sense into me.
- Narrator 2: A man comes marching up, his face flushed red with anger. A sword hangs by his side, and his cape flies as he walks.

Captain Smith: They're sending nothing but gentlemen! By God, who will build the houses? Who will grow the crops? Do they think they can *eat* the gold and silver they are hoping to find? I know these gentlemen. They'll expect to have everything done for them, expect it to be easy. They won't lift a finger to work.

Narrator 3: Reverend Hunt speaks calmly, lays a hand on the man's shoulder.

Reverend: John, there are carpenters going, too, and laborers, and these boys, and—

Captain Smith: *More* gentlemen than commoners! The investors of the Virginia Company were raving *mad* when they chose these men for this journey. Is this the boy you promised me? Which one is the fighter?

Narrator 4: Reverend Hunt nods my way. The man, who I think must be Captain John Smith, narrows his eyes at me. I narrow my eyes back at him. *If you beat me, I'll spit in your ale*, I threaten silently.

Narrator 5: Captain Smith smiles slightly, almost as if he has heard my unspoken threat.

Captain Smith: We'll take that energy you've got for fighting and put it to some good use.

Narrator 1: He turns to Reverend Hunt.

Captain Smith: At least we'll have a good worker here.

Narrator 2: Is that what he plans for me? To make me into a workhorse? I cross my arms over my chest and scowl.

Narrator 3: Captain Smith looks about at the crowd.

Captain Smith: Where is Captain Newport? I want to speak to him about this gentleman problem.

Narrator 4: He marches off, leaving us behind. Reverend Hunt turns to me and Richard.

Reverend: There are men here whom you must show extra respect to, you understand?

Narrator 5: Richard and I both nod. I have never seen so many finely dressed gentlemen in one place.

Reverend: Over there is Captain Christopher Newport. He's captain of the *Susan Constant* and leader of the whole expedition. Do not forget who he is.

Narrator 1: I see Captain Smith talking to a tall, dark-haired man in a red doublet. The man's right sleeve is pinned up and empty. I remember the boys at the orphanage talking about Captain Newport, how he was in a battle at sea with the Spanish and got his arm shot off.

Narrator 2: I would think that the loss of an arm would diminish a man, but I see that it has not diminished Captain Newport one bit. He nods to Captain Smith, then looks over the scene around him with an air of confidence and authority, as if it were his kingdom. In fact, these three ships and all of the men on board *are* his kingdom until he drops us colonists safely in the New World.

Reverend: Now wait here. I'm going to find out which ship we'll be on.

Narrator 3: Richard and I stand there but we don't talk. Richard is younger than I am by a year, and a bit shorter and broader, with dark, serious eyes. We haven't said a word to each other since I knocked his teeth out. This suits me just fine; I don't need a friend. I haven't needed anyone since my mum died.

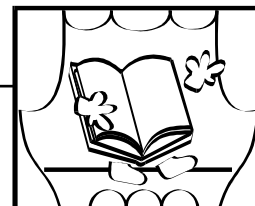
Narrator 4: Reverend Hunt returns and tells us we'll be passengers on the flagship, the *Susan Constant*. A breeze picks up. It will be a good day for sailing.

Captain Newport: Get your men on board.

Narrator 5: I feel a leap of excitement inside me. Doomed or not, the adventure is about to begin.



Readers' Theater



The Wednesday Wars

by Gary D. Schmidt

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

Characters:	Holling	Sister	Mrs. Baker	Mom	Dad
	Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3	Narrator 4	Narrator 5

Narrator 1: Of all the kids in the seventh grade at Camillo Junior High, there was one kid that Mrs. Baker hated with heat whiter than the sun. Me.

Narrator 2: And let me tell you, it wasn't for anything that I'd done. If it had been Doug Swieteck that Mrs. Baker hated, it would have made sense.

Narrator 3: Doug Swieteck once made up a list of 410 ways to get a teacher to hate you. It began with "Spray deodorant in all her desk drawers" and got worse as it went along. A whole lot worse. I think things became illegal around Number 167.

Narrator 4: You don't want to know what Number 400 was, and you really don't want to know what Number 410 was. But I'll tell you this much: They were the kinds of things that sent kids to juvenile detention homes in upstate New York, so far away that you never saw them again.

Narrator 5: But the thing was, I never did any of that stuff. Never. I even stayed as far away from Doug Swieteck as I could, so if he did decide to try Number 166 on anyone, I wouldn't get blamed for standing nearby.

Narrator 1: But it didn't matter. Mrs. Baker hated me.

Narrator 2: I knew it on Monday, the first day of seventh grade, when she called the class roll – which told you not only who was in the class but also where everyone lived. If your last name ended in "berg" or "zog" or "stein," you lived on the north side. If your last name ended in "elli" or "ini" or "o," you lived on the south side.

Narrator 3: Lee Avenue cut right between them, and if you walked out of Camillo Junior High and followed Lee Avenue across Main Street, you'd come to my house – which my father had figured out was right smack in the middle of town. Not on the north side. Not on the south side. Just somewhere in between.

Narrator 4: On Saturday morning, everyone north of us was at Temple Beth-El. Late on Saturday afternoon, everyone south of us was at mass at Saint Adelbert's. But on Sunday morning – early – my family was at Saint Andrew Presbyterian Church listening to Pastor McClellan, who was old enough to have known Moses.

Narrator 5: So being a Presbyterian was a disaster. Especially on Wednesday afternoons when, at 1:45 sharp, half of my class went to Hebrew School at Temple Beth-El, and, at 1:55, the other half to Catechism at Saint Adelbert's. This left behind the Presbyterians – of which there had been three, and now there was one. Me.

Narrator 1: I think Mrs. Baker suspected this when she came to my name on the class roll. Her voice got kind of crackly, like there was a secret code in the static underneath it.

Mrs. Baker: Holling Hoodhood.

Holling: Here.

Mrs. Baker: Hoodhood.

Holling: Yes?

Mrs. Baker: Hoodhood. Does your family attend Temple Beth-El?

Narrator 2: I shook my head.

Mrs. Baker: Saint Adelbert's, then?

Narrator 3: I shook my head again.

Mrs. Baker: So on Wednesday afternoon you attend neither Hebrew School nor Catechism.

Narrator 4: I nodded.

Mrs. Baker: You are here with me.

Holling: I guess.

Narrator 5: Mrs. Baker looked hard at me. I think she rolled her eyes.

Mrs. Baker: Since the mutilation of 'guess' into an intransitive verb is a crime against the language, perhaps you might wish a full sentence to avoid prosecution – something such as, 'I guess that Wednesday afternoons will be busy after all.'

Narrator 1: That's when I knew she hated me. This look came over her face like the sun had winked out and was not going to shine again until next June.

Narrator 2: I walked back home slowly that afternoon. Inside, I dropped my books at the stairs.

Holling: Mom!

Narrator 3: My mother was in the kitchen and that's when it came to me. I needed to have an ally in war against Mrs. Baker.

Mom: How was your first day?

Holling: Mom, Mrs. Baker hates my guts.

Mom: Mrs. Baker doesn't hate your guts.

Holling: Yes, she does.

Mom: Mrs. Baker hardly knows you.

Holling: Mom, it's not like you have to know someone well to hate their guts. You don't sit around and have a long conversation and then decide whether or not to hate their guts. You just do. And she does.

Mom: I'm sure Mrs. Baker is a fine person, and she certainly does not hate your guts.

Narrator 4: How do parents get to where they can say things like this? There must be some gene that switches on at the birth of the firstborn child, and suddenly stuff like that starts to come out of their mouths. It's like they haven't figured out that the language you're using is English and they should be able to understand what you're saying.

Narrator 5: Instead, you pull a string on them, and a bad record plays. I guess they can't help it.

Narrator 1: Right after supper, I went to the den to look for a new ally.

Holling: Dad, Mrs. Baker hates my guts.

Dad: People don't just hate your guts unless you do something to them. So what did you do?

Holling: Nothing.

Dad: This is Betty Baker, right? The Betty Baker who belongs to the Baker family?

Narrator 2: See what I mean about the gene thing? They miss the entire point of what you're saying.

Holling: I guess she belongs to the Baker family.

Dad: The Baker family that owns the Baker Sporting Emporium, which is about to choose an architect for its new building and which is considering Hoodhood and Associates among its top three choices?

Holling: I guess things aren't so bad.

Dad: Keep them that way.

Narrator 3: There was only my sister left. To ask your big sister to be your ally is like asking Nova Scotia to go into battle with you. But I knocked on her door anyway. Loudly, since the Monkees were playing.

Narrator 4: She pulled it open and stood there, her hands on her hips. Her lipstick was the color of a new fire engine.

Holling: Mrs. Baker hates my guts.

Sister: So do I.

Holling: I could use some help with this.

Sister: Ask Mom.

Holling: She says that Mrs. Baker doesn't hate my guts.

Sister: Ask Dad.

Narrator 5: Silence – if you call it silence when the Monkees are playing.

Sister: Oh, it might hurt a business deal, right? So he won't help the Son Who Is Going to Inherit Hoodhood and Associates.

Holling: What am I supposed to do?

Sister: If I were you, I'd head to California.

Holling: Try again.

Sister: Mrs. Baker hates your guts, right?

Narrator 1: I nodded.

Sister: Then, Holling, you might try getting some.

Narrator 2: And she closed her door.

