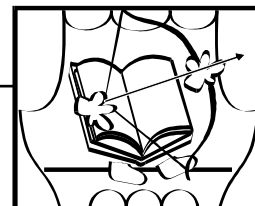


# Readers' Theater

---



## *The Hunger Games*

by Suzanne Collins

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

Characters:	Katniss Prim	Gale Mother	Narrator 1 Mayor	Narrator 2 Effie
-------------	-----------------	----------------	---------------------	---------------------

---

Katniss: *(to audience)* I avoid discussing tricky topics like the reaping, food shortages or The Hunger Games. In the woods waits the only person with whom I can be myself. His name is Gale. Gale says I never smile except in the woods.

Gale: Hey, Catnip.

Katniss: *(to audience)* My real name is Katniss, but when I first told him, I had barely whispered it. So he thought I'd said Catnip. Then when this crazy lynx started following me around the woods looking for handouts, it became his official nickname for me.

Gale: Look what I shot.

Narrator 1: It was a loaf of bread with an arrow stuck in it.

Katniss: mmm, still warm. What did it cost you?

Gale: Just a squirrel. Think the old man was feeling sentimental this morning. Even wished me luck.

Katniss: Well, we all feel a little closer today, don't we? Prim left us a cheese.

Gale: Thank you, Prim. We'll have a real feast. I almost forgot! Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor.

Narrator 2: Katniss watches as Gale pulls out his knife and slices the bread. He could be her brother. Straight black hair, olive skin, they even have the same gray eyes. But they're not related, at least not closely. Most of the families who work the mines resemble one another this way. That's why Katniss' mother and Prim, with their light hair and blue eyes, always look out of place.

Katniss: *(to audience)* They are. My mother's parents were part of the small merchant class that caters to officials, Peacekeepers, and the occasional Seam customer. They ran an apothecary shop in the nicer part of district 12. Since almost no one can afford doctors, apothecaries are our healers. My father got to know my mother because on his hunts he would sometimes collect medicinal herbs and sell them to her shop. She must have really loved him to leave her home for the Seam. I try to remember that when all I can see is the woman who sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned to skin and bones. I try to forgive her for my father's sake. But to be honest, I'm not the forgiving type.

Gale: *(as he spreads the cheese on the bread)* We could do it, you know.

Katniss: What?

Gale: Leave the district. Run off. Live in the woods. You and I, we could make it. If we didn't have so many kids, of course.

Katniss: *(to audience)* They're not our kids, of course. But they might as well be. Gale's two little brothers and a sister. Prim. And you may as well throw in our mothers, too, because how would they live without us? Who would fill those mouths that are always asking for more? With both of us hunting daily, there are still nights when game has to be swapped for lard or shoelaces or wool, still nights when we go to bed with our stomachs growling.

Katniss: I never want to have kids.

Gale: I might. If I didn't live here.

Katniss: But you do.

Gale: Forget it.

Katniss: *(happy to change the subject)* What do you want to do? We can hunt, fish, or gather.

Gale: Let's fish at the lake. We can leave our poles and gather in the woods. Get something nice for tonight.

Narrator 1: Tonight. After the reaping, everyone is supposed to celebrate. And a lot of people do, out of relief that their children have been spared for another year. But at least two families will pull their shutters, lock their doors, and try to figure out how they will survive the painful weeks to come.

*(Later that day)*

At home, Katniss finds her mother and sister are ready to go. Her mother wears a fine dress from her apothecary days. Prim is in Katniss' first reaping outfit, a skirt and a ruffled blouse. To Katniss' surprise, her mother has laid out one of her own lovely dresses for her.

Katniss: Are you sure?

Mother: Of course. Let's put your hair up, too.

Prim: You look beautiful.

Katniss: And nothing like myself.

Narrator 2: The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty-four tributes are imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins.

Narrator 1: Taking the kids from the districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch—this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the message is clear.

Narrator 2: "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen."

Narrator 1: To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires the people to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others. The last tribute alive receives a life of ease back home, and their district will be showered with prizes, largely consisting of food. All year, the Capitol will show the winning districts gifts of grain and gold and even delicacies like sugar while everyone else battles starvation.

Mayor: It is both a time for repentance and a time for thanks.

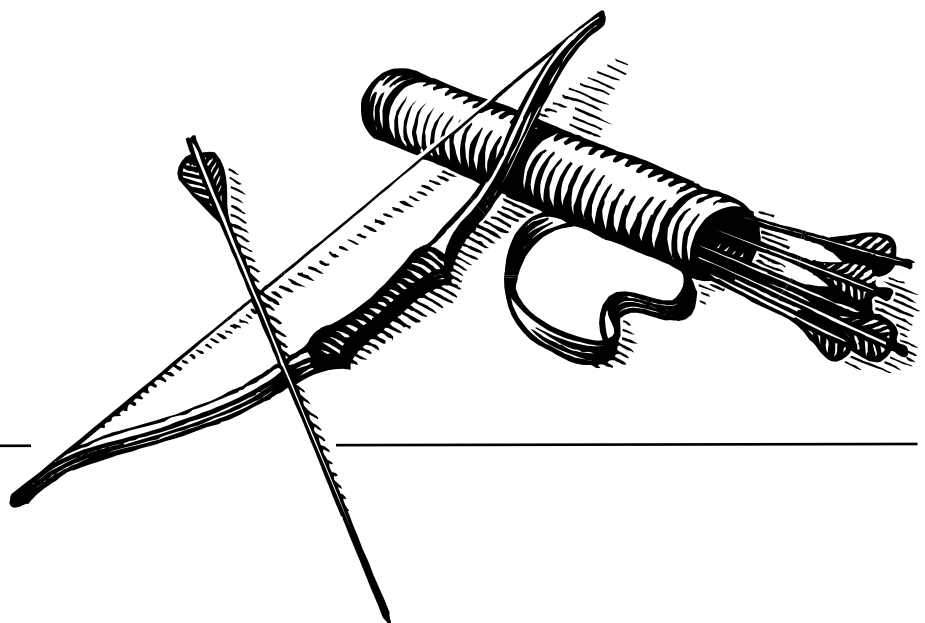
Effie: Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor!

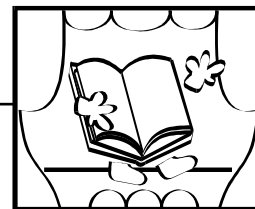
Narrator 2: It is time for the drawing.

Effie: Ladies first!

Narrator 1: Effie crosses over to the glass ball with the girls' name. She reaches it, digs her hand deep into the ball, and pulls out a slip of paper. The crowd draws in a collective breath and then you can hear a pin drop, and Katniss is feeling nauseous and so desperately hoping that her name is not the one drawn.

Effie: It's Primrose Everdeen.





# *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*

By Mary E. Pearson

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

Characters: Narrator      Jenna      Mother      Lily      Mr. Bender

---

Narrator: There are words. Words Jenna doesn't remember. Not obscure words that Jenna wouldn't be expected to know. But simple ones. Jump. Hot. Apple. Time.  
Jenna looks them up. And she will never forget them again. Where did those words go, those words that were once in her head?

Jenna: *(to herself)* On Day Seven, Mother handed me a small box.

Mother: I don't want to pressure you. They're in order. Mostly all labeled. Maybe watching them will help bring things back. I love you, Jenna. Anything you want to ask me, I'm here. I want you to know that.

Jenna: Thank you. *(to herself)* I knew that was the right response so I said it.

Narrator: Jenna watched the first disc. It seemed logical to go in order. Day after day, Jenna watched more discs.

Lily: You don't have to watch them in order, you know.

Jenna: I know. Mother told me.

Lily: There are discs of when you were a teenager. I suppose. . . aren't you curious?

Narrator: Curious is a word Jenna looked up before mother handed her the discs. Her mother used the word to describe Mr. Bender who lives on the other side of the pond. Jenna doesn't know if Lily is asking if she is inquisitive or odd.

Jenna: I've been in a coma for over a year. I guess that makes me highly unusual; odd; strange. Yes, Lily. I am curious.

Narrator: Lily's arms unfold and slide to her sides. Her head tilts slightly. She is a pretty woman. She looks to be fifty when she is at least sixty.

Lily: You should watch them out of order. Skip straight to the last year.

Narrator: Lily leaves the room, and on Day Fifteen of being awake, Jenna makes her first independent decision. She will watch the discs in order. When she woke this morning, Jenna had questions. She wondered what everyone had been hiding.

Mother: Jenna, I'm leaving. Are you sure you'll be okay?

Jenna: I'll be fine. My nutrients are on the counter. I know how much to take.

Narrator: Jenna cannot eat regular food yet. When she asked why, her parents and Lily stumbled over each other's words trying to explain. They finally said that after a year of being fed through a tube, Jenna's system can't utilize regular food for a while. Jenna never saw the tube. Maybe that is what is on the last disc that Lily had told her to watch.

Mother: Don't leave the house.

Lily: She won't.

Narrator: As mother is leaving, Jenna asks her.

Jenna: Mother, why did we move here?

*(No answer)*

Jenna: When the doctors, Father, and your career are all in Boston, why are we here?

Mother: There's lots of reasons, Jenna. I can't discuss them all right now or I'll miss the shuttle into town, but the main reason is we thought it would be best for you to have a quiet place to recover. And our plan seems to be working, doesn't it?

Narrator: Jenna knows that the answer is not completely truthful. She can see it in mother's eyes.

Mother: Go to your room, Jenna. I think you might need some rest.

Narrator: But Jenna doesn't want to rest but she goes to her room anyway. She looks out the window. Across the yard and the pond, Jenna sees the curious Mr. Bender. He appears to be squatting, looking at something on the ground. Jenna turns from the window and looks at her room. A wooden chair. A bare desk. A plain bed. So little. Is this all Jenna Fox adds up to?

Jenna: *(alone)* A question I will never ask Mother; did I have friends? I was sick for over a year and yet there is not a single card, letter, balloon, or wilted bouquet of flowers in my room. The Netbook never buzzes for me. Not even an old classmate's simple inquiry. I may not remember everything, but I know there should be these things. Something. I know when someone is sick that people check on her. What kind of person was Jenna Fox that she didn't have any friends? Was she someone I even want to remember? Everyone should have at least one friend.

Narrator: Jenna hears Lily humming. She peeks into the kitchen and sees Lily. Lily used to be chief of internal medicine at Boston University Hospital. Jenna's father was a resident under Lily. That was how he met Jenna's mother. Lily gave up her job. Now her passions were gardening and cooking. To Jenna, it seemed that everyone in the house was reinventing themselves and not one was what they once were. Jenna decides to go outside.

The noon sun is bright and hurts Jenna's eyes. She sees Mr. Bender sitting on his haunches. It is an odd stance for a grown man.

Mr. Bender: Hello. Lost?

Jenna: No.

Mr. Bender: I'm Clayton Bender. You the new neighbor?

Jenna: I'm Jenna Fox. Yes, I live over there.

Narrator: Jenna reaches her hand out to shake his.

Mr. Bender: Your hands are like ice, young lady. You still acclimating?

Jenna: I saw you from my room. I saw you squatting. You're curious.

Mr. Bender: *(laughing)* You mean you're curious.

Jenna: My grandmother thinks so.

Mr. Bender: Well, Jenna, you saw me squatting because I was working on this. Come, take a look.

Jenna: What is it?

Mr. Bender: I haven't named it yet, but I think it will be Pine Serpent. Maybe not. I'm an environmental artist.

Jenna: A what?

Mr. Bender: I create art from found objects in nature.

Jenna: Why?

Mr. Bender: *(laughing)* You're a tough critic, Jenna Fox. I create art because I need to. It's just something in me. Like breathing.

Jenna: Are you going to take a picture?

Mr. Bender: Not yet. I need to wait for the sun to get a little lower. And if I get lucky, I'm going to coax a few birds to pose with it.

Jenna: You have birds?

Mr. Bender: Here. I'll show you. Over this way.

Narrator: He holds his palm out, and instantly there are multiple chirps around us.

Mr. Bender: Hold still.

Narrator: A small gray bird pecks a seed and flies away. Jenna tries to touch one and the birds fly away.



Mr. Bender: You have to be patient.

Narrator: Jenna holds out her hand and waits but the birds don't come.

Mr. Bender: Maybe they're full. You come back anytime, Jenna, and give it another try.

Jenna: I will.

Narrator: Jenna leaves knowing she now has a friend. It changed everything. She doesn't know if she will ever remember the old Jenna. On the way back home, Jenna falls down.

Lily: Jenna! Jenna! What's the matter? What happened? Jenna! Jenna!

Jenna: I—

Lily: Are you all right?

Jenna: I think so.

Narrator: Later in the kitchen, father takes care of Jenna's small cut on her knee. Her mother wanted Lily to look at it but Lily said she had never practiced that kind of medicine.

Mother: It is just like any other cut.

Lily: Not exactly.

Mother: I told you, Jenna! I told you! I said don't leave the house!

Jenna: But I did.

Mother: What happened?

Jenna: I was crossing the creek. I stepped on the first stone. And then. . .

Mother: Then what?

Jenna: Did I almost drown?

Mother: The creek's only a few inches—

Lily: Yes. A long time ago. She wasn't even two.

Mother: But she couldn't possibly remember.

Jenna: I remember. I remember birds. White birds. I remember falling. I fell so far. And I screamed and water filled my mouth. . .

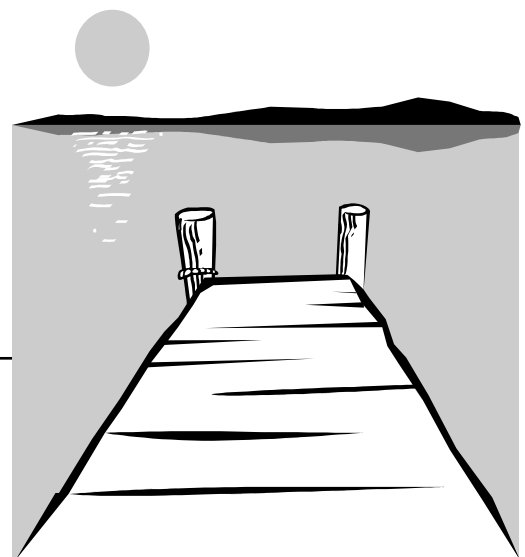
Lily: We were at the bay. I let go of Jenna's hand for only a second, just long enough to get money out of my purse for a snow cone. I was paying for it, and when I turned around, she was already at the end of the dock. She ran so fast. It was the gulls. There were gulls at the end of the dock and she didn't stop. She was so focused on those birds, she didn't hear me scream. I saw her go over and I ran. She was already sinking, and I jumped in after her.

Jenna: You bought me another snow cone. It was—

Lily: Cherry.

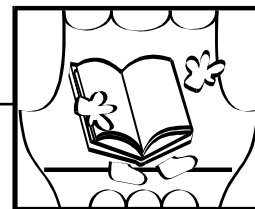
Narrator: Jenna's mother begins to cry. She wraps her arms around her shoulders and she kisses her cheeks and hair.

Mother: You're remembering, Jenna. Just like your father said. This is just the beginning.



# Readers' Theater

---



## *Unwind*

by Neal Shusterman

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

Characters: Narrator 1    Narrator 2    Connor    Ariana    Father

---

Narrator 1: The Bill of Life.

The Second Civil War, also known as "The Heartland War," was a long and bloody conflict fought over a single issue.

To end the war, a set of constitutional amendments known as "The Bill of Life" was passed.

It satisfied both the Pro-life and the Pro-choice armies.

The Bill of Life states that human life may not be touched from the moment of conception until a child reaches the age of thirteen.

Narrator 2: However, between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, a parent may choose to retroactively "abort" a child...

... on the condition that the child's life doesn't "technically" end.

The process by which a child is both terminated and yet kept alive is called "unwinding."

Unwinding is now a common and accepted practice in society.

(Scene 1)

Narrator 1: Connor and Ariana are on the freeway overpass letting their legs dangle.

Ariana: There are places you can go and a guy as smart as you has a decent chance of surviving to eighteen.

Connor: I can't believe that my life is being stolen from me at sixteen.

Ariana: I'm so sorry. . . We should run away. I'm fed up with everything too. My family, school, everything. I could kick-AWOL, and never look back.

Connor: Do you mean it?

Ariana: Sure. Sure I do. I could leave here. If you asked me.

Narrator 2: Connor knows this is major. Running away with an Unwind—that's commitment. He kisses and holds her. She smiles at him.

Ariana: AWOL. What does that mean, anyway?

Connor: It's an old military term or something. It means 'absent without leave.' Will you come with me Ariana?

Ariana: Sure. Sure I will.

Narrator 1: As Connor walks Ariana home, he knows her parents don't like him. Still, when he walks her home and hides behind a tree, he thinks that hiding is not going to be a way of life for both of them.

Home.

Narrator 2: Connor wonders how he can call the place he lives home, when he's about to be evicted—not just from the place he sleeps, but from the hearts of those who are supposed to love him. As Connor walks in the door, he sees his father watching TV.

Connor: Hi, Dad.

Father: (*pointing at the TV*) Clappers again.

Connor: What did they hit this time?

Father: They blew up an Old Navy in the North Akron mall.

Connor: Hm. . . You'd think they'd have better taste.

Father: I don't find that funny.

Narrator 1: Connor's parents don't know that Connor knows he's being unwound. The date on the order was the day before his parents were going on a trip to the Bahamas. He was going off to be unwound, and they were going on vacation to make themselves feel better about it.

Connor: Did I miss dinner?

Father: Your mother left a plate for you.

Father: Connor? Did you lock the door when you came in?

Connor: I'll do it now.

Narrator 2: The next morning, Connor gets dressed and packs a few things. He goes over to Ariana's house. He knocks quietly on the door. Ariana is wearing a robe over satin pajamas.

Connor: Hi, are you ready? Obviously not. You didn't forget, did you?

Ariana: No, I didn't forget. . .

Connor: So, hurry up! The sooner we get out of here, the more of a lead we'll get before anyone knows we're gone.

Ariana: Connor, here's the thing. . . I really want to go, I do. . . but it's just a really bad time for me. My sister's getting married, and you know she picked me to be the maid of honor. And then there's school.

Connor: You hate school. You said you'd be dropping out when you turn sixteen.

Ariana: Testing out. There's a difference.

Connor: So you're not coming?

Ariana: I want to, I really, really want to. . . but I can't.

Connor: So everything we talked about was just a lie.

Ariana: No, it was a dream. Reality got in the way, that's all. And running away doesn't solve anything.

Connor: *(angrily)* Running away is the only way to save my life, I'm about to be unwound, in case you forgot.

Ariana : *(gently touching his face)* I know. But I'm not. You'll get away, I know you will.

Narrator 1: The door closes and Connor stands there for the longest time. Being alone had not been part of his plan, but he realizes it should have been. From the moment his parents signed those papers, Connor was alone. He knows he can't take a train or a bus. Unwinds on the run are so common, they have whole teams of Juvey-cops dedicated to finding them. Connor knows once he turns eighteen, he's home free. Surviving that long is the trick.

