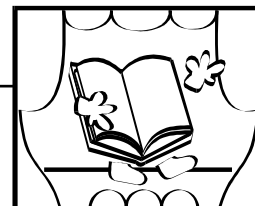


# Readers' Theater

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## *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party* by Ying Chang Compestine



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

Characters:	Ling	Father	Comrade Li
	Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3

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Narrator 1: Coming home from school, Ling saw Comrade Li standing in front of her apartment building with a loudspeaker in his hand. With a wide blue belt over his Mao uniform, he looked taller and skinnier.

Ling: I ducked behind the trunk of a milk tree and stared.

Narrator 2: Young people in Mao uniforms ran in and out of Ling's building. On their right arms they wore red armbands that said RED GUARD in yellow characters. Two of them carried Mrs. Wong's sewing machine. Four others had her refrigerator. Her heater was smashed into pieces near the stairs. Neighbors peeked out from behind their curtains.

Narrator 3: Comrade Li's voice boomed around the courtyard through the loudspeaker.

Comrade Li: WE CONFISCATE THESE BOURGEOIS ITEMS IN THE NAME OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

Ling: How could this be the same funny man who did magic tricks for me and who sang in the bathroom?

Narrator 3: She took a deep breath and ran upstairs. To her surprise, Mother sat by the dining room table staring at an empty wall.

Ling: Why wasn't she helping Mrs. Wong? Why didn't she call Father home to protect us? Would the Red Guards take our things next?

Narrator 1: But she was afraid to ask her mother these questions.

Ling: That night I had a horrible dream. Father was taken away by a mob without faces.

Narrator 2: She woke up and ran toward her parents' bedroom.

Ling: I found Father sitting in the living room with a heavy cotton blanket tented over himself and the radio that sat on the round end table. The yellow light from the small lamp cast his shadow on the wall. All I could hear was a humming like tiny mosquitoes.

Narrator 3: Her father had told her the government jammed foreign stations, because Chairman Mao wanted everybody to listen only to the Central China People's Broadcast from Beijing. It played Jiang Quing's propaganda songs and repeated Mao's speeches over and over.

Ling: *(Whispering)* Daddy! What are you listening to?

Narrator 1: Father turned off the radio and lifted up a corner of his blanket.

Father: *(Whispering)* The Voice of America.

Narrator 2: These days, they had to whisper a lot. Ling crawled onto her father's lap and snuggled with him under the blanket.

Ling: Daddy, why do people want to go to America?

Father: Shhh!

Narrator 3: They both glanced toward Comrade Li's apartment.

Father: *(Whispering)* They want to enjoy freedom.

Ling: *(Whispering)* What's freedom?

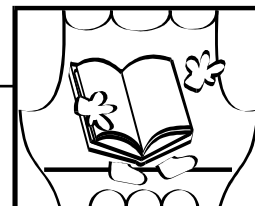
Father: Freedom is being able to read what you want and say what you think



# Readers' Theater

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## *Waiting for Normal* by Leslie Conner



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

Characters: Addie Mommers Narrator 1 Narrator 2 Narrator 3 Narrator 4

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Narrator 1: Addie and Mommers entered the trailer.

Addie: Look at the kitchen. Isn't it perfect?

Narrator 2: Mommers rolled her eyes at Addie. The kitchen was kinda shrimpy, like it was made for sixth-graders instead of grown-ups, but that Addie smile. Addie'd be starting sixth grade in about a week. She flipped a light switch and a bare bulb came on above the sink. Mommers squinted.

Mommers: How classy.

Addie: Hey, look. Everything is six steps.

Narrator 3: Addie counted six baby steps from the front door. That put her right at the kitchen sink. She counted six more and that put her in the living room, which was also the dining booth and an extra sleeping bed. In a pinch, Mommers and Addie could drop the table down and cover it with the seat cushions.

Narrator 4: Six more steps and Addie stood in front of the bedroom, the only real bedroom.

Addie: This one's yours, Mommers.

Mommers: Wow, I get a folding door. And a window with a view of—what the heck is that? A Laundromat? I got me a regular Luxury Suite. Oh, and it's near the bathroom. What more could I want?

Narrator 1: Addie didn't mind Mommers getting the Luxury Suite. Addie got the bunk tucked up high, way at the other end of the trailer. She climbed up the ladder—six rungs, by the way—and pushed open the curtain on a string to try it out. She straightened up on her knees, inched a little higher and let her head thunk the ceiling a few times. She fell down giggling.

Narrator 2: She put her nose to the little square window and looked out onto the tar-patch yard and out to the steep, grassy bank that led up to the train tracks. Meadow flowers grew on the slope.

Narrator 3: She turned and pulled the curtain shut across her bunk. Then she poked her head out.

Addie: Look, Mommers, I have my own sleeping cupboard!

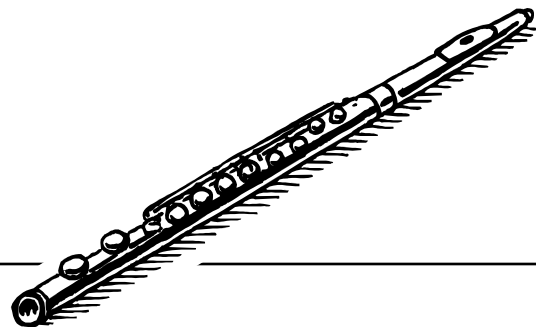
Mommers: Looks like a chintzy mattress on top of a closet and dresser to me.

Addie: There's a closet?

Narrator 4: Addie tipped her head down to see below her bed and almost flipped out of the bunk. Mommers let out a tiny laugh.

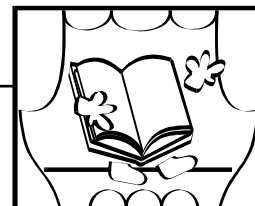
Mommers: You like it here, don't you?

Addie: It's not bad. I like small stuff. I'll make dinner tonight.



# Readers' Theater

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## *Every Soul a Star*

by Wendy Mass

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

Characters: Ally                      Bree                      Jack                      Mr. Silver (Science Teacher)  
Narrator 1                      Narrator 2                      Narrator 3

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Narrator 1: Meet Ally, whose parents own the Moon Shadow Campground. People will be gathering there to view the Great Eclipse. Here's one thing to know about Ally. She is home-schooled and when you are home-schooled, you have a lot of books.

Narrator 2: Here's another thing to know about Ally. She knows how to find every constellation in the sky, and that the brightest star in any constellation is called, the Alpha. She knows all the constellations because her father taught them to her.

Ally: I know about the Alpha because it is also my name. But my family and friends call me Ally. OK, that's not entirely true. I don't have any friends. Not within hundreds of miles anyway. And it's not because I am unlikable or smell bad or anything like that.

Narrator 3: In fact, Ally takes a bath every single day in the hot spring outside her house, and everyone knows that the minerals in hot springs make you smell like fresh air all day long.

Ally: Actually, the fact that we live somewhere with a hot spring outside our house pretty much explains why I don't have friends nearby. Basically, my house is as close to the middle of nowhere as a person can get and still be somewhere. Our town is not even on the map. It's not even a town. It's more of an area.

Narrator 4: There's the Moon Shadow Campground that Ally's family owns, and a tiny general store a mile away, where most everything expired in the last millennium. The nearest real town is an hour away.

Ally: It gets lonely every now and then, but I love it here.

- Narrator 1: Some people might think her parents are crazy for doing what they did—up and leaving their jobs to build a campground in the Middle of Nowhere, USA. But they had a plan.
- Narrator 2: They knew that a decade later, hundreds, maybe thousands of people would travel to this exact spot to be a part of something that hasn't happened in mainland America for over seventy-five years and won't happen again for a hundred more.
- Ally: My parents knew that, for one day, our two-square-mile campground would be the only patch of land in the entire country to lie smack dab in the path of the Great Eclipse when it passes overhead. In precisely twenty-two days and some hours from now, the sun will get erased from the sky, the planets will come out to greet us, the birds will stop singing, and a glowing halo of light will flutter like angels' wings above our heads.
- Narrator 4: Now we meet Bree, whose family is coming to view the Great Eclipse.
- Bree: I was switched at birth. There's no other explanation for how I wound up in this family. My physicist parents are certified geniuses with, like, a zillion IQ between them and all these grants to study things like dark matter and anti-matter, which are apparently very different things.
- Narrator 1: Bree's eleven-year-old sister, Melanie, gets straight As, does cartwheels in public, and actually enjoys watching science documentaries on PBS with her parents.
- Bree: I prefer MTV to PBAS, and to me, dark matter and anti-matter really means don't matter. But as smart as they are, my family members are all rather plain-looking.
- Narrator 2: Not ugly or anything even close, but just short of plain. Average. Like soft-serve vanilla ice cream in a cup, not even a cone.
- Bree: I am not plain or average or—god forbid—vanilla. I am peanut butter rocky road with multicolored sprinkles, hot fudge, and a cherry on top.
- Narrator 3: Not that SHE would ever EAT such a thing, because it would go RIGHT to her thighs.

Bree: Every morning I brush my dark brown hair a hundred times until it shines like silk, and any nails that are chipped, I fix them with the manicure kit I bought last year at Things of Beauty in the mall. Every night before I go to bed, I do fifty sit-ups. I drink bottled water because you only look good on the outside if you're healthy on the inside. My friends and I keep up with all the latest trends, and we share clothes and even shoes sometimes.

Narrator 4: She worked extremely hard to become one of the most popular girls in her grade, and she works hard at staying there.

Bree: We all have things to offer the world. My beauty is what I have to give. And the best thing about being beautiful? No one (except maybe my deluded parents who don't understand that modeling is a perfectly respectable career choice) expects me to be anything else.

Narrator 1: Now we meet Jack, who is going to be at the campground in order to assist his science teacher.

Jack: My mother never talks about my father, who left before I was born. I stopped asking when I realized all it did was make her upset. She said that anyone who would leave his pregnant wife and four-year-old son to go "find himself" didn't deserve another thought. It sure was a terrible thing to do. But it seems to me that my mother is better off alone than with a guy who ditched his whole family.

Narrator 2: His brother Mike, is the star first baseman on the high school baseball team. Luckily, he's four years older than Jack, so they won't ever have to be in the same school again.

Jack: No way can I compete with my brother in anything. I gave up trying a long time ago. I also gave up trying to pay attention in class. And trying to get people to like me. It's just too much effort. When they look at me, the other kids just see a big pudgy kid who sits in the back of every class drawing in his art book. I don't belong to any clubs or after-school activities either.

Narrator 3: But not paying attention in class came back to bite Jack on the butt this year. Failing science class gave him a one-way ticket to summer school.

Jack: It's humiliating. Having to sit in a stifling hot room with a bunch of my fellow rejects learning for the millionth time what different types of rocks are called. What a total waste of time.

Narrator 4: Now we meet Mr. Silver, who is Jack's science teacher. Here is what he proposed what Jack do instead of having to sit in a stifling hot room in the summer.

Mr. Silver: I'm inviting you to join me and thirty others for a two-week eclipse tour up north. I'll be doing some science experiments during that time, and at the end is the big solar eclipse we talked about in class. You'd be my right-hand man. The kid who was supposed to come broke his wrist skate-boarding. I'm going to need your help setting up the equipment, monitoring the telescopes, making sure the rest of the participants have what they need, things like that. I can't pay you, but it's free room and board. And the best part is that if you participate in the program, and write a short paper at the end, you'll get out of summer school.

Jack: When do we leave?

