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Preface

Today's Readers Theatre is engaged in the exciting pursuit of a more contemporary self-definition, and some of the more theatrical trends of classroom performance are reflected in this book of basic practices and principles. The fundamental performance theory at work in each chapter discussion, selected exercises, and sample scripts is that today's Readers Theatre is concerned with a "dramatic visualization" of literary texts; and that performers should be challenged vocally as well as physically in role-playing literary character actions and attitudes.

Traditional theatre practices like complementary costumes, props, movement, scenic design, and staging are essential ingredients in today's Readers Theatre and play a major role in transforming abstract, literary images on the printed page into inventive, risk-taking approaches to contemporary classroom performance. The focus here is on translating primary Readers Theatre principles into classroom performance practices that feature performers artistically, transforming literary figures or images into flesh-and-blood character portraits and visual pictures.

It would be rather foolhardy to spell out too explicitly the potential use of this handbook in a classroom setting. The imaginative reader of any book will find the most useful purpose for it. Each reader should view the materials in this handbook in a manner that enriches and reinforces their individual style of teaching or performing. Each reader is also encouraged to take the creative liberty of adjusting the focus of chapter discussions, suggested readings, recommended assignments, sample scripts, rehearsal exercises, or supplemental lesson plans to meet the special needs of student performers.

Please keep in mind that this is a shared journey, one that welcomes fellow travelers who have a lively spirit of adventure. Although this book provides a number of useful road signs to direct traffic through selecting, analyzing, scripting, and staging literature,

it is the reader who will ultimately make appropriate choices that determine the creative role of Readers Theatre in either principle or practice. I offer this work therefore, not as a reference of rules or regulations, but simply as an invitation to come along on today's Readers Theatre journey in search of a host of theatrical literary characters ripe for classroom performance.

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