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Fables by Thurber

adapted by MELVIN R. WHITE

- 1. The Crow and the Oriole**
 - 2. The Shrike and the Chipmunks**
 - 3. The Very Proper Gander**
 - 4. The Foolhardy Mouse and
the Cautious Cat**
 - 5. The Owl Who Was God**
 - 6. The Truth About Toads**
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PRODUCTION NOTES

These dramatizations of James Thurber's fables may be performed as individual skits or combined to provide a complete evening performance.

Bright and lively music might be performed between the skits as props are arranged and rearranged on the playing area — piano, mouth organ, ocarina, violin, or even recorded selections. The few props needed to dress the bare stage are stools, chairs, benches, boxes, and/or ladders.

If one person is cast in each role, the total would be 46. However, with double-casting, eight actors/actresses/readers may be used, employing the same narrator throughout. In all of these fables, the performers suggest in voice, body, action, and manner the animal or bird involved; suggestions on each role are included in the Cast of Characters for each skit.

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1. The Crow and the Oriole

by James Thurber

Arranged for Readers Theatre by Melvin R. White

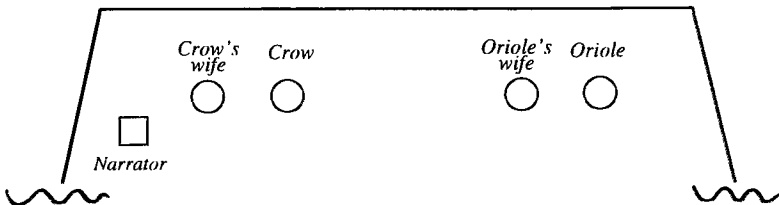
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From *Fables For Our Time* published by Harper Collins.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Narrator	An effective storyteller, male or female
Crow	A black male bird with a raspy, loud, unpleasant voice
Crow's Wife	A black female bird with a voice like her husband's
Oriole	A petite male bird with a melodious voice
Oriole's Wife	A petite and colorful female bird with a melodious voice

This Thurber fable calls for a cast of five: a narrator and four birds. Provide the birds with stools, preferably with revolving seats, although boxes or two benches would suffice. The Narrator is to stand Downstage Right and may have a speaker's stand.



Stage diagram for *The Crow and the Oriole*.

1 (ALL enter. The BIRDS face Upstage, backs to the audience.)
2 **NARRATOR:** (To audience) Once upon a time a crow fell in
3 love with a Baltimore oriole.
4 **CROW:** (Turning front) I saw her flying past my nest every
5 spring on her way north and every autumn on her way
6 south. She's a tasty dish!
7 **NARRATOR:** He had observed that she came north every
8 year with a different gentleman, but he paid no attention
9 to the fact that all the gentlemen were Baltimore orioles.
10 He said to himself:
11 **CROW:** Anyone can have that mouse. I must speak to my wife.
12 (CROW'S WIFE turns forward.) Wife, I'm in love with a
13 Baltimore oriole. She's as cute as a cuff link. I want a
14 divorce.
15 **CROW'S WIFE:** You can have it. Here's your hat, and there's
16 the door. Don't come crying to me when she throws you
17 down. That fly-by-season hasn't a brain in her head. She
18 can't cook or sew. Her upper register sounds like a
19 streetcar taking a curve. You can find out in any dictionary
20 that the crow is the smartest and most capable of birds —
21 or was until you became one.
22 **CROW:** Tush. Pish. You are simply a jealous woman. Here,
23 take this money. Go buy yourself some finery. You look
24 like the bottom of an old teakettle. (Turns back to audience
25 as WIFE exits, leaving the stage.)
26 **NARRATOR:** And he went off to look for the oriole. This was
27 in the springtime and he met her coming north with an
28 oriole he had never seen before. (CROW crosses to ORIOLE'S
29 WIFE, who turns to audience.) The crow stopped the female
30 oriole and pleaded his cause — or should we say cawed
31 his pleas?
32 **CROW:** (All of this in his harsh, grating voice) Ms. Oriole, I have
33 adored you for years, every time you pass this way. I
34 worship you. You're so beautiful — and you have such a
35 glorious voice. Will you be mine?

1 **ORIOLE'S WIFE:** (*Laughing merrily*) You sound like an old
2 window shutter. I snap my fingers at you. (*She does so.*)
3 **CROW:** I am bigger and stronger than your gentleman friend.
4 I have a vocabulary larger than his. All the orioles in the
5 country couldn't even lift the corn I own. I am a fine
6 sentinel, and my voice can be heard for miles around in
7 case of danger. Caw! Caw!
8 **ORIOLE'S WIFE:** (*Still amused, laughing merrily*) I don't see
9 how that could interest anybody but another crow.
10 (*Laughing, she turns her back to audience.*)
11 **ORIOLE:** (*Crosses to CROW.*) Here are some coins. Go buy
12 yourself a blazer or something. You look like the bottom
13 of an old coffeepot! (*Turns his back to audience after returning*
14 *to his stool.*)
15 **CROW:** I guess I'd better go back to my wife. Maybe she'll
16 forgive me. (*Crosses toward her stool.*) She's not here! I
17 wonder . . . oh, here's a note. (*Picks it up to read.*) "I've gone
18 away with Bert. You will find some arsenic in the medicine
19 chest."
20 **NARRATOR:** Moral: Even the llama should stick to mamma.
21 (*CAST may come Down Center for a curtain call.*)
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