
Copyright Notice

The rights to unlimited classroom performances of these Readers Theatre scripts are granted only with the purchase of a Readers Theatre Starter Packet, including all script copies, from Contemporary Drama Service, PO Box 7710, Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710. This purchase entitles the purchaser to unlimited amateur performances at one location.

A royalty fee of **\$10.00** is due for any performance at another location. Special royalty arrangements for multiple-location performances can be arranged. Write or call us for details.

All other rights, including professional, TV, radio, film, videotape and recording, are reserved. Fees for these rights will be quoted on request.

It is a violation of copyright law to copy or reproduce any part of these Readers Theatre scripts in any manner without permission from the copyright owner. Permission to reproduce copies of these scripts is granted with the purchase of a Readers Theatre Starter Packet from the copyright owner. These copies are for use by the purchaser only and may not be sold to any third party. The right of performance is not transferable, and performance without a Readers Theatre Starter Packet purchase constitutes copyright infringement punishable by law.

Whenever these Readers Theatre scripts are produced, the following notice must appear on any programs, playbills or advertising: "Produced by special arrangement with Contemporary Drama Service," along with the author's credit.

*Copyright © MCMLXXV Meriwether Publishing Ltd.
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved*

Reader's Theatre Starter Packet #1

by MELVIN R. WHITE

1. The Rats Have All the Fun

by ART BUCHWALD

adapted for Reader's Theatre

by MELVIN R. WHITE



Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

Contemporary Drama Service

PO Box 7710 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710

Reader's Theatre Starter Packet #1

by MELVIN R. WHITE

The Rats Have All the Fun

by ART BUCHWALD

Art Buchwald's essay pokes delightful but caustic fun at man's experiments to control some of his habits as well as his environment. The characters are all rats, confined to their separate cages in a government laboratory.*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Three men, four women, an announcer and a narrator, the latter two either men or women. If desired, the announcer's and the narrator's parts may be read by one person.

ANNOUNCER: Man or woman, dynamic voice.

NARRATOR: An effective storyteller with a mature, pleasing voice; man or woman.

ALICE: Woman with a headache.

ZELDA: A thin and weak woman.

HORACE: Man with a bad cough; has a guttural, throaty voice.

BETTINA: Smug, self-satisfied woman.

MARY: Woman with an upset stomach.

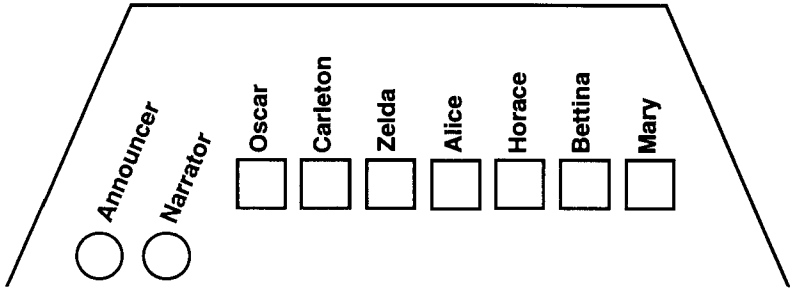
CARLETON: Man with an upset stomach.

OSCAR: Man with a bad cold.

*Adapted and made available for production by permission of the original author, Art Buchwald.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The seven rats (readers/actors) are seated atop seven tall stools, which are lined up across the reading/acting area, be it a stage, a platform or simply the front of a classroom. They make believe they are locked up, each in his or her own separate cage. As they converse, they try to peer out of their cages in order to look at each other, but are not very successful in seeing each other, hard as they try. The Announcer and the Narrator share the Downstage area, entering after the rats have perched on their stools, and leaving after their lines are completed. The rats approach their characterizations with the high, thin, squeaky, sharp voices associated with rodents, yet they each have personalities and characteristics of their own, and emotions like humans.



The Rats Have All the Fun!

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

ANNOUNCER: The rats have all the fun!

NARRATOR: The key to man's survival on earth seems to be the rat. Recently, I visited a large government laboratory around midnight, and this is what the rats were saying to each other: *(The rats, who have been sitting frozen, heads down, come to life, raising their heads, looking around, brushing their whiskers, rubbing their front paws together, peering at each other.)*

ALICE: Zelda, you look so thin.

ZELDA: They've had me on cyclamates. I must have lost three ounces in a week. What have you been doing?

ALICE: I've been taking monosodium glutamate. It's tasty, but it gives me headaches. *(HORACE has started coughing badly.)* Oh, Horace, will you stop coughing?

HORACE: *(Coughing badly)* I can't help it. They've got me smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.

ZELDA: Why don't you give them up? You know the Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health. *(Some of the other rats squeak their approval of that remark.)*

HORACE: I'd like to, but they won't let me. *(Sees SHELDON.)* What on earth is Sheldon doing? He's staggering all over his cage.

ALICE: Sheldon? He's involved in the marijuana experiments. He goes on a trip every night.

ZELDA: That's what I call luck! I wonder how I can get off cyclamates and in the pot program?

HORACE: You have to know somebody. Every rat in the lab wants to go on pot. *(Again, squeaks of agreement)*

BETTINA: Well, I don't. I feel you have to face reality and not seek escape. That's why I'm proud to be associated with the air pollution project.

MARY: How can you stand it, Bettina?

1 **BETTINA:** It's not bad. Every day they drive me around
2 (*Name of the city*), and I just breathe. If I die, they know
3 the air pollution count is too high. If I live, I get to see
4 the city (*Name some interesting local spot such as a park or*
5 *zoo*) and everything.

6 **MARY:** You're probably right, Bettina. I volunteered for air
7 pollution, but some computer assigned me to *water*
8 pollution. Yeeeck, I'm getting sick of drinking dirty water
9 every day. (*Use the name of a polluted river, lake or stream, if*
10 *desired.*)

11 **ZELDA:** (*Peering at WHITNEY*) What's the matter with
12 Whitney? He seems awfully quiet tonight.

13 **ALICE:** He's been eating grapes with DDT on them for a week —
14 or is it chlordane? — and I guess it's finally getting to him.

15 **ZELDA:** I *told* him to boycott grapes!

16 **ALICE:** They won't give him anything else to eat, so he has no
17 choice. (*All rats ad-lib their resentment of this.*)

18 **HORACE:** Where's Alvin?

19 **MARY:** Didn't you hear? They transplanted his heart today
20 into Hazel. Hers gave out during the automobile exhaust
21 tests.

22 **HORACE:** Poor Alvin. (*All rats squeak their sorrow, their*
23 *sympathy.*)

24 **MARY:** He didn't seem to mind, really. You see, Alvin was
25 involved in the tranquilizer experiments, and when they
26 asked him for his heart, he said he couldn't care less.
27 (*Sound of crying*) Who's crying?

28 **BETTINA:** Sandra Ann. They have her taking the birth
29 control pill. It's a shame, too, because she wants babies
30 in the worst way.

31 **CARLETON:** Well, at least she's having some fun, which is
32 more than I can say for what I'm doing.

33 **BETTINA:** What's that, Carleton?

34 **CARLETON:** I'm working for NASA to see the effects of
35 weightlessness. I vomit all the time.

**Thank you for reading this
copyrighted free sample.**

**You may order this play online
or by phone or fax at:**

**Contemporary Drama Service
PO Box 7710
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80933-7710**

**Toll Free: 800-93PLAYS (937-5297)
Toll Free Fax: 888-594-4436**

www.contemporarydrama.com