

PASSENGERS THRU MATH, SCIENCE, AND SOCIAL STUDIES
A CURRICULUM BASED READER’S THEATRE PROGRAM

TEACHER’S GUIDE

Curriculum-Based Readers Theatre (CBRT) incorporates the basics of traditional reader’s theatre—actors reading aloud from a script, performing without costumes, props, or stage movement. But instead of scripts that are based on stories or literature, CBRT scripts use school content areas as their topics—science, math, and social studies—dramatizing the content to make it more interesting and memorable and to inform and entertain. Reading these types of scripts is effective in increasing retention of curriculum information, improving reading fluency, engaging students in a learning experience, and encouraging a theatrical delivery of the words on the page.

PASSENGERS is a unique, dynamic, creative, and *multi-leveled*, role-play reading series that transports students through three curriculum topics in the form of “Learning Trains.” With clever and entertaining dialogue, this series provides a conversational way to learn (or re-learn) essential topics and to remember them in the most fun and engaging way.

As students read the roles of five passengers and a conductor on one of these learning trains, they realize that asking and answering questions is a great way to learn. The structure of each script is based on an important topic in each car of the train. The conductor begins with discussions of a BIG question that is something important to learn, but can be a little complicated to answer. Passengers are encouraged to ask questions and make guesses as to the answers. Because they learn early on in the first car of the train that big a surprise awaits them in the last car, they are motivated and eager to find the answers. Asking questions in order to answer bigger questions is a great skill to acquire because the act of being curious is one of the best ways to learn new things in life.

These scripts accomplish arts integration through the natural marriage of curriculum content and learning strategies with the skills and creativity of the art form of theatre. These scripts bring excitement, energy and entertainment, all while informing students (and the audience) about important topics that students may typically label as “dull.” The scripts provide students with the opportunity to practice speaking skills and stage presence, and to become kinesthetically and creatively involved in the delivery of a script. When students practice and perform these scripts, the content information that they are responsible for learning is simultaneously reinforced.

The author of this series has created a clever and calculated framework of learning that through visual questions, statements/clues, and additional questions/answers, students will succeed in learning the topics well. The series is visual, verbally dramatic, choral, interactive, kinesthetic, inquisitive, and includes drawing activities, all while meeting many state educational standards.

The series provides for grades K-2 and grades 3-5 each with a 6, 12, or 15-week continuous weekly role-play reading curriculum (six cars per train for math and science and three cars for social studies). By reading one script car per week, students are given opportunities to repeat the texts 2-3 times per week. Repetition of the same role for each student for each car of the train is essential to building reading fluency and confidence as well as learning and remembering the content. As you’ll see on the final page of this guide, which serves as an easy 1-page “Quick Start Implementation Sheet,” each car of the Passengers series uses the same system for assigning readers.

The passengers are numbered 1 through 5. “Passenger 1” is the easiest role to read, and “Passenger 5” has the most challenging text. The role of the conductor is the highest reading level in the series and should thereby be assigned to a more advanced or capable student. If you choose to have your conductors use a whiteboard with the story, he or she will need to draw on or refer to the whiteboard throughout the script. One can easily lose his or her place on the page when attention is drawn away from the script so this can prove challenging for less confident readers.

For grades K-2 scripts, most likely it will be necessary to have the teacher, aide, parent volunteer, or an older student from another class to read the role of the conductor.

Using a Whiteboard (Optional)

The Conductor uses a whiteboard in each car of the trains. Passengers enjoy engaging with the conductor as he or she uses a whiteboard to provide the BIG question in each train car and to give clues to help them find the answer. Some scripts have opportunities for the Passenger characters to also use the whiteboard. So, optionally, you can have your students use a classroom or portable whiteboard with dry-erase markers as they read their roles. This helps them add visual, kinesthetic, and memorable elements to their reading and learning experience.

An alternative to the student Conductor drawing all the images is to use a printed copy of the whiteboard provided online at this link www.readerstheater.com. You could create table flipcharts of all the whiteboards for a particular car script using these documents, or you could simply tape certain pages on and off the whiteboard.

How important is it that the students perform the CBRT script?

The goal of performance is overwhelmingly motivating for most students. Working toward a performance is what makes students willing to read, re-read, and rehearse a script many times. For many students, it’s one of the few opportunities they will ever have to present a rehearsed piece for an audience. For some students, it’s as thrilling as a Broadway opening and they experience the same exciting jitters! The performance of the script transforms a reading experience into a theatrical experience that audiences of parents or other students will enjoy. When students are performing for an audience, encourage the audience to repeat chants when appropriate. Not only will parents be entertained, they will have the satisfaction that their children are learning and having fun at the same time.

Have students re-read/rehearse the script until the students are reading fluently before moving to the next car of the train. Conduct the initial readings with the students seated at their desks or standing behind them. The repeated reading of the same text increases students’ reading fluency; the repetition of the script’s content information contributes to their retention of the information. In addition, the gestures/sound effects add a kinesthetic element to the reading activity. Students’ projection and expression grow stronger in repeated readings/rehearsals.

Assign “stage positions” if students will be performing for an audience.

Once the students are familiar and fluent with the script’s lines, gestures/sound effects, assign them a position for performance. This position may simply be where they will stand in a semi-circle of their classmates in relation to where the conductor stands.

Encourage the students to read with energy and expression!

During rehearsals, emphasize the importance of delivering the script as an energetic and entertaining piece of theatre. Coach students to speak loudly and with expression. Assure them that their audience will appreciate a lively, well-prepared performance.

Getting All Students on the First and Last Cars in a Timely Manner (Important)

In this unique Passengers series, it is important for all students to begin and end with the first and last cars at the appropriate time. These cars set the stage and premise of the series and natural progression that builds interest and desire in students to read all cars of the train and the enjoy the value of the last- car surprise and the value in the intrinsic lesson it teaches. The middle cars, however, are interchangeable and can be completed in any order. So, considering there are only six book copies of each car included in your set, including the first and last cars, you might wonder how you can make sure all students start and end with the first and last cars within the same and possibly limited time period. There are two options available for you to make this work easily.

1. Use Digital Texts Available for Low-Cost Purchase (Recommended)

In order to make sure all students have a way to access the first script within the first few days of your program, digital copies of the first and last cars are available for purchase. These digital versions can be accessed on a computer, iPad, or any other device! You can rotate groups of students through the first and last cars in the same manner as a set of six printed books if you have six digital devices for a group to view and read (or, one computer screen to place in a small group for viewing by all six readers.)

Alternatively, these digital versions of Passengers can be displayed on a screen and “choral read” by the entire class in small teams of students assigned to each role. For example, to read the first car with all students all at once, you would group all your highest-level readers to read the Conductor’s role “in unison” as this role comes up in the reading of the full story, while your lowest level readers stand together as a team and read the Passenger 1 role in unison when this part comes up. At the same time, other teams of students are assigned (based on their reading level skills) to read in unison, the Passenger 2-4 parts as these roles come up as students grouped in reading teams assigned to the six roles (rather than students assigned an individual role) read the entire story together.

To place and order for these digital versions of the first and last cars, please email info@readerstheater.com and you will be provided a purchasing and download link.

2. Stagger Start-Date and Reading Times

An alternate to using the digital versions of the first and last car is to “devote time” to staggering the reading of the first car (with the one and only set of six books) with your small groups of six students over a short period of condensed time. For example, one group would use the first car books during a couple of days, as the first group(s) and subsequent groups of students move on to any of the middle cars of the train. This alternative simply requires more time periods for group reading in the beginning and the end of your reading program than using the digital versions to get through the first and last cars.

FOR THE LAST CAR OF EACH TRAIN

As the surprise rewards are given to passengers in the last car of each learning train, there are opportunities for students to have self-expression. Encourage your students to participate and even provide ideas or examples from your own experience to help students get the most out of this portion of the script and performance. Students need to feel worthy and accomplished.

Also, as the script provides intangible rewards that should make students feel good about themselves and their teacher, tangible rewards are also a good idea to provide if desired.

You can ADD any additional classroom rewards you decide. Some ideas might include:



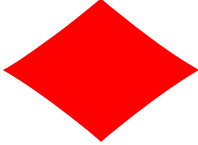
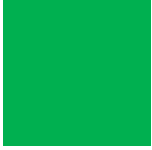

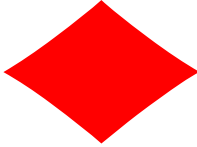
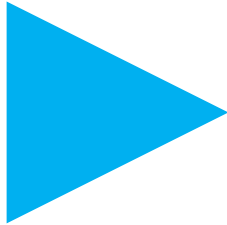

- A pizza or ice cream party
- Free homework passes
- Free choice coupon
- A colorful performance award certificate available that you can print yourself at www.readerstheater.com

There is no limit to how you can reward your students for their courage as they participated, for what they learned by taking part and being engaged, and for doing their very best as passengers. Consider rewards that allow every passenger to have some individual self-expression.

Additional Ideas and Supplemental Activities

- Have students make train tickets for each the six learning trains
- Make up a vocabulary match list or vocabulary quiz to reinforce vocabulary introduced in the scripts
- Have someone walk in holding a big cue card with the label, Passengers Through Math, Passengers Through Science, or Passengers Through Social Studies during performances.

Feel free to contact one of our Reader's Theater Specialists at 1-800-375-2926 or email info@readerstheater.com if you have any questions or need support of any kind.

Clap hands 		Slap Sides
Snap fingers 		Stomp feet
Stomp feet 		Snap fingers
Slap Sides 		Clap hands