

# Reader's Theatre / Performance Notes:

## *Boots and His Brothers*

Notes by P. J. Rittiger

**If students read aloud the play while remaining seated in the classroom,** ask readers to skip all bracketed stage instructions. If you divide the class into several sections, you can rotate turns for speaking roles.

**If students perform the play in the classroom,** seat audience members on the floor in the center of the room. Create an area for ACT 1 in one side of the room (*the cottage*), for ACT 2 in the middle of the room (*the forest*), and for ACT 3 at the opposite side of the room (*the king's castle*).

**If students perform this play onstage,** create sets for ACT 1, ACT 2 and ACT 3. If you have a curtain available, close the curtain between acts.

### Set Suggestions

A painted forest backdrop appears in all three acts. To make a "fire" in Act 2 for BOOTS and his brothers to sit beside, paint cardboard rolls from boxes of aluminum foil orange, yellow and red. Glue them together and glue onto them red, orange and yellow "flames cut from construction paper. Add glitter. In Act 3, remove the "fire" and add a painted castle backdrop, a treasure chest brimming with shiny coins and a large fake tree. To make the tree, paint a tree onto thin cardboard or rolled brown paper. Prop it against the castle backdrop or tie it at the top, but remember, the AXE has to be able to "kick" it down. Make sure no actors are nearby when AXE kicks down the tree.

### Character Notes

The FATHER and BOOTS are kind-hearted, sympathetic figures. BOOTS is not offended by his brothers' teasing remarks. PETER and PAUL are loud. They should whisper and snicker at BOOTS even when they are not speaking their lines. The character of BOOTS and the two older siblings can also be played by girls. AXE, SHOVEL and WALNUT can be played by either boys or by girls. SOLDIER can also be male or female but this actor should move stiffly, as if constantly waiting for an order from the KING. TOWNSPEOPLE are peasants who are neighbors of BOOTS and his family.

# "Boots" – Performance Notes

## Prop List - Optional

- A table and four chairs at center stage for BOOTS, PETER, PAUL and FATHER.
- Wooden bowls, spoons and other household implements for cottage scene.
- Wooden pegs to stick in cottage walls, so the actors can hang up their cloaks.
- Trumpet, tuba or any kind of horn to be blown by SOLDIER.
- A roll of paper for SOLDIER to read from in the first act.
- A fake fire, as described above.
- A small piece of colored felt with Velcro glued to the back for BOOTS to place on WALNUT'S costume.
- Blue confetti for WALNUT to toss into the air.
- Black confetti for SHOVEL to toss into the air.
- A chest of shiny fake coins for the KING to hand BOOTS in the third act.
- Recordings of water sounds to be played when WALNUT tosses confetti into the air in Act 2 and Act 3, or 2 buckets for pouring water from one to another.
- Wooden blocks to clap together off-stage when AXE chops.
- Sandpaper & a microphone to create a sound of shoveling when SHOVEL digs.

## Costumes - Optional

Drape FATHER, BOOTS, PETER and PAUL in earth-toned cloth. AXE'S costume consists of a gray or brown sweats or a wind suit. Attach black strips of felt vertically onto the sweat suit or the wind suit using fabric glue. Use iron-on letters available at craft stores to spell out the word "AXE" on the chest of AXE'S shirt. SHOVEL'S costume is similar. If you use brown for AXE, use gray or black for SHOVEL. WALNUT'S costume should be large, round looking and brown. Start with two brown pillowcases. Take one pillowcase and turn it so the opening is toward the ground. Use iron-on letters to spell out the WALNUT on the case. Next stuff each pillow case with cotton batting and sew it shut or close it with fabric glue. Once the cases are stuffed, sew them to the front and back shoulders of a brown sweatshirt to create a puffy rounded effect. When WALNUT is dressed, the pillowcases cover the front and back of him or her. During the play, BOOTS places a piece of felt on the front of WALNUT'S costume. In order for BOOTS to do this, attach a small piece of Velcro to the front of WALNUT'S costume and a small piece to a piece of colored felt for BOOTS to use. In the third act, WALNUT produces several handful of blue confetti and tosses it into the air. A bag of blue confetti can be concealed beneath WALNUT'S stuffed pillowcases to create this effect. Finish WALNUT with brown sweat pants. The KING should be very regal looking in dress clothes, a crown and a cape. The SOLDIER could wear a uniform, such as a Boy Scout uniform or he or she could wear something as simple as khaki slacks and a white shirt with a cape. Girls who are TOWNSPEOPLE should wear long skirts, simple shirts and shawls of earth-toned fabrics. Boys who are TOWNSPEOPLE can wear simple clothing and be draped in earth-toned fabrics.

**Casting Slips**  
*Boots & His Brothers*

**Father**

**Peter**

**Paul**

**Boots**

**Soldier**

**Axe**

**Shovel**

**Walnut**

**King**

**Townsperson**

**Townsperson**

**Townsperson**