

Reader's Theatre / Performance Notes

Fur and Feathers

Performance Notes by P. J. Rittiger

✓ 3 Ways to Use this Play Script:

Students read aloud the play while remaining seated in the classroom.

Ask readers to skip all bracketed stage instructions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.

Students perform the play in the classroom.

Students perform the play onstage. Refer to the production notes that follow.

If students perform the play in a large room, seat audience members on the floor in the center of the room. Your actors can enter skipping, hopping, galloping or trotting by the audience to the area where they will perform. Place MAMA LION and the two OSTRICH CHICKS in MAMA LION'S home before the play begins. Two areas - or sets if you can make them - are indicated. One area is the "clearing" where MAMA LION and MAMA OSTRICH live. At the end of the first act, all characters trot, gallop or skip to the second area where the anthill is located.

If students perform on a stage, ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage. Remember to place MAMA LION and the two OSTRICH CHICKS in MAMA LION'S home before the play begins.

Scenery and Set Suggestions (*optional*)

Fur and Feathers takes place at dusk in an African jungle. The scenery for both acts is similar. The first act displays the homes of MAMA OSTRICH and MAMA LION, both of which can be made of large, refrigerator-size boxes that have been painted and draped with vines of silk flowers and leaves or simply painted. The painted backdrop, which does not change, could show a glorious sun setting behind a large purple and black mountain, silvery streams, black silhouettes of trees and animals. When the curtain closes at the end of the first act, the homes of MAMA LION and MAMA OSTRICH are

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taken away and replaced with an anthill. Another option is to create two sets in a large room, and have the actors move from one set to the other.

The anthill can be built using boxes stacked atop each other and painted reddish brown, but it must have a front entrance that faces the audience and an exit. You might paint big black ants all over your anthill or glue plastic or construction paper bugs on it. The 'dirt' referred to in the beginning of the second act can be made of packing material peanuts spray painted green, brown or black. This should be placed around the anthill so MAMA OSTRICH can easily push it away. Be sure it does not obstruct the pathways of your actors.

Prop List

Act 1 - A simple basket containing fruit, real or plastic, for MAMA OSTRICH to carry.

Act 2 - There are no specific props for ACT 2.

Casting

MAMA OSTRICH can become PAPA OSTRICH as quickly and easily as can MONGOOSE change from a boy to a girl. MAMA ANTELOPE (or PAPA ANTELOPE) should have at least one baby. This holds true for MAMA (or PAPA) ZEBRA.

You can have as few as ten characters or as many as you can fit into your performance area. There is no limit to the number of JUNGLE ANIMALS, ZEBRA BABIES or ANTELOPE BABIES you can have.

Students who are cast as JUNGLE ANIMALS should pick whatever animal they want to be. Ask the children to come up with ideas about how to make their own costumes and how their animal should move.

The most humorous character in the play is MAMA OSTRICH, who is nervous and speaks quickly. MONGOOSE is the hero. MAMA LION is a near-sighted bully. When she is on-stage, the other characters should look nervous and fidgety.

The characters in *Fur and Feathers* should bear some small resemblance to the animals they portray but they are more fanciful than realistic. MAMA LION must wear over-sized, bright spectacles, but almost anything else your actors have in mind could work well.

MAMA OSTRICH might drape herself in yellow, furry fabric, wear pink knee socks and a bright kerchief over her hair. MAMA ANTELOPE might wear a pink marabou boa or red tennis shoes. MONGOOSE might wear camouflage paints over his or her face with cloth ears pinned to his or her hair.

Casting Slips
Fur and Feathers

Mama Ostrich

Mama Lion

Ostrich Chick #1

Ostrich Chick #2

Mongoose

Zebra

Zebra Baby

Antelope

Antelope Baby #1

Antelope Baby #2