

# A READER'S THEATER SCRIPT

for

John, Paul, George & Ben



*John Hamerch*



*Paul Roney*



*Giff Washington*



*Prof. Franklin*

Adapted from *John, Paul, George & Ben*, written and illustrated by Lane Smith, published by Hyperion Books for Children, 2006. (For grades 2–6.)

*Reader's Theater* adaptation by Judy Freeman; reprinted with permission of the publisher, Hyperion Books for Children.

## **ROLES**

Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Narrator 3, Narrator 4, John Hancock, Paul Revere, George Washington, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John's Teacher, Lady Customer, man customer, George's father, townsfolk, Mr. Douglas

## **NOTE**

If you want everyone in your class to have a role, expand the number of narrators. One child can be Narrator 1 on pages 1 and 2, and another can be Narrator 1 on pages 3 and 4, and so on. You could have 12 narrators this way. If you have a smaller cast, two children can divide between them the smaller roles of John's teacher, the lady and man customers, George's father, the townsfolk, and Tom's teacher, Mr. Douglas.

**NARRATOR 1:** Once there were four lads: John

**JOHN:** (bows; holding large piece of chalk)

**NARRATOR 1:** Paul

**PAUL:** (takes off tricorn hat and bows)

**NARRATOR 1:** George

**GEORGE:** (bows; holding toy hatchet)

**NARRATOR 1:** And Ben.

**BEN:** (bows; holding kite)

**NARRATOR 2:** Make that five lads. There was also Independent Tom, always off doing his own thing.

**TOM:** (waves; holding sketchpad)

**NARRATOR 3:** John was a BOLD lad.

**NARRATOR 4:** At the start of every school year, the students were asked to write their names on the chalkboard, and every year it was the same story.

**JOHN:** (writes name on board, or in air, with chalk) John Hancock.

**TEACHER:** John, you have lovely penmanship. John, your confidence is refreshing. But, John, *c'mon*, we don't need to read it from SPACE!

**NARRATORS 1-4:** (laugh and giggle)

**NARRATOR 1:** Paul was a NOISY lad.

**NARRATOR 2:** Before fun was invented, people joined bell-ringing clubs.

**NARRATOR 3:** As a member of Boston's Old North Church, Paul spent hours practicing in the belfry tower.

**PAUL:** (pantomimes ringing bells and pulling on ropes)

**NARRATOR 4:** Over time, that bell-ringing took a toll on young Paul. All day his head was filled with . . .

**NARRATORS 1-4:** (loudly) BING! BONG! BING! BONG!

**PAUL:** (walks all discombobulated, head and eyes rolling)

**NARRATOR 1:** Now that's fine around the belfry, but not at work.

**LADY CUSTOMER:** (softly) Young man, do you have some, uh, well, some extra-large underwear?

**PAUL:** (very loudly) EXTRA-LARGE UNDERWEAR? SURE WE HAVE SOME! LET'S SEE, LARGE . . . LARGE, EXTRA-LARGE! HERE THEY ARE! GREAT, BIG, EXTRA-LARGE UNDERWEAR!

**LADY CUSTOMER:** Oh, my!

**NARRATOR 2:** Paul was like a bullhorn in a china shop.

**MAN CUSTOMER:** (softly) Young man, have you received the package I ordered?

**PAUL:** (yelling) YOUR WIG? YES, IT'S COMING!

**MAN CUSTOMER:** GRRR!

**PAUL:** (yelling) AND YOUR POLKA-DOT SHIRTS ARE COMING! AND THE PINK BREECHES ARE COMING!

**NARRATOR 3:** It took many years and a midnight ride for people to finally appreciate his special talent.

**PAUL:** (galloping on a horse) THE REDCOATS ARE COMING!

**NARRATOR 3:** Everyone except the big-underwear lady.

**NARRATOR 4:** She was still mad.

**LADY CUSTOMER:** Harrumph!

**NARRATOR 1:** George was an HONEST lad.

**NARRATORS 2:** One day he took his shiny new hatchet and chopped down his family's cherry tree. His father discovered the tree.

**GEORGE'S FATHER:** Son, do you know who killed this beautiful little cherry tree?

**GEORGE:** I cannot tell a lie. 'Twas I who chopped down this cherry tree.

**GEORGE'S FATHER:** Then run to my arms, dearest boy, for you have paid me for it a thousand-fold with your honesty.

**GEORGE:** Really? In that case, when I tell you I've taken out the orchard, leveled the barn, and made kindling of your carriage, you'll be a wealthy, wealthy man.

**GEORGE'S FATHER:** Oh, no!

**NARRATOR 3:** Ben was a CLEVER lad.

**NARRATOR 4:** Not only did he have a saying for every situation, he generously shared them with anyone.

**NARRATOR 1:** Anywhere.

**NARRATOR 3:** At any time.

**BEN:** Fish and visitors STINK after three days.

**TOWNSFOLK:** What?

**NARRATOR 4:** He considered it his duty to provide frequent, free advice.

**BEN:** The sleeping fox catches no poultry.

**TOWNSFOLK:** Huh?

**BEN:** Those who in quarrels interpose, must often wipe a bloody nose.

**TOWNSFOLK:** Hey!

**BEN:** If your head is wax don't walk in the sun.

**TOWNSFOLK:** Who, me?

**BEN:** Three can keep a secret if two of them are dead.

**TOWNSFOLK:** What?

**NARRATOR 1:** The townsfolk were so taken by his generosity, they came up with a saying especially for Ben.

**TOWNSFOLK:** PLEASE SHUT YOUR BIG YAP!

**BEN:** I like it. Short and to the point. Work a fox or a turkey in there, and I think you've got something.

**NARRATOR 2:** Tom was an INDEPENDENT lad.

**NARRATOR 3:** One day his teacher, Mr. Douglas, introduced a new project.

**MR. DOUGLAS:** Today, class, we will be making birdhouses by gluing macaroni to ye olde balsa wood.

**NARRATOR 4:** Tom happily ignored him and used traditional building materials in a neoclassical design.

**TOM:** (pantomimes making a building)

**MR. DOUGLAS:** Today, class, we will be making a palm tree with paint and the palms of your hands.

**TOM:** Not on your life!

**NARRATOR 1:** Tom quickly left to sketch his own tree.

**TOM:** (pantomimes sketching tree in sketchbook)

**MR. DOUGLAS:** Young Thomas! Would you mind explaining to the class why you insist on working so independently?

**TOM:** Certainly. In fact, I've taken the LIBERTY to list the very reasons. (Unfurls a scroll and reads) My Declaration of Independence from Idiotic Class work. Fear not, sir, I've used smaller words for the benefit of the dullards.

**NARRATOR 2:** Tom learned the power of his words that day.

**MR. DOUGLAS:** Well, Thomas, you may pursue all the LIFE, LIBERTY, and HAPPINESS you want . . . independently in the corner!

**NARRATOR 3:** The other students pursued lunch.

**NARRATOR 4:** The rest is history!

**NARRATORS 1-4:** Say, you want a revolution?

**NARRATOR 1:** Well, John, Paul, George, Ben, and Tom sure did.

**NARRATOR 2:** In April of 1775, they got one.

**NARRATORS 1-4:** The Redcoats WERE coming.

**NARRATOR 3:** In fact, King George the Third's army was marching to Lexington and Concord to arrest John and other Sons of Liberty.

**NARRATORS 1-4:** Fortunately, Paul Revere was a NOISY man.

**PAUL:** After my midnight ride, every Minuteman, woman, and child knew who was coming and what they'd be wearing. It was the start of the Revolutionary War.

**NARRATORS 1-4:** Thomas Jefferson was an INDEPENDENT man.

**TOM:** We Americans needed to formally state our separation from the king. So I wrote the Declaration of Independence.

**NARRATORS 1-4:** Ben Franklin was a CLEVER man.

**BEN:** Simply signing such a document was treasonous. And dangerous. So I said, "We must all hang together or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

**NARRATORS 1-4:** John Hancock was a BOLD man.

**JOHN:** I didn't think twice about signing the Declaration. In fact, I was the first to scribble my autograph, and, man, just look at the size of my John Hancock. (unfurls a copy of his signature)

**NARRATOR 4:** The war was won thanks to General George Washington. Everyone thought he would make a great king for the new United States of America.

**NARRATORS 1-4:** But George Washington was an HONEST man.

**GEORGE:** The last thing we need is another King George! *President* George, however, has a nice ring to it.

**NARRATORS 1-4: YE OLDE EPILOGUE**

**NARRATOR 1:** George didn't live in the White House like all the other presidents.

**NARRATOR 2:** He was asked to live in New York City . . .

**NARRATORS 3&4:** Where there aren't so many trees.

**GEORGE:** (holds up hatchet, and whistles innocently.)

**ENTIRE CAST SINGS SONG TO END:**

(to the tune of Yankee Doodle Dandy)

*Come along and share a tale  
Of lads who rocked a nation  
The story of these feisty boys  
Who led our liberation.*

*John who was a bold, bold lad,  
Paul who was quite raucous,  
George who was an honest lad,  
And Ben who was obnoxious!*

*John and Paul and George and Ben  
Those beastly little bothers  
Grew to be enormously  
Important founding fathers!*

END

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