



Pam Muñoz Ryan

Readers' Theatre Script

THE DREAMER by Pam Muñoz Ryan

For Four Voices
Reader One - Mamadre
Reader Two - Neftalí
Reader Three
Reader Four - Father

READER ONE

THE DREAMER, by Pam Muñoz Ryan, illustrated by Peter Sís.

On a continent of many songs, in a country shaped like the arm of a tall guitarrista . . .

READER TWO

. . . the rain drummed down on the town of Temuco. [Teh-moo-coe]

READER THREE

Neftalí Reyes sat in his bed, propped up by pillows, and stared at the schoolwork in front of him. His teacher called it simple addition, but it was never simple for him.

READER FOUR

How he wished the numbers would disappear! He squeezed his eyes closed, and then opened them.

READER ONE

The twos and threes lifted from the page and waved for the others to join them. The fives and sevens sprang upward, and finally, after much prodding . . .

READER TWO

. . . the fours, ones, and sixes came along, too. But the nines and zeros would not budge, so the others left them. They held hands in a long procession of tiny figures . . .

READER THREE

. . . flew across the room . . .

READER FOUR

...and escaped through the window crack.

READER ONE

Neftalí closed the book and smiled. He certainly could not be expected to finish his homework with only the lazy zeros and nines, lolling on the page.

READER THREE

He stepped out of bed and to the window. He knew that he should rest in order to recuperate from his illness, or catch up on his studies . . .

READER TWO

... but there were so many distractions. Outside, the winter world was gray and sodden. The earth turned to mud, and a small stream flowed through a hole in the ramshackle fence.

READER ONE

Neftalí always imagined a friend on the other side, waiting for him . . .

READER THREE

... someone who also collected sticks, like to read, and was not good at mathematics, either.

READER FOUR

He heard footsteps.

READER TWO (Neftalí, with anxiety)

Was it Father?

READER THREE

Neftalí's heart pounded and his eyes grew large with panic. The footsteps came closer.

READER FOUR

Clump. Clump. Clump. Clump.

READER ONE

Neftalí smoothed his hair.

READER TWO

Was it out of place?

READER THREE

He examined his hands.

READER TWO

Were they clean enough?

READER ONE

The idea of having to confront Father made his arms tingle and his skin feel as if it were shrinking. He took a deep breath and held it.

READER FOUR

The footsteps passed his room and continued down the hall.

READER THREE

Neftalí exhaled. It must have been Mamadre, his stepmother, in her wooden-heeled shoes. He listened until he was sure that no one was near, then turned to the window again.

READER TWO

Raindrops strummed across the zinc roof. Water mysteriously trilled above. Weepy puddles dripped from the ceiling, filling the pots that had been poised to catch them.

[PAUSE]

Reader One plip-plip

Reader Four plop

Reader Three bloop, bloop, bloop

READER TWO oip, oip, oip, oip

Reader One plip-plip

Reader One plip-plip

Reader Four plop

Reader Three tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

Reader Four plop

Reader One plip-plip

Reader Three bloop, bloop, bloop

READER TWO oip, oip, oip, oip

Reader Three tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

Reader One plip-plip, plip-plip

Reader Four plop

READER THREE

As Neftalí listened to the piano of wet notes, he looked up at the Andes Mountains.

READER ONE

He looked out at the River Cautín. He wondered what lay beyond, past the places of Labranza, Boroa, and Ranquilco, where the sea plucked at the rugged land.

READER FOUR

The window opened. A carpet of rain and wind swept in and carried Neftalí through the storm . . .

READER THREE

. . . to the distant ocean he had only seen in books. There, he was the captain of his own ship, its prow slicing through the blue. Salt water sprayed his cheeks. His clothes and hair fluttered against his body.

READER ONE

He gripped the mast, looking back on his country, Chile.

READER THREE

The screech of a conductor's whistle snapped Neftalí to attention. He jerked around.

READER TWO

Father's body filled the doorway.

READER FOUR (Father, angry)

Stop that incessant daydreaming! And why are you out of bed? Do you want to be a skinny weakling forever and amount to nothing?

READER TWO (Neftalí, stuttering)

N-n-n-no, Father

READER FOUR (Father, disgusted)

Your mother was the same, scribbling on bits of paper, her mind always in another world!

READER THREE

Neftalí rubbed his temples. He had never known his mother. She had died two months after he was born.

READER TWO (Neftalí)

Was Father right? Could daydreaming make you weak? Had it made his mother so weak that she had died?

READER THREE

Mamadre, his stepmother, hurried into the room.

READER FOUR (Father, sternly – point to Reader One)

You need to watch him more closely. He must stay in bed or he will never get stronger.

READER THREE

Mamadre took Neftalí's hand, gently helped him into bed, and tucked the blankets around him.

READER ONE (Mamadre)

Your mother did not die from her imagination. It was a fever. And look at me. I may not appear big and strong on the outside, but I am perfectly capable on the inside . . . just like you. I know it is hard to spend so many days in bed.

READER TWO (Neftalí)

I f-f-feel . . . f-f-fine.

READER ONE (Mamadre)

Just one more day. Then you may go back to school. I will read to you to help pass the time.

READER FOUR

Within the lull of Mamadre's voice, Neftalí lost himself in the legends of swashbuckler's and giants. There, his painful shyness stayed in the back of his mind.

READER ONE

There, he could not be called "Shinbone" because of his thin and sickly body . . .

READER TWO

. . . or chosen last for a street game by the neighborhood boys.

READER THREE

Between the pages, he forgot that he stuttered when he spoke. While the pages turned, he even dared to imagine himself with a friend.

READER FOUR

After Mamadre finished reading and slipped away, Neftalí studied the cracks in the ceiling.

READER TWO

They looked like roads on a map. To which country did they belong?

READER THREE

It had not mattered one bit what Father had said about daydreaming.

READER ONE

Neftalí could not stop. Every curious detail of his life taunted him. His mind wandered . . .

READER TWO

To the monster storm raging outside, which startled the roof.

READER FOUR

To the distant rumble of the dragon volcano, which made the floors hiccup.

READER THREE

To the makeshift walls of his timid house, trembling and cowering from the roar of passing trains.

READER TWO

To the haphazard design of the room with the incomplete stairs . . .

READER ONE

. . . which might have led to a castle on another floor, but had long been deserted in the middle of construction.

READER ONE

plip-plip, plop
plip-plip, plop
plip-plip, plop
plip-plip, plop

READER TWO

oip, oip, oip, oip

READER FOUR

bloop, bloop, bloop

READER THREE

tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

tin, tin, tin, tin, tin

End of Scene