

The *Fluent* ≈ READER ≈

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**Texts for Practice
and Performance**

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Appendix:

Texts for Practice and Performance

Sojourner Truth and the Struggle for People's Equality

adapted by Timothy Rasinski

Parts: *Narrators 1–4 (can be combined), Sojourner Truth*

Narrator 1: Long before the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s, in which certain Americans demanded that all citizens, regardless of the color of their skin, be treated fairly and with respect . . .

Narrator 2: Indeed, long before the women's rights movement of the 1960s and '70s, in which women demanded their right to be treated justly and with dignity . . .

Narrator 3: Even years before the start of the Civil War, a war fought to end slavery in the United States . . .

Narrator 4: There were people who spoke up for the rights of black people and the rights of women. One of those people was—

Narrators 1–4: Sojourner Truth.

Narrator 1: Sojourner Truth was a black woman, a Negro, and she was born into slavery in 1797.

Narrator 2: But Sojourner Truth was not afraid to speak out for what she thought was right and what she knew was wrong.

Narrator 3: In the years before the Civil War, Sojourner spoke throughout the northern and midwestern United States, to whoever would listen to her, about the evils of slavery and the need for all Americans to have equal rights.

Narrator 4: She was a powerful speaker. And since she stood six feet tall, people listened to what she had to say!

- Narrator 1:** In the 1850s, women in the United States did not have the same rights as men. They could not vote, they could not go to college, they could not own their own property.
- Narrator 2:** In many ways, women were the property of their husbands—almost like slaves themselves. Men did not think women were strong enough or smart enough to have the same rights as men.
- Narrator 3:** Many men thought that women were weak, that they needed to be helped into carriages, that they needed to be carried over ditches, that they needed to be taken care of by men.
- Narrator 4:** Besides, since Jesus Christ was a man, many men felt that that must be proof that men were superior to women and that women did not deserve the same rights as men.
- Narrator 1:** Women knew that this was not right and they began to speak out about this blatant unfairness.
- Narrator 2:** They began to organize meetings in which they spoke out about their lack of rights—
- Narrator 3:** But these meetings were run by white women, mostly from the northern states. Black women were neither welcome nor wanted.
- Narrator 4:** In 1851, a women’s rights convention was held in Akron, Ohio. Many women and men spoke about the rights of women—white women, that is.
- Narrator 1:** But, in the middle of the convention, a tall black woman stood up and demanded to speak. Those at the meeting tried to keep her from speaking. They protested her presence loudly, and they demanded that she leave.
- Narrator 2:** This is a meeting for whites only! Get her out of here!
- Narrator 3:** No blacks allowed here!

Narrator 4: Let her speak to her own people. Make her leave.

Narrator 1: Sojourner Truth was not only tall, she was strong in her beliefs. She made her way to the podium, faced the group of angry white people, waited a few seconds . . . and told everyone that the struggle for the rights of white women was the struggle for all women, regardless of the color of their skin.

Sojourner: Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that between the Negroes of the South and the women of the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about? That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best of everything. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me the best of anything! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have plowed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and I could bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and have seen most all of them sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Narrator 2: By now the crowd was hushed. Sojourner's strong voice presided over the crowd. A silence descended on the audience. Heads began to nod in response to Sojourner's repeated question—Ain't I a woman?

Sojourner: Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it?

Narrator 3: You mean intellect?

Sojourner: That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half-measure? Then that little man in black over there, he says that women can't have as much rights as men, cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with it. If the first woman God ever made was

strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now that they is asking to do it, the men better let them. Obligated to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

SILENCE FOR A FEW SECONDS

Narrator 4: And with that, Sojourner Truth's speech was over. She left the podium, and she walked out of the meeting and into history. Yet her words still ring true today as they did on that day in 1851 . . .

Narrator 1: Ain't I a woman?

Narrator 2: Even though the color of my skin may be different from yours, inside we are all the same.

Narrator 3: And I too deserve to be treated with equality, respect, and dignity.

The Night Before Christmas

by Clement C. Moore

To be performed by two readers: Reader 1 reads the left column of text. Reader 2 reads the right column, and both readers read the center column of boldface text together.

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their bed,
While visions of sugarplums danced in their heads;

And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap . . .

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,

When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,

But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver so lively and quick,

I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them
by name:

“Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and Vixen!

On, Comet!

On, Cupid!

On, Donder!

And Blitzen!

To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!

Now, dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!”

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,

When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,

So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,

With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas, too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head, and was turning around,

Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur,

From his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all tarnished

With ashes and soot. A bundle of toys

He had flung on his back,

And he looked like a peddler

Just opening his pack.

His eyes—how they twinkled—his dimples how merry!

His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!

His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,

And the beard of his chin was as white as
the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,

And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.

He had a broad face and a little round belly

That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full
of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,

And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head

Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,

And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,

And laying his finger aside of his nose,

And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

He sprang to his sleigh, to his teams gave a whistle,

And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,

“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!”

The Three Billy Goats Gruff (With Attitude!)

Adapted by Timothy Rasinski

With Second Graders From Kent State University's Reading Clinic

Parts: *Little Billy Goat Gruff, Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff, Big Billy Goat Gruff, Troll, Narrators 1 and 2*

Narrator 1: Welcome to our show. Today's play is "The Three Billy Goats Gruff."

Little BGG: "I'm Little Billy Goat Gruff!"

Middle BGG: "I'm Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff!"

Big BGG: "Hello there, I'm Big Billy Goat Gruff!"

Troll: "Do you know who I am? I'm the Troll—and today I am very, very hungry! Grrrrr!"

Narrator 2: As Little Billy Goat Gruff strolls through the fields, he sees a rickety, old bridge. On the other side of the bridge is a meadow with green, green grass and apple trees filled with red, red apples.

Little BGG: "I'm the littlest billy goat. I have two big brothers. I want to go across this bridge to eat some green, green grass and red, red apples so that I can be big like my two brothers."

Narrator 1: And so, Little Billy Goat Gruff starts across the bridge.

All (softly): Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator 2: Just as Little Billy Goat Gruff comes to the middle of the bridge, an old troll pops up from underneath it.

Troll: "Who is that walking on my bridge? Snort! Snort!"

Little BGG: "It's only me, Little Billy Goat Gruff."

Troll: “Arrrgh! I’m a big, bad troll, and you are on my bridge. I’m going to eat you for my breakfast. Snort! Snort!”

Little BGG: “I just want to eat some green, green grass and red, red apples in the meadow. Please don’t eat me, Mister Troll. I’m just a little billy goat. Wait until my brother comes along. He is much bigger and tastier than me.”

Troll: “Bigger? Tastier? Well, alright. I guess I will. Go ahead and cross the bridge. Arrrgh!”

Little BGG: “Thank you very much, you great big, ugly, old troll.”

Troll: “What did you call me? Come back here! Grrrr!”

Little BGG: “Bye!”

All (softly): Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator 1: Little Billy Goat Gruff runs across the bridge. He eats the green, green grass and red, red apples. The troll goes back under his bridge and falls asleep.

Narrator 2: Before long, Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff walks up to the rickety, old bridge. He, too, sees the meadow with the green, green grass and apple trees filled with red, red apples.

Middle BGG: “I’m the middle-size billy goat. I have a big brother and a little brother. I want to go across this bridge to eat some green, green grass and red, red apples so that I can be big like my brother.”

Narrator 1: Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff starts across the bridge.

All (a bit louder, as Middle BGG is bigger): Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator 2: Just as Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff comes to the middle of the bridge, the old troll pops up from under the bridge.

Troll: “Grrr! Who is that walking on my bridge? Arrrgh!”

Middle BGG: “It is I, Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff.”

Troll: “Grrrr! I’m a big, bad troll, and you are on my bridge. I’m going to eat you for my lunch. Snort! Snort!”

Middle BGG: “I just want to eat some of that green, green grass and red, red apples in the meadow. Please don’t eat me, Mister Troll. I’m just a middle-size billy goat. Wait until my brother comes along. He is much bigger and much, much tastier than I am.”

Troll: “Bigger? Tastier? Hmmmmm. Alright, I guess I will. Go ahead and cross the bridge.”

Middle BGG: “Thank you very much, you great big, really ugly, smelly, slimy, and dirty old troll.”

Troll: “What did you call me? Grrrr! Come back here right this very instant!”

Middle BGG: “Oh, nothing. See ya!”

All (*a bit louder*): Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator 1: Middle-Size Billy Goat Gruff runs across the bridge. He eats the green, green grass and the red, red apples. The troll goes back under his bridge and once again falls fast sleep.

Narrator 2: After a while, Big Billy Goat Gruff sees the rickety, old bridge. He also sees his two brothers on the other side of the bridge in the meadow eating the green, green grass and the red, red apples from the apple tree.

Big BGG: “I’m the biggest billy goat. I have two brothers. I want to go across this bridge to eat some green, green grass and red, red apples just as they did.”

Narrator 1: Big Billy Goat Gruff starts across the bridge.

All (*louder this time*): Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator 2: Just as Big Billy Goat Gruff gets to the middle of the bridge, the old troll pops up from under the bridge.

Troll: “Grrrr! Who is that walking on my bridge?”

Big BGG: “It is I, Big Billy Goat Gruff.”

Troll: “Grrrr! I’m a big, bad troll and you are on my bridge. I’m going to eat you for my supper. Snort! Snort! Snort!”

Big BGG: “Really?” (smiles at the audience) “Well, then, Mr. Troll, come right on up here and have a feast.” (smiles at the audience again)

Narrator 1: The troll climbs onto the bridge. Big Billy Goat Gruff lowers his head and charges the troll!

Big BGG: “Garrummmp!”

Narrator 2: Big Billy Goat Gruff knocks the troll clean off the bridge and into the icy cold water!

Troll: “Glug. Glug. Glug. Grrrrr. Grrrrr. Shiver. Shiver. Brrrrrr.”

Big BGG: “Brothers, that ugly old bully won’t bother us again. I butted him with my horns and knocked him off the bridge and into the icy cold water. I’ve done my job, and from now on we can come and go in peace. Now, I’m going to go and eat some of that green, green grass and some red, red apples.”

All (very loudly): Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap.

Narrator 2: Big Billy Goat Gruff crosses the bridge and joins his brothers. In the meadow, the three billy goats eat the green, green grass and red, red apples.

Big Billy Goat: “Munch, munch, munch.”

Little and Middle-Size Billy Goats: “Munch, munch, munch.”

All Three Billy Goats: “Munch, munch, munch. This green green grass is great for lunch!”

Narrator 1: What happened to that mean, ugly, old troll? He never came back to the bridge. He learned that being mean never pays.

Troll: “This water feels like ice. Brrr, brrr, brrr! Next time, I guess I’ll try being nice!”

All: The End.