

CHICKEN STORY TIME

An interactive play for the very young adapted from the picture book of the same name by the playwright, writing as "Sandy Asher"

by Sandra Fenichel Asher

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Pollyanna Select Plays
Austin TX

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Sandra Fenichel Asher
Edited by Andrew Perry

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Chicken Story Time was first produced by Pollyanna Theatre Company at the Long Center for the Performing Arts' AT&T Education Room in Austin TX in November 2017. The original cast and crew were as follows:

<u>FIRST PUPPETEER:</u>	Bethany Harbaugh
<u>MS. KARIN, THE LIBRARIAN:</u>	Uyen-Anh Dang
<u>SECOND PUPPETEER:</u>	Allison Huston
<u>DIRECTOR:</u>	Bethany Lynn Corey
<u>STAGE MANAGER:</u>	Allison Huston
<u>SCENIC DESIGNER:</u>	Chase Staggs
<u>COSTUME DESIGNER:</u>	Judy Matetzschk-Campbell & Bethany Lynn Corey
<u>PUPPET DESIGNER:</u>	Judy Matetzschk-Campbell & Bethany Lynn Corey
<u>SOUND DESIGNER:</u>	Bethany Lynn Corey & Andrew Perry
<u>PRODUCER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR:</u>	Judy Matetzschk-Campbell

Cast of Characters

*All Characters may be male or female. Three are human. The rest are puppets.

<u>FIRST PUPPETEER:</u>	Friendly and helpful
<u>PUPSTER:</u>	A puppet; A well-trained Reading Dog, handled by FIRST PUPPETEER
<u>SECOND PUPPETEER:</u>	Also friendly and helpful
<u>MS. KARIN, THE LIBRARIAN:</u>	Usually calm, organized, and in control, and yet...
<u>CHICKEN:</u>	A puppet; A great fan of books and Story Time, handled by SECOND PUPPETEER
<u>OTHER CHICKEN PUPPETS:</u>	Six of them, hidden at first, and then handled by PUPPETEERS
<u>FIRST PUPPET CHICK:</u>	Hidden at first, and then handled by PUPPETEERS
<u>MANY PUPPET CHICKS:</u>	Hidden at first, and then handled by audience
<u>LIBRARY STAFF (optional):</u>	One or more cheerful assistants to keep audience and CHICKENS moving and to serve as additional puppeteers, if needed.

Scene

A children's reading room at a library

Time

Story Time in each of three sequential weeks

Synopsis

Children approximately 3 to 6 years of age encounter stories, puppets, and chickens in this fanciful, full-immersion adventure at the Library. Once a week, children gather in the Children's Reading Room to hear the LIBRARIAN read a story. But one day, a book-loving CHICKEN shows up. CHICKEN likes the children. The children like CHICKEN. Everyone loves Story Time. And then, as the weeks pass, more and more chickens show up, until there is such a crowd and so much commotion, it's impossible for anyone to hear one LIBRARIAN reading one book. At last, CHICKEN clucks the solution: "Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-book!" A library has many books, with many stories. When they are divided among many readers (LIBRARIAN, PUPPETEERS, STAFF), the children, the chickens, and the LIBRARIAN can all enjoy Story Time again.

Copyright Note

Permission is needed of authors, illustrators, and/or publishers to read published books as part of a stage presentation for paying audiences. Instead, producers may opt to create original books, with illustrations paid for with a flat fee to the artist. Five texts by the playwright are offered at the end of the script. When these prop books are made and used, please include the copyright notice "Copyright (c) 2017: Sandy Asher" inside each copy. (These words need not be spoken aloud during the readings.) Permission to use these stories extends ONLY to productions of CHICKEN STORY TIME. Additional copies may not be created, distributed, or sold, and all rights remain with the author.

Playwright Notes for Production Space

The *central playing area* is the Children's Reading Room at the library. This is separated from a *transitional path* suited to the individual theater. The *transitional path* must allow for the entire audience to travel as a group. It may be a circle all around the *central playing area* separated from it by bookcases. There may be a door, archway, or other entranceway from the *transitional path* into the *central playing area*. The action begins in the lobby or anywhere the audience can be gathered as they arrive for the performance before entering the world of the play. If necessary, this can be a section of the *transitional path*.

Dedication

For Judy Matetzschk-Campbell,
with love and thanks
for the "firsts", friendship, and fun.

SETTING:

Inside the Children's Reading Room are carpet scraps or a rug where the children will sit, perhaps stools or benches for their adult companions, a reading chair for the LIBRARIAN, a floor lamp with an easily removed shade, a stepstool or ladder, and shelves of books, with perhaps one sturdy enough to hold the LIBRARIAN. A basket sits beside the LIBRARIAN's chair, from which LIBRARIAN will take books to be read to the children.

BEFORE RISE:

Music. Children and their adult companions arrive to find picture books scattered about the lobby, perhaps books about chickens, but books about dogs, libraries, and nursery rhymes would also be appropriate. Because this is not part of the play itself, published books may be used. Audience is greeted by FIRST PUPPETEER with PUPSTER who ad libs, explaining that today we're using our imaginations to turn the theater into a library and children and their adult companions can help us get started by choosing a book and reading it together until everyone has arrived. FIRST PUPPETEER and PUPSTER circulate, encouraging PUPSTER-petting and reading. While the reading is going on, SECOND PUPPETEER with CHICKEN enters without fanfare and casually wanders about in a curious and friendly manner, noticing the books being read with interest, expressed with gentle clucking that sounds more like "BOOK-a-book-a-book-book-book" than the traditional "BU-UCK-a-buck-a-buck-buck-buck."

Upon noticing the CHICKEN, FIRST PUPPETEER and PUPSTER are perplexed, but not alarmed. THEY remain calm, courteous, and accepting, wondering aloud whether anyone should tell the LIBRARIAN about the CHICKEN, but deciding the LIBRARIAN is too busy getting ready for Story Time to be disturbed. PUPSTER and CHICKEN may get acquainted by touching nose to beak.

AT RISE:

When all have arrived, MUSIC fades, and FIRST PUPPETEER and PUPSTER get everyone's attention.

FIRST PUPPETEER

Welcome, everyone!

PUPSTER

RUFF! RUFF! RUFF! RUFF!

FIRST PUPPETEER

Yes, Pupster, we're glad to see everyone here.

PUPSTER

RUFF! RUFF!

FIRST PUPPETEER

We're on our way to Story Time at the library.

PUPSTER

RUFF! RUFF!

FIRST PUPPETEER

This is my dog, Pupster. She's a Reading Dog. I used to think a Reading Dog was a dog who knew how to read-

PUPSTER

(disagreeing)

RUFF!

FIRST PUPPETEER

No, a Reading Dog doesn't know how to read. A Reading Dog is a dog who likes to listen to *people* who know how to read.

PUPSTER
 (enthusiastically)
 RUFF-RUFF! RUFF-RUFF!

FIRST PUPPETEER
 Pupster likes to listen to all kinds of books- about dogs
 and cats and-

CHICKEN
 BOOK-A-BOOK-A-BOOK-BOOK-BOOK-BOOK!

FIRST PUPPETEER
 Yes, and books about chickens! Story time is wonderful. I
 love it. Pupster loves it, too. We wish it would come soon,
 don't we, Pupster?

PUPSTER
 Ruff-ruff!

FIRST PUPPETEER
 Yes, we do. But Story Time comes only once a week...
 (singing)

Story Time comes once a week,
 once a week, once a week.
 Story Time comes once a week,
 and we can't wait!

(spoken)
 Everybody!
 (singing)

Story time comes once a week,
 once a week, once a week.
 Story time comes once a week,
 and we can't wait.

(spoken)
 Louder!
 (singing)

Story Time comes once a week,
 once a week, once a week.
 Story time comes once a week,
 and we can't wait.

(spoken)

A week is a long time. It has many days. Who knows how many
 days there are in a week?

(waits for answers, then)

Seven! A week has seven days!

(encouraging ALL to stand up)

FIRST PUPPETEER (Cont.)

Come on! Let's all move through the week together. And then it will be Story Time!

(Singing or chanting, FIRST PUPPETEER and PUPSTER lead the actions as all travel along the *transitional path*, with SECOND PUPPETEER and CHICKEN bringing up the rear. The "go-go-go" sections, accompanied by shuffling forward, may be eliminated or extended as needed to cover the distance.)

Sunday. On Sunday,
what do we do?

We sway!

Sway, sway, sway, sway
sway, sway, sway, sway.

That's what we do.

(shuffling forward)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go...
and stop when the day is through.

What day comes after Sunday? Monday!

On Monday, what do we do?

We march!

March, march, march, march,
march, march, march, march.

That's what we do.

(shuffling)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go
and stop when the day is through.

What day comes after Monday? Tuesday!

On Tuesday, what do we do?

We tiptoe!

Tiptoe, tiptoe, tiptoe, tiptoe,
tiptoe, tiptoe, tiptoe, tiptoe.

that's what we do.

(shuffling)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go...
and stop when the day is through.

What day comes after Tuesday? Wednesday!

On Wednesday, what do we do?

We wiggle!

Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle,
wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle.

FIRST PUPPETEER (Cont.)

That's what we do.

(shuffling)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go...

and stop when the day is through.

What day comes after Wednesday? Thursday!

On Thursday, what do we do?

We thump!

Thump, thump, thump, thump

thump, thump, thump, thump.

That's what we do.

(shuffling)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go...

and stop when the day is through.

What day comes after Thursday? Friday!

On Friday, what do we do?

We fly!

Fly, fly, fly, fly,

fly, fly, fly, fly.

That's what we do.

(shuffling)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go...

and stop when the day is through.

What day comes after Friday? Saturday!

On Saturday, what do we do?

We swim!

Swim, swim, swim, swim,

swim, swim, swim, swim.

That's what we do.

(shuffling)

Then we go, go, go, go, go, go, go...

and stop when the day is through.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,
Saturday- that's seven days! We've moved through a week
together- and now it's Story Time! That means our librarian
is waiting for us. Her name is Ms. Karin. Come on! Into the
Children's Reading Room we go!

(Music. FIRST PUPPETEER
waves everyone through
entranceway into *central
playing area*- where
LIBRARIAN awaits them and
helps them get seated, with
ad libbed directions.
SECOND PUPPETEER leaves
CHICKEN PUPPET outside
entranceway to help as

well. MUSIC fades when all
except SECOND PUPPETEER and
CHICKEN are seated.)

FIRST PUPPETEER (Cont.)

Hello, Miss Karin!

LIBRARIAN

Hello, everyone! Welcome! It's wonderful to see you all.
Oh, and I see Pupster has come with you. Pupster is such a
good Reading Dog. She really likes to listen to stories.
Don't you, Pupster?

PUPSTER

(taking a seat among
audience)

RUFF! RUFF!

LIBRARIAN

Please make yourself comfortable, everyone. That's it.
(Ad libs as needed until
all are settled, then takes
her own seat.)

Good. Let's begin. So... here we are, in the Children's
Reading Room of the library. And it's Story Time! We have
everything we need-

(indicating herself)

One librarian.

(removing a book from the
basket)

One story.

(indicating the audience)

Children.

PUPSTER

Ruff-ruff!

LIBRARIAN

And Pupster, our Reading Dog.

(CHICKEN enters Children's
Reading Room.)

CHICKEN

Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-book!

LIBRARIAN

(surprised)

And a chicken! Oh, my goodness!

CHICKEN

Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-book!

LIBRARIAN

(to children)

I think that chicken said "book"! It certainly sounded like "book" to me. But chickens don't usually say "book"! What do chickens usually say?

(Children respond.)

It's sort of "bu-uck-a-buck-a-buck-buck-buck-buck," isn't it?

CHICKEN

Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-book!

LIBRARIAN

This chicken is definitely saying "book."

(to CHICKEN)

Do you like books, Chicken?

CHICKEN

(Absolutely!)

BOOOOOOOK-A-BOOK-A-BOOK-BOOK-BOOK-BOOK!

LIBRARIAN

A chicken who likes books! Imagine that!

CHICKEN

Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-book!

LIBRARIAN

But this is the *Children's* Reading Room. It's not the *Chickens'* Reading Room...

CHICKEN

(heart-broken)

Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-boooooook?

LIBRARIAN

(to children)

I think the chicken wants to join us.

CHICKEN
 ("Yes, please!")
 BOOK-A-BOOK-A-BOOK-BOOK-BOOK-BOOK!

LIBRARIAN
 Well, Story Time is for everyone...

PUPSTER
 (agreeing)
 RUFF! RUFF!

LIBRARIAN
 All right. Yes. Please join us, Chicken.

(CHICKEN shares her delight
 with the children as she
 snuggles in among them,
 being careful not to block
 anyone's view of
 LIBRARIAN.)

CHICKEN
 Book-a-book-a-book-book-book-book.

LIBRARIAN
 The chicken likes you, children.
 (CHICKEN responds with a
 soft "book-a-book-a")
 The children like you, Chicken.
 (another gentle, happy
 response)
 How nice!
 (indicates book)
 And everyone loves Story Time. Let's begin.
 (begins to read a story)
 "MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB"-

(But no sooner does she
 begin, than CHICKEN is
 overcome with joy and
 enthusiasm.)

CHICKEN
 BOOK-A-BOOK-A-BOOK-A-BOOK-A...!

LIBRARIAN
 Oh, my goodness, Chicken!