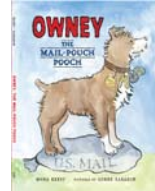


READERS' THEATER for OWNEY, THE MAIL-POUCH POOCH

For Readers' Theater, you don't need props or costumes. Instead, use your voice. Read loudly, clearly, and with expression. Practice your lines many times.

The five readers are: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Narrator 3, Narrator 4, and Owney. The same actors may read the entire play. Or, different groups may read Act I, II, and III.

Teachers, librarians, and students may adapt the play to meet their needs.



Play written by Mona Kerby and based on her book.

ACT I

- Narrator 1:** In the year 1888, on a rainy night in Albany, New York, a hungry mutt wandered the streets. At the post office, he spied an opening. The dog squeezed inside.
- Narrator 2:** He found a pile of canvas bags. He sniffed around until he found just the right spot, where he circled twice, and went to sleep.
- Owney:** (Barks twice. Yawns loudly.)
- Narrator 3:** The next morning, workers found the mutt on the mail pouches. He growled a mean, low-pitched rumble.
- Owney:** (Growls in a scary way.)
- Narrator 4:** The men talked to the dog. The mutt glared. He sniffed. But he didn't bite. He seemed to like the smell of blue wool uniforms.
- Owney:** (Barks twice. Sniffs loudly.)
- Narrator 1:** Days passed. The dog didn't leave. No one came looking for him. So the men gave him a name. They called him Owney.
- Owney:** (Barks several times, happy.)
- Narrator 2:** Owney settled in at the post office. He patrolled the mail room. He supervised the men. He stood guard as the men loaded the mail on the train.
- Narrator 3:** One day, just as the train started leaving the station, Owney chased it. Running lickety-split, he leaped and landed in the mail car.
- Narrator 4:** The Albany men were sad. But the train crew waved. They were glad to have Owney aboard. All the way to New York City, Owney sat in the open door, seeing new sights and sniffing new smells.
- Owney:** (Barks several times. Sniffs, pants, loudly.)

ACT II, SCENE 1

Narrator 1: Months later, Owney took the train home to Albany. His friends asked where he had been. But Owney didn't answer. He just wagged his tail.

Owney: (Barks several times.)

Narrator 2: After that, the men tied a note to his collar. "Owney guards the U.S. Mail. Will you let us know where he has been? Please attach your tag to his collar."

Narrator 3: Soon, Owney had so many tags on his collar that he could barely lift his head. But when his pals tried to remove some, Owney growled.

Owney: (Growls in a scary way.)

Narrator 4: So his pals gave him a harness that stretched across his body. They spread out the tags. This made it easier for Owney to walk. He liked it fine.

Owney: (Barks several times, happy.)

Narrator 1: Owney took off again. He visited New York City, Boston, and Augusta, Maine.

Narrator 2: He took the train to Cleveland, Chicago, St. Paul, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Narrator 3: In Texas, he inspected Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston. He hopped trains to Memphis, Washington D.C., and Baltimore.

All Narrators: Howdy, Owney! Glad to see you! Come back soon!

Owney: (Barks a happy bark.)

Narrator 4: But not everyone liked Owney. In Canada, dog catchers threw him in the pound.

All Narrators: (Sing in a dreary monotone.) Dum, dum, da-dum, dum, dum, dum, da-dum, da-dum.

Owney: (Barks in a sad way.)

ACT II, SCENE 2

Note: This brief scene has the potential to be the most entertaining. Practice reading together, using your more expressive voices.

Narrator 1: No dog worked harder for the U.S. Postal Service. In 1892, Owney greeted the Republicans in Buffalo, New York.

All Narrators: Cast your vote and shake a paw. Say hello to Owney!

Owney: (Barks several times.)

Narrator 2: In 1893, he met with the Iowa bankers in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

All Narrators: (Voices get louder at the end.) Go-oo-oo, bankers! Hooray for money!
Three cheers for Owney!

Owney: (Barks in sets of three, several times.)

Narrator 3: In 1895, he welcomed the chicken farmers in Tacoma, Washington.

All Narrators: Chicken feathers! Chicken clucks! Owney, take a bow!

Owney: (Barks several times.)

Narrator 4: But by 1895, Owney was slowing down.

ACT III

Narrator 1: His friends gave him a trip around the world. He had his very own suitcase.

Narrator 2: In Japan, the officials didn't know what to do with a traveling dog. They give him a passport—with rules.

Narrator 3: Owney was not allowed to ride a horse to a fire. He could not rent a house. He could not scribble on buildings.

Narrator 4: Owney obeyed. After all, he was a U.S. Postal Employee.

Owney: (Barks several times, sounding official.)

Narrator 1: Owney visited Hong Kong, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. Then he sailed home, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Narrator 2: People called him the “Greatest Dog Traveler in the World.”

Owney: (Barks several times, sounding proud.)

Narrator 3: In 1897, Owney was missing some teeth. He was blind in one eye. He was too stiff to hop a train.

Narrator 4: But he took one last trip. In San Francisco, he was the guest of the Railway Clerks at their convention.

Narrator 1: Owney walked on stage. The crowd leaped to their feet. They cheered, clapped, and whistled.

All Narrators: (Make a variety of sounds—including whistling, cheering, clapping.)

Owney: (Barks.)

Narrator 2: After that, Owney retired to the Albany Post Office. He had plenty to eat. He had a soft mail bag for a bed.

Narrator 3: Sometimes when he napped, his nose twitched, and his paws quivered. Maybe Owney was dreaming about the good old days—

Narrator 4: Of running lickety-split to catch a train and traveling the world.

All Narrators: Cheers to Owney and the U.S. Mail!

Owney: (Barks many times, sounding, happy.)

Everyone: The End.

Thanks to Ms. Rhine's fourth grade class at William Winchester Elementary School for their help in revising this readers' theater, especially Brandon, Emma, Flannery, Julia, and Megan.—Mona Kerby, 4-21-09