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A one-act dramatic play

# PEACHES

by Idries Shah



KashfisChildren.org

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## CAST

*(Narrators 1-3 can be read by more than three students so that many will get a chance to perform.)*

Narrators 1 - 3

The Three Neighboring Families (each family can have as many members as desired)

The First Family: The Syrup Makers

The Second Family: The Dried Fruit Makers

The Third Family: The Kernel Extracting Family

The Small Boy, the Merchant, and the Old Person

## The Script

*(The three families are in different spots on the staging area: The First Family is working beside their large contraption. The Second Family is sitting on tarps inspecting their fruit. The Third Family is piling kernels in a basket. Allow children to choose their own actions during the reading. However, some ideas for actions are given throughout the script.)*

**Narrator 1:** Once upon a time, there were three neighboring families who ate nothing but peaches. One family boiled the peaches, added large amounts of sugar, and made a syrup to drink. *(Suggested action: A Syrup Family member holds up a bottle of peach syrup while other family members look on proudly.)*

**Narrator 2:** Another family dried the fruit in the sun and gnawed on it when it was as hard as rock. *(Suggested action: Dried Fruit Family members pretend to gnaw on the fruit.)*

**Narrator 3:** The third family discarded the skin and flesh, cracked open the stones, and ate the kernels. *(Suggested action: Members of this family can pretend to extract the kernels and pitch the discarded skins over their shoulders into a pile, then place the kernels in baskets.)*

**Narrator 1:** Each family thought their way of preparing peaches was the only way it should be done. *(Suggested action: each family can use gestures depicting their thinking their way is the only way.)*

**Narrator 2:** However, each wondered if they were, in fact, experiencing the true essence of peaches ... *(Suggested action: Members of each family have quizzical expressions on their faces and perhaps hold their chins in their hands as if they are saying Hmmm.)*

**Narrator 3:** what they began to think of as ...

**All Narrators in unison:** *the real thing.*

**A Member of the First Family:** What if there is even more to *the real thing* than this syrup?

**Narrator 1:** To find out, they tried new ways of preparing syrup.

**A Member of the Second Family:** Naturally, sun-dried peaches are far peachier than other forms of the fruit, but could there be something even peachier than this?

**Narrator 2:** To find out, they tried new methods for drying the fruit and eating it. *(Suggested action:*

actors can choose the actions they want to do, such as rearranging, stacking, placing the dried fruit on wooden sticks or in pots, and so on.)

**A Member of the Third Family:** It stands to reason that the kernel is central to the fruit and as such must be the best part, but could we experience something that's even closer to a true peach?

**Narrator 3:** To find out, they tried new ways of cracking peach stones and eating the kernels.

**Narrator 1:** One day, a small boy from a different neighborhood passed by and overheard the families talking. (*The small boy enters.*)

**The Small Boy:** What strange things you're doing! Don't you know how to eat peaches?

**A Member from any of the Families:** He must be too young to understand! (*Suggested action: all families nod in agreement, while the small boy runs off.*)

**Narrator 2:** Another time, a merchant from a different town passed by and stopped to observe the methods and experiments of the neighbors. (*The merchant enters.*)

**The Merchant:** You have each come up with a valid way to prepare peaches, but there is more to it than that.

**Narrator 3:** Suspicious, they drove him away, muttering about the dangers of trusting strangers. (*Suggested action: All families shake their fists and wag their fingers at the retreating merchant.*)

**Narrator 1:** Eventually, the town's oldest inhabitant hobbled past. (*The old person enters.*)

**The Old Person:** Stop your syrup making, sun drying, and stone cracking for a moment! I'll explain how to experience the true flavor of peach, which is escaping you all. You must eat the whole peach! It's sweet like syrup, peachy like dried fruit, and you can hold the stone while you are finishing off the flesh.

**Narrator 2:** However, the families were too attached to their peach-extraction methods and experiments to listen to her.

**Narrator 3:** They were also too addicted to their feuding and their search for *the real thing* to think and listen.

**Narrator 1:** Instead, they stepped up their experiments with increasing gusto. Tirelessly, they worked on their machines and systems and laughed at their critics.

**A Member from the First Family:** With our years of experience with peaches, how could a boy...

**A Member from the Second Family:** a merchant and an old woman...

**A Member from the Third Family:** know more about the fruit than we do?

(*Suggested action: all the families make scoffing noises, shake their heads, and in other ways show disapproval.*)

**A Member of the First Family:** Anyway, they each told us something completely different.

**Narrator 2:** So, shaking their heads at the folly of others, they continued. Of course, this all took place a very long time ago, and the people in this story are now long gone.

**Narrator 3:** However, their descendants live on. Some are still making peach syrup.

**Narrator 1:** Some are still making peach syrup.

**Narrator 2:** Still others extract the peach kernels and throw away the rest of the fruit.

**Narrator 3:** Each will tell you that *they* are closest to finding ...

**The entire cast (in unison):** *the real thing.*

**The End**

# TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR THEATER

Teachers may want to use this script as an excellent way to allow students to learn the story, while promoting reading fluency. Students learn to read with expression and to practice such attributes of fluency as pausing, inflection and intonation. Reading the scripts aloud to students promote listening skills as they follow along silently and listen for spoken cues. Having students take on character roles helps them understand literary elements, such as motivation and characterization. The scripts provide a great opportunity for student cooperation as they work together on the performance.

## 1. Using the Script

- a. Use the script as you would any reading material and make sure students are familiar with the story and the vocabulary before they engage in this activity.
- b. Tell students that different combinations of readers will take turns reading the “play.”
- c. Assign the first set of readers and give them time to practice their roles and feel confident. Encourage them to read with expression. Tell the readers that the “Suggested Action” comments in the script are given only as examples of actions and are not part of the spoken script, and that they should feel free to choose their own actions during the reading.
- d. When the first readers are ready, you may want to have them stand where all students can see them. They may also read from their seats. Coach the readers to look up occasionally from their scripts and to make eye contact with the audience and other characters/readers as they read their lines.
- e. Have other sets of readers take turns at reading the script.
- f. If you have the resources, make a copy of the two-page script for each of the characters in the cast and mark the parts for that character. If this is not possible, have the student actors read their lines from the books, without marking, of course.

**RETELL OPTION:** Children might also use this script as a guide to retell the story in their own words or act out the story in their own way.

## 2. Staging the Play

- a. When students have become familiar with the script from several readings, you may want to create a full stage performance with costumes, props, and an audience of students, parents, and teachers. It is always a good idea to allow more rehearsal time when applying extra touches such as costumes or movement.
- b. In planning a performance, encourage students to think about the expressions and movements characters might make. For example, have students think about how people look and move when they are happy, angry, or nervous.
- c. Have students practice facial expressions. If the character is the Small Boy, have students practice looking concerned because of the strange way the families are acting over peaches. You might have a mirror around for the students to practice making their “faces.”
- d. Encourage them to create a “voice” for their character.
- e. Encourage students to act creatively (even to “ham it up”) with the script to increase the entertainment value of the performance.
- f. Establish a “stage” area in the classroom, moving and using tables, desks, and chairs and using the floor as needed and as safety allows.
- g. Use these simple tips to keep the performance smooth and entertaining:

- ❖ Make sure readers are positioned within view of all members of the audience. It is important that the audience can hear lines and see movements and expressions. If you choose to place all the readers in front of the audience at once, it is helpful to have them stand in a semicircle so that each reader can be seen by all the other readers and by the audience.
- ❖ Suggest where readers should stand so that they do not block the audience’s view of other readers.
- ❖ Remind students that they should be looking at, talking to, and reacting to the other readers/characters. However, the narrators may face and speak to the audience.
- ❖ As an alternative to having all the readers stand together in the performance area, you may want to direct the performance by having readers enter and exit off to the side before and after delivering their lines. Having readers move in and out of the performance area will require more rehearsal time.

### 3. Ideas for Props

Props are optional and can all be constructed out of cardboard, construction paper, pieces of cloth, and other common items. (See **Extras: Costumes & Props** below for more ideas.)

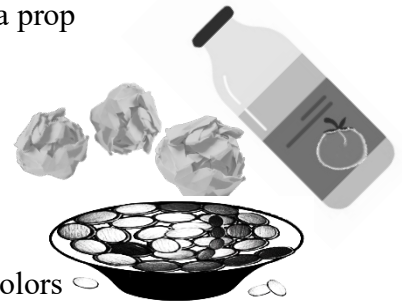
**1. Syrup-Making Machine:** Have the students construct their version of the complex machine out of cardboard boxes and tubes. They can draw, cut out glue on shapes for cogs, wheels, and instruments. If they have a chance to make some “moving” parts, that would be even more dramatic. Have the students draw a fire to fuel the contraption. Have a schematic drawing of the machine for a prop (see the book for an illustration of one).

**2. Syrup Bottles:** Plastic bottles.

**3. Tarps (or blankets) and baskets (2 sets):** The Fruit Drying and the Kernel family members will sit on the tarps and fill the baskets with their dried fruit or kernels. (See **Extras: Costumes & Props** below for more ideas.)

**4. Dried “peaches”:** Scrunch up construction papers into small balls of various colors of orange, red, yellow and brown to depict dried peaches.

**5. Peach Seeds/Stones & Kernels:** Cut out shapes of peach skins, stones and kernels from construction paper. For kernels, a collection of large beads could be used.



### Extras: Costumes and Props

The face and head command the most attention, so a hat, mask, or makeup can work as an entire costume. Make sure that students obtain permission before borrowing items from other people. It's best not to let them cut, paint, or modify any clothing items unless you bring in articles of clothing specifically for that purpose.

Students will have their scripts in hand while performing. So, when choosing props, keep in mind that objects which require two hands may not be practical. Encourage students to use their imagination as they transform everyday objects into props.

**For Syrup Bottles:** For the Syrup Family, use empty plastic water bottles. Insert orange-colored construction paper in the bottles to represent peach syrup, or have the children paint the inside of the bottle with orange paint by pouring liquid water-based paint inside and swirling. Discard the paint and allow the paint to dry.

**For Dried Fruit & Stones/Kernels:** Use the construction paper suggestions from above. Or have children draw, color and cut out the props. (It is not recommended to use real dried fruit because of potential allergies.)

**For Tarps:** Families Two and Three will be sitting or standing on tarps or blankets for their scenes. They should each have 2-3 medium-to-large baskets (or cardboard boxes decorated to look like baskets) for collecting the fruit.

**The Merchant's Cart:** Students can construct a cart using a large cardboard box. Adding cardboard wheels to the side, handles for pulling, etc., or simply drawing wheels and handles on the side of the box.

**Art Materials:** water (washable) paints, paint brushes, foam brushes, sponges, plastic cups, plastic bottles and jars, paint cups & trays, art paper roll, pencils, markers, glue, scissors, chalk, rulers, finger paints, construction paper or other heavy paper, plastic sheeting to cover work areas

Students may wish to use their art and other drawings from previous lessons.

**Making a Mural:** Allow enough space in the room for several students to work at once on the large art roll (the mural can be as long as your “staging” area) that is taped to the wall (or laid out on the floor). Or, you may want to section off parts of the larger roll of art paper for several students or groups to work on at once. Or, cut sections of the paper roll for each student or group of students to work with at their desks or on the floor.

Depending on your staging space, you may want to do several murals: One for the beginning scenes, one for the middle scenes, and one for the ending scenes. Allowing time during the performances for changing scenes is another possibility, but this takes coordination and rehearsal, so make sure your rehearsals include this activity.

THIS WILL TAKE MORE THAN ONE DAY TO COMPLETE. YOU MAY WISH TO DECIDE WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO KEEP THE MURAL SO THAT IT REMAINS INTACT AND CAN DRY BETWEEN CLASSES.

Here are some suggestions on making a mural:

1. Discuss some possible ideas for the mural they will be creating. Here are some suggested ideas:

The illustrations in the book include many designs and illustrations of contraptions, surrounding countryside, homes and buildings, fruit trees and gardens, people, animals, birds, and objects; perhaps the students want to emphasize these elements in the mural. They may want to use their own drawings for ideas for scenes of the story.

The elements of the story take place mostly in the peach orchards, yet other areas, such as the village and farm houses, can be depicted. Perhaps the students want to create a mural that includes all of the places in which the story occurs.

2. You may want to organize students into three groups: one group for scenes or designs from the first part of the story; one for the middle part; and one for the ending of the story. Each group can brainstorm ideas for a mural.

3. Once they have decided on the idea for the mural, students or groups of students can lightly sketch their designs onto drawing paper at their desks. Using these sketches, ask student or group to show their designs to the class and have the class discuss the elements and where to add them to the mural. Let this be a cooperative effort. Make sure that all students have a part in the design of the mural, whether it's sketching, painting, planning.

4. Allow 4-6 students at a time to take turns coming to the mural to sketch the design and later to paint. Older students may direct younger students.

5. Some painting can be done with sponges, others with paint brushes. Let the students make these choices. One idea using sponges is having students dip them into one or more colors of paint and press them onto the paper, creating a different texture than brushstrokes. Students may want to create “stencils” by drawing a design (such as a bottle) on thick paper, cutting out the design, and use sponges to stencil the design onto the mural.

6. Ten minutes before class ends, have students help with the clean-up.

## Clean-Up

1. Assign students to wash brushes and sponges.
2. Assign students to collect the newsprint or plastic sheeting (re-use if possible).
3. Assign students to cover paints, rinse out plastic cups or trays.
4. Store mural or individual pieces of it so that it will dry without disturbing other classroom activities.

## Other Ideas for Activities

Some suggestions for making the set:

**Architecture/Furniture:** Have the students look at the architecture, furniture and other elements, such as windows, doors, columns, balconies, roofs, which are depicted in the illustrations to get ideas for their murals.

**Costumes:** Students may want to make up several costumes using items of clothing that are specifically designated for this use. Have them discuss the dress as depicted in the story, by explaining some of the clothing is those worn by people from Afghanistan and other Central Asian areas. These include items such as hajibs and turbans (head coverings) and kaffiyehs (large scarves) and decorated tunics. Some characters are in white lab coats. Then have the students make up the costumes for their parts in the play. They can take turns explaining them to the classroom.

## Follow-Up

There will be opportunities to recall and use the story with your students. For example, whenever you notice students insisting their way is the best for doing something, remind them about the Peach families and other characters in *Peaches* who also felt that way. You may want to say:

“When I heard you just now, it reminded me of the story we read called *Peaches*. Can you guess why I thought that?”

Go back to the story from time to time, weeks or months later, to see what your students can remember from the story. Encourage them to share what they remember or perhaps retell the story in their own words or act out the story in their own way. You and your students may find more meanings, concepts and insights from it as time goes on. Remember, these stories can be enjoyed and be useful for people of all ages.