



A Caterpillar's Voice

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

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CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

HARE - *another name for rabbit*

CATERPILLAR

JACKAL

LEOPARD

RHINO

ELEPHANT

FROG

**Performance notes can be found on the pages following the script*

Scene 1 – Hare’s Cave

[**Stage set:** Outside of and inside the HARE’s cave. The set inside the cave has a chair. Outside the cave, students can create small trees, flowers, and bushes, or paint these onto a large butcher block paper for a backdrop.]

[When the play opens, HARE is sitting on the chair inside his cave (or her cave, if the actor playing HARE is a girl).]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Hello, everyone. You are about to see a play called “A Caterpillar’s Voice.” It is a folktale from Kenya, that’s a country in Africa. The story is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*.

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

NARRATOR:

Once upon a time in Africa, there was a Hare. He (*or she, depending on the actor*) lived in a nice cave.

[HARE starts out on the stage. He is sitting in a chair. This is his cave. He gets up and speaks.]

HARE:

What a nice day for a walk. I will leave my cave for a bit and get some exercise.

[HARE exits.]

[CATERPILLAR enters. It is good if CATERPILLAR can crawl.]

NARRATOR:

What is this? It’s a little caterpillar.

CATERPILLAR:

This seems like a very good cave. Maybe I’ll just go for a bit. (*sits on the chair*) Ah! I like it here. I could stay and be very happy. (*looks around*) Say, this cave has an echo. It makes my little voice sound big!

[HARE enters onstage and looks around.]

HARE:

It’s good to be home. (*looks at the ground outside the cave*) Oh, my! I see footprints outside my cave! What’s going on? Did someone go in there while I was out? (*calls out*) Hello there! Who is in my cave?

CATERPILLAR:

(in a big, loud voice) It is!! I am the biggest and strongest of them all.

HARE:

Oh dear! What a loud voice! What will I do?

[JACKAL enters the stage.]

HARE:

Oh Jackal, I am glad to see you. I need help!

JACKAL:

Sure. What is it?

HARE:

There is a big, mean animal in my cave! How will I get back inside?

JACKAL:

That is a problem, but don't worry. *(calls out)* Hello! Who is in the cave of my friend, the Hare?

CATERPILLAR:

(in a big, loud voice) It is!! I am the biggest and strongest of them all!

JACKAL:

Oh, Hare. I don't think I can help you. It sounds like you have a giant animal in your cave. Probably bigger than me. I am just a jackal. I must go now! Goodbye!

[JACKAL exits.]

[LEOPARD enters.]

HARE:

Leopard, please help me!

LEOPARD:

Sure. What's the problem?

HARE:

There is a big, scary animal in my cave. Can you get it out?

LEOPARD:

Most definitely. As you can see, I myself am big and strong. *(calls out)* You there! Who is in the cave of my friend, the Hare?

CATERPILLAR:

(in a big, loud voice) It is!! I am the biggest and strongest of them all.

LEOPARD:

Uh, oh! If that animal is the biggest and strongest, I'd hate to think what he could do to me! I'm sorry, Hare. I'm out of here!

[LEOPARD exits.]

[RHINO enters.]

HARE:

Oh, Rhino. You are a very big animal! Please, you must help me!

RHINO:

That is true. I am HUGE. What do you need?

HARE:

Something big is in my cave. I'm scared. Can you help me?

RHINO:

Of course. It's a good thing you came to me for help. Nothing scares ME. *(calls out)* Hello, in there! Who is in the cave of my friend, the Hare?

CATERPILLAR:

(in a big, loud voice) It is!! I am the biggest and strongest of them all.

HARE:

Oh Rhino, can you get it out?

RHINO:

Hare, nothing scares me. Nothing, that is, except the big voice in that cave! You need an even bigger animal. Maybe an elephant?

[ELEPHANT enters. RHINO remains on stage.]

ELEPHANT:

Did I hear someone mention my name?

HARE:

We were talking about how extremely big and strong you are.

ELEPHANT:

Of course! That is what I am known for! What do you need?

HARE:

There is something big and terrifying in my cave. Can you help get it out?

ELEPHANT:

Is that all? (*calls out*) Hey! Who is in the cave of my friend, the Hare?

CATERPILLAR:

(*in a big, loud voice*) It is!! I am the biggest and strongest of them all.

ELEPHANT and RHINO:

(*scream*) AHHH!

[ELEPHANT and RHINO run off the stage.]

HARE:

NOW what I am going to do?

[FROG enters.]

FROG:

Hare, what is wrong?

HARE:

Oh, what a day! I am trying to get back inside my cave. But there is something gigantic and loud in there. It says it's the biggest and strongest of them all. I don't know what to do!

FROG:

Did you try calling out to the thing in your cave?

HARE:

Oh yes. I did. And so did Jackal, Leopard, and Rhino. Even Elephant!

FROG:

What happened?

HARE:

All the other animals got scared and ran away.

FROG:

I am not as big as Jackal, Leopard, Rhino, or Elephant. Still, can I try?

HARE:

How would you be able to get the big voice out? You are just a frog.

FROG:

That's true but still, can I try?

HARE:

Why not? Good luck!

[Enter JACKAL.]

JACKAL:

Did someone call my name?

[Enter LEOPARD.]

LEOPARD:

I heard someone say my name.

[Enter RHINO.]

RHINO:

Who wants me?

[Enter ELEPHANT.]

ELEPHANT:

I am here, everyone.

HARE:

Hello there. Frog is going to try to get the big thing out of my cave.

JACKAL:

(points to Frog) That frog?

LEOPARD:

That tiny thing?

RHINO:

No way!

ELEPHANT:

What a joke!

[JACKAL, LEOPARD, RHINO and ELEPHANT all laugh.]

HARE:

(to Frog) It's okay. Don't listen to them. Nothing else has worked, and I still need help.

FROG:

(steps up to the opening to the cave and calls out) Who's in the cave of my friend, the Hare? You may be big and strong, but I am the biggest and strongest of ALL the animals. I insist that you come outside this cave. Right now!

CATERPILLAR:

Oh dear! This one says it is the very biggest and strongest of all! And I am just me, a caterpillar, after all. I am coming out now.

[CATERPILLAR gets off the chair, crawls over to the animals, and stands up.]

CATERPILLAR:

Please don't hurt me.

HARE:

What? All that time it was just YOU in the cave?

CATERPILLAR:

Oops.

JACKAL:

A caterpillar? For real?

LEOPARD:

But that voice!

CATERPILLAR:

That cave had a great echo! It made me sound BIG!

RHINO:

This must be a joke! You are anything but big!

[JACKAL, LEOPARD, RHINO, and ELEPHANT step in closer to CATERPILLAR. They are mad.]

CATERPILLAR:

Well, now. Hi, fellows! I guess it's time now for me to be moving along. BYE!

[CATERPILLAR quickly crawls off stage.]

ELEPHANT:

Boy, he sure fooled us.

LEOPARD:

Can you believe it? We were all bamboozled by that little caterpillar!

[All ANIMALS laugh, except HARE and FROG.]

HARE:

All of us, that is, except one. (*points to Frog*)

FROG:

I may be little, but my thinking is big.

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]



Performance Notes for A Caterpillar's Voice

THREE WAYS THAT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS CAN UTILIZE THIS PLAY:

1. *Students can read the play aloud while sitting in the classroom.* Ask the readers to skip all bracketed stage directions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.
2. *Students can perform the play in the classroom.* Clear an area that can be used as the stage. Have the audience sit on the floor in front of the stage. Students in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets as described below. When the scene change, the characters "on stage" simply walk to the back of the room where they wait until their next appearance "on stage."
3. *Students can perform the play on stage.* Refer to the production notes that follow. Ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage.



COSTUMES

Each character wears clothing with a color indicative of his or her animal character and also wears a customized hat.

- HARE — Rabbit ears.
- CATERPILLAR— Antenna.
- JACKAL — Small round ears.



- LEOPARD — Yellow cat ears with spots.
- RHINO — One white horn attached to the front of a hat.
- ELEPHANT— A trunk attached to a low hat.
- FROG — Big wide eyes on a green hat.



PROPS

Scene 1

- Optional: A spear made out of cardboard with its tip covered with foil for the NARRATOR to hold.
- A megaphone or microphone for the CATERPILLAR to make his/her voice loud and booming.
- A bunch or real carrots or carrots made out of orange construction paper for the HARE to carry.
- Twigs for all the ANIMALS to use in order to chase the CATERPILLAR away.



SETS

- **Scene 1** —Students can paint trees, flowers, and bushes on to large butcher block paper for a backdrop outside the cave. Students can paint a separate backdrop to represent the inside of the cave. Optional: A blanket and/or pillow and a chair inside the cave for the CATERPILLAR to rest on.

