

Reader's Theatre: "All for a Pansa"

To Read Aloud in Class or to Perform

*Based on a story retold by Elaine L. Lindy
Adapted as a play script by Lindsay Parker*

► **Note:**

If you read this play script aloud in class, skip the stage directions. The stage directions are the words shown inside the brackets and in italics:

[Like this.]

You can also skip the descriptions of props, set changes and backdrops.

Characters in Order of Appearance:

NARRATOR or NARRATORS

(one person or more than one person)

MERCHANT

WIFE

SON

IRONSMITH'S DAUGHTER

Another One-Act Play

NARRATOR or NARRATORS:

(Anyone who does not have a speaking part in the rest of the play and who wants to perform can be a NARRATOR. If more than one person wants to be a NARRATOR, then the NARRATORS as a group should speak together in one voice.)

This play is "All for a Pansa." It is a folktale from India. It is brought to you by Whootie Owl.

Long ago in India there lived a wealthy merchant who was not at all happy with his only son. His mother always thought the best of him, however, and was continually making excuses for him.

[Stage set: The backdrop shows a house with some trees beside it and fields of golden grasses.]

[MERCHANT and WIFE enter, speaking to each other.]

MERCHANT:

He just doesn't listen. I don't know how he can be my son.

WIFE:

Don't say that. He's our dear child. He just needs some extra attention.

MERCHANT:

You give him way too much attention as it is! I don't know how we're ever going to find a wife for him. Let's face it, the boy is lazy.

WIFE:

Please, just give him one more chance to prove himself.

MERCHANT:

He's already had WAY too many chances!

WIFE:

Just one more, for me. Please? Pretty please?

MERCHANT:

All right. But that fool is going to have work for it. He's going to have to think.

[SON enters.]

SON:

Hello, Father and Mother. How are you today?

MERCHANT:

Fine, fine. I have something I want you to do. I will give you one last chance to prove yourself.

SON:

What can I do?

MERCHANT:

I am going to give you this paisa. I want you to go to the bazaar. With this one paisa, buy something to eat, something to drink, something for the cow to chew on and something to plant in the garden.

SON:

What? How do you expect me to do that with only one paisa? That's not fair!

MERCHANT AND WIFE:

(with hands on hips) LOTS OF THINGS IN LIFE AREN'T FAIR!

SON:

I'll show you, father. I can do it! *(to audience)* Somehow.

[MERCHANT, WIFE and SON exit.]

[STOPPING POINT—ask audience for suggestions]

[SON enters with the IRONSMITH's DAUGHTER carrying a watermelon.]

SON:

Here's a watermelon, father. It provides something to eat, something to drink, something for the cow to chew on, and something to plant in the garden.

MERCHANT:

So it does. I'm impressed!

WIFE:

I knew you could do it, son.

SON:

Actually, it was the ironsmith's daughter who had the idea.

MERCHANT:

And you don't hog the credit, either. That's two good moves. Young lady, how did you think of such a fine solution?

IRONSMITH'S DAUGHTER:

Well, a watermelon takes care of all your conditions.

MERCHANT:

Indeed it does. I am proud of you both. Young lady, I would like to invite your family to my house to celebrate. It seems like our families should get to know one another better.

IRONSMITH'S DAUGHTER:

Thank you. I would like that.

MERCHANT:

(to audience) Young people! Just when you're ready to give up on them, they surprise you! And to think I didn't have any idea myself how to solve that riddle!

THE END

Production Notes: 3 Riddle Stories

Notes by Lindsay M. Parker

Three ways that students and teachers can utilize the one-act plays:

1. ***Students can read the play aloud from their seats.*** Students simply read their lines. They do not follow the stage directions.
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 scenes 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 onstage.*** For a performance on a real stage, see the notes on sets, costumes, and props.

Teachers, please note:

Each riddle story is a one-act play. During each play there is a designated "stopping point." If you're performing the play for students who already know the story, ignore the stopping point. Or if you're performing the play for students who do not know how the riddle is solved, use the stopping point to solicit suggestions from the audience.

- In **Pumpkin in a Jar**, the maiden asks the audience, "Do you have any ideas?" She hears three guesses from the audience, then says, "Well, let me see, how can I do it? I have it!"

- In **All for a Pansa**, the merchant asks the audience, "Do you think you know?" The merchant takes three suggestions, then says, "Ah, I see my son coming. Let's see if he figured it out!"

- In **Outwitting the Imp**, the son asks the audience, "Do you know what I should do?" After three suggestions: "I think you have some good ideas and have helped me come up with a way to save my mother!"

Set Suggestions – Optional

The Pumpkin in the Jar:

This is a one-act play with no set changes. The backdrop should be painted to show grassy fields or rice fields. The maiden's home, surrounded by a garden of melons, is painted on one side of the backdrop.

All for a Pansa:

This is also a one-act play with no set changes. There is a lot of movement in this act and people come and go throughout. The backdrop shows a beautifully ornate house painted with some golden grassy fields in the foreground.

Outwitting the Imp:

This is also a one-act play with no set changes. The backdrop shows planted rows of crops in the foreground. The family's crops of cassava (the root crop in the story that's grown in the Congo and made into bread) has been ruined. Actual hay and roots in the background will give the set a three-dimensional flavor.

Props

The Pumpkin in the Jar:

A table, two plastic jars and a pitcher.

All for a Pansa:

Gold coin, watermelon. (You can apply paper mache to a balloon and paint it when dry to look like a watermelon.)

Outwitting the Imp:

A basket and shovels.