



Reading Aloud Steps: Selected Readings

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Step 1: Prose Passages

The Lion and the Mouse

The Lion was tired after hunting and he lay down in the cool grass to rest. He felt something tiptoeing up his back. It was a mouse. The Lion lay still. SNAP! "Got you!" he roared.

"Please don't eat me – let me go and I will repay you one day," begged the Mouse. The Lion laughed and flicked the Mouse away. "You are too small to eat."

A few days later, some hunters captured the Lion and tied him up. The Mouse heard his roaring and came to help. She began to gnaw the ropes binding the Lion until he was free.

Moral: Even a small friend may be a great friend.

The Boy and the Fox

There was once a village boy who was walking through the forest near his home in Sweden when he saw a fox lying in a clearing, fast asleep.

"I could kill that fox and sell the skin," the boy muttered to himself. "With the money, I could buy some corn and sow it in my father's field. All the people in the village will see it when they pass by and will say, 'Look at that wonderful corn!' I'll say to them, 'Get away from my corn!' But they won't listen so I'll have to run up to them and shout at them. But they will ignore me. So I will have to yell at them."

The boy was so involved in his dream that he screamed, "GET AWAY FROM MY CORN!!"

The noise woke the fox up, who raced off into the forest before the boy could move.

Theseus

Once there was a powerful king who had a beautiful daughter. Young men came from all over Greece to ask for her hand in marriage. She refused them all. Many of these men were strong but they could not read or write. There were other pale and wise young men who could read every book, but who couldn't ride or run. The princess sent them all home.

Finally, she married the king of Athens, who could throw a spear farther than anyone else and who had read many books. They were very happy but the king had to return to Athens.

They stood on a high hill. "Soon you will have child, my beautiful wife." He stooped and buried his shoes and sword in the earth, placing a giant rock over them.

"When our son is strong enough to move this rock, send him to me."

The Fox and the Crow

A crow was sitting on the branch of a tree with a piece of cheese in her beak, when a fox saw her and wanted to find a way of getting hold of the delicious cheese. He quietly came up to the tree and stood below the crow. He looked up and said, "What a noble bird I see above me! Her beauty is beyond words and the colour of her feathers is perfect. If only her voice is as sweet as her looks are beautiful, she will be the queen of this part of the wood."

The crow was hugely flattered by these words and just to show the fox that she could sing, she gave a loud caw. Down came the cheese, of course, and the fox, who snatched up the tasty piece, said, "You certainly have a voice, madam, I see. What you need is wits."

Three Billy Goats

Three billy goats wanted to cross a bridge to eat the grass on the other side. The problem was that under the bridge lived a terrible troll with teeth of iron and eyes of fire.

The youngest Billy Goat crossed the bridge. Trip, trap, trip, trap.

“AHA! I will gobble you up!” shouted the Troll.

“No, don’t take me, I’m too little,” said the Billy Goat, “wait until my brother comes, he’s much bigger.”

The second Billy Goat crossed the bridge. Trip, trap, trip, trap.

“I have been waiting for you!” shouted the Troll.

“No, don’t take me, wait till my brother crosses, he’s much bigger.”

At that moment, the big Billy Goat arrived on the bridge which creaked and groaned.

“At last, I’m coming to gobble you up!” roared the Troll.

“Well, come along! I’ve got two spears, and I’ll poke your eyeballs out at your ears; I’ve got two great flat stones, and I’ll crush you to bits, body and bones.”

So said the big Billy Goat and so he did!

Step 1: Nursery Rhymes

Little Jack Horner

Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum.
And said, What a good boy am I!

Three Blind Mice

Three blind mice, three blind mice,
See how they run, see how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did ever you see such a thing in your life
As three blind mice?

Hey Diddle Diddle

Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away
With the spoon.

Old Mother Hubbard

Old Mother Hubbard,
She went to the cupboard
To fetch her poor dog a bone,
But when she got there,
The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

There Was a Little Girl

There was a little girl, and she had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead;
When she was good she was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was horrid.

Step 2: Prose Passages

Krishna and the Serpent

Krishna lived in a village near the Yamuna River. His job was to help take the cattle down to the jungle next to the river every morning and bring them back in the evening. Krishna loved music and could play the flute in such a way, that everyone who heard, stopped to listen.

One day, as Krishna was playing, a huge poisonous snake slithered down the bank and entered the deepest part of the river. He filled the river with his poison and soon any person or animal who drank there fell down dead.

Krishna swam down to meet the serpent, which tried to crush him to death underwater but Krishna could hold his breath as long as he wanted so was able to attack the snake until all his poison had come out.

The serpent gave up the struggle and he was banished from the river. The villagers rejoiced.

The Greek Gods

In mythical times, humans lived on Earth with many strange and dangerous creatures. The Greek heroes often had to fight these monsters and the Gods frequently visited the Earth. They sometimes made friends with humans or came in disguise, rewarding or punishing people for their behaviour. The Gods even fell in love with humans and had children with them – many of the heroes in the myths were born in this way and were half-human and half-god, Hercules, for example, was the son of Zeus and a mortal woman.

Zeus' brother, Pluto, ruled the Underworld or Hades. Everyone who died went to Hades where there were three parts: one for the good, one for the evil and one for ordinary souls.

The home of the Gods was on the peak of Mount Olympus which was a real mountain in northern Greece – a remote and high place.

An Irish Legend

An early king of Ireland lost his hand in a battle when he fought in single combat. His hand was cut off when half of his shield broke under a blow from an axe. His doctors made him a silver hand, strong and with joints to replace his own hand.

No person could sit on the throne of Ireland who had lost any part of himself so the king had to be deposed and he went to live in a castle with his faithful servant and a porter who guarded the castle gate.

The porter had lost an eye and used to sit at the gate with his cat curled up on his lap.

One day, the two doctors who had made the king's hand visited the castle.

The porter asked the two strangers who they were. "We are good doctors," they replied.

"If that is so, perhaps you could give me a new eye?" asked the porter.

"Certainly."

So they took one of the cat's eyes and put it in the place of the porter's lost eye. This worked pretty well but when the porter went to sleep at night, one eye was always searching for mice. This eye could barely keep awake in the day.

Step 2: Action Verses

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

One, two,
Buckle my shoe;

Three, four,
Knock at the door;

Five, six,
Pick up sticks;

Seven, eight,
Lay them straight;

Nine, ten,
A big fat hen;

Eleven, twelve,
Dig and delve;

Thirteen, fourteen,
Maids a-courting;

Fifteen, sixteen,
Maids in the kitchen;

Seventeen, eighteen,
Maids in waiting.

Two Little Dicky Birds

Two little dicky birds
Sitting on a wall,

Use your two index fingers to be Peter and Paul.

One names Peter.

Wiggle the finger which is Peter.

One named Paul.

Wiggle the finger which is Paul.

Fly away Peter,

Put the finger which is Peter behind your back.

Fly away Paul;

Put the finger which is Paul behind your back.

Come back Peter.

Come back Paul.

Bring each finger back in front of you.

Incey Wincey Spider

Incey Wincey spider
Climbing up the spout;

Use all your fingers to show how the spider climbs up.

Down came the rain
And washed the spider out;

Wriggle your fingers down to show the rain.

Out came the sun
And dried up all the rain;

Sweep your hands up and bring them out and down.

Incey Wincey spider
Climbing up again.

Do the same as for the first line.

Step 3: Prose Passages

Daedalus and Icarus

Daedalus was a famous inventor and craftsman who lived on the island of Crete for many years. He wanted to return to Athens where he was born but the King of Crete ordered him to stay on the island.

“The king may rule the land and the sea,” said Daedalus, “but he certainly does not rule the sky.” When he had said this, he decided to make some wings. There were a huge number of feathers of all sizes and shapes lying on the shores of the island, so Daedalus collected them and bound them together with wax. The wings were so good that when they were finished, Daedalus jumped off a cliff and they bore his weight easily. He then built another pair for his son, Icarus as he would not leave him behind when he escaped.

When these wings were finished, Daedalus warned his son, “when you fly, keep in the middle course, don’t fly too low or the water from the waves will drench the wings and you will fall into the sea and don’t fly too high or the heat of the sun will melt the wax holding the wings together.”

Icarus was so thrilled by the excitement of flying that he flew too near the sun and his wings melted.

He fell into the sea and was drowned.

from Ovid ‘Metamorphoses’

The Milkmaid and her Pail

There was once a poor farmer who had a daughter. She was always day-dreaming. "Your head is always in the clouds," scolded the farmer. "It's time you learned to milk the cows."

The farmer's daughter did not want to be a milkmaid, she wanted to become rich. When she had finished milking, she put the pail of milk on her head and returned to the dairy, day-dreaming as she walked.

"This pail will give cream and from the cream I will make butter. I'll sell the butter and buy some eggs. When the eggs hatch, I'll have chickens who will lay more eggs. Soon I will have a whole field of poultry. Then I will sell the hens and buy a fine silk dress."

The milkmaid spun round in her imaginary dress. "All the young men will admire my dress and will fall in love with me," she added proudly. "I shall toss my head and have nothing to do with them!"

At this, she tossed her head. Down went the pail. All the milk was spilled and the milkmaid's dreams came to nothing.

Moral: do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

from 'Aesop's Fables'

John and the Green Dragon

It was Chinese New Year and the moon hung like a huge lantern. A shadow crossed the moon like a rustling wind. John woke up. Outside his window John saw a green dragon's head bobbing up and down with red glowing eyes and a long flaming tongue darting in between huge, spiky, white teeth. The dragon squeezed himself between the open windows and coiled himself round the room.

"Hello," said John politely. "Can I help you?"

"I've flown all the way from China," said the Green Dragon. "Over snowy mountains and lakes, over winding rivers and smoking factories, over vast fields of rice and wheat – and now I'm so hungry I could swallow up your mother's kitchen."

"Oh, please don't do that," cried John. "My mother and father are proud of their kitchen. They say we cook the best Chinese food outside London. I help with the sorting out of the knives, forks and spoons and our customers call me 'Hong Kong John'."

"Well then, Hong Kong John," said the dragon, "since I'm so hungry and since it is Chinese New Year, I think I should savour some of your famous food."

from 'The Orange Tree and other Stories' by Jamila Gavin

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Beowulf and Grendel

Grendel was a monster who hated all men and came out of his swamp when he heard feasting in the King's Hall. He loved the taste of human flesh. Beowulf was the most powerful warrior on earth who served the King and knew that his sword was useless against Grendel's scaly skin.

He decided on a plan and met the monster at night in the Great Hall. He filled the Hall with candles to confuse Grendel who had smashed down the door to taste the blood of men.

Beowulf tossed a tiny pebble along the floor.

"What's that?" bellowed Grendel.

"Only a mouse," whispered Beowulf.

"What kind of a mouse smells of human and talks like a man?"

"A mouse that will kill you," whispered Beowulf as he silently climbed up into the rafters of the Hall. He dropped another pebble.

"What's that?" roared Grendel.

"Only an owl," whispered Beowulf and he dropped from the roof like an armoured eagle onto its prey.

Long they fought, rolling and clawing, smashing the tables and chairs, pouring with blood until Beowulf broke the monster's right arm. The monster howled but Beowulf did not let go. Finally, the monster wrenched himself free, but his arm and shoulder had been torn off.