

Sandy Zell, of the Bellingham Public Library, has created this delightful Reader's Theater for *Mabela the Clever*. Sandy uses this in a format she calls "junior theatre". Children of all ages come for the program. Pre-schoolers form the mouse chorus, older children take the parts. The children hear the story with picture book, then rehearse their presentation. Parents return at the end of the class for the performance. Sandy writes: "The performance itself is an audience-participation event. Parents, grandparents, and siblings too you to participate in the actual staging of the story all have fun as they interact with the kids "on stage."

Advice from Sandy: The Chorus is non-readers 3 1/2 (or 4) to 6 (or 7) and the Main Parts are for readers 7-10 (or even 11). One of Jr. Theatre's best features is its appeal to children who are emergent readers. Strongest readers do Narration Parts. A very shy but strong reader loves the opportunity to be the "Audience Prompt" which doesn't require speaking! Two directors are needed (one each for Chorus and Main Parts). I try to line up 2 or 3 Assistant Directors (kids 12-15) to help with the emergent readers that have Main Parts. Sandy Zell Szell@cob.org

Mabela the Clever

An African story retold by Margaret Read MacDonald
Adapted for Jr. Theatre by Sandy Zell

Narrator 1: In the early times, some were clever

Narrator 2: And some were foolish.

Narrator 1: The Cat was one of the clever ones.

Narrator 2: The mice were mostly foolish.

Narrator 1: But one little mouse was not so foolish.

Narrator 2: Her name was Mabela,

Narrator 1: And her father had taught her cleverness.

Narrator 2: Her father always told her,

Father: Mabela, when you are out and about,
KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN AND LISTEN.

Mabela, when you are out and about,
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AND LOOK AROUND YOU.

Mabela, when you are speaking,
PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU ARE SAYING.

Mabela, if you have to move, **MOVE FAST!**

Narrator 1: One day the Cat came to the mouse village.

Cat: Dear mice,
I come to offer a special invitation.
It has been decided
that the mice may join the secret Cat Society.

Mice & Mabela: **We get to join the Cat Club!**
We get to join the Cat Club!

Cat: And mice, my dears,
When you have been initiated into the Cat Society,
You will know **ALL THE SECRETS OF THE CAT!**

Come to my house on Monday morning,
And we will hold the secret ceremony.

Narrator 2: Monday morning bright and early,
The little mice were there.

Mice & Mabela: **WE'RE HERE!**
WE'RE READY!

Cat: Oh, my, you have ALL arrived!

How DELICIOUS... I mean DELIGHTFUL.

You must all learn the secret Cat Society song.

The song goes like this...

All Mice: When we are marching,

All Mice & Mabela: We NEVER look back!
The Cat is at the end,

Fo Feng! Fo Feng!

Narrator 1: The little mice learned to shout loudly on the last

Mice & Mabela: **Fo Feng!**

Narrator 2: The Cat lined them up in a straight line.

Narrator 1: And at the end came...

Audience: **THE CAT!**

Mabela: I get to march in front,
Because I'm the smallest of all.

Cat: Now, we will march into the forest,
And you will learn the secrets of the CAT.

Remember, you must **NEVER, EVER LOOK BACK!**

Audience: **WHY NOT?**

Narrator 2: Off they started.

Narrator 1: Mabela was leading the way so proudly.

All Mice & Mabela: When we are marching,
We NEVER look back!
The Cat is at the end,

Fo Feng! Fo Feng!

When we are marching,
We NEVER look back!
The Cat is at the end,

Fo Feng! Fo Feng!

Narrator 2: Every time the mice shouted

Mice & Mabela: **Fo Feng!**

Narrator 1: The Cat **Fo Fended** a mouse into her sack.

Narrator 2: Suddenly Mabela remembered...

Narrator 1: Her father always said,

When I am out and about,
Keep my ears open and

LISTEN!

Audience: **SHHH!**

Narrator 2: Mabela stopped singing for a moment.

Mabela: I better listen!

Narrator 1: Mabela did not hear a long line of mice behind her.

Narrator 2: She heard a few mice.

All When we are marching,
Mice(Quietly): We NEVER look back!
The Cat is at the end,

Fo Feng! Fo Feng!

Mabela: The Cat's voice is getting closer each time we sing

Mice: Fo Feng!

Narrator 1: Then Mabela remembered something else her father always said,

When I am out and about,

Keep my eyes open and

LOOK AROUND!

Narrator 2: Mabela turned her head just a little to the left,
And just a little to the right.

Mabela: I do **Not** see a Long line of mice!

Narrator 1: Mabela saw a short line of mice, and

Mabela: THE CAT IS VERY CLOSE!

Audience: OH, NO!

Narrator 2: Then Mabela remembered that her father had said,

Mabela: When I am speaking,
Pay attention to

WHAT I AM SAYING!

Audience: WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

Narrator 1: Mabela listened to her song.

Mabela: When we are marching,

We NEVER look back!
The Cat is at the end...

Narrator 2: Mabela stopped.

Mabela: The Cat is at the end?

Audience: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Mabela: NO ONE IS WATCHING THE CAT!

Narrator 1: Mabela turned right around.

Narrator 2: There was **THE CAT!**

Narrator 1: The Cat had just **Fo Fenged** the mouse behind Mabela!

Narrator 2: Now Mabela remembered the **LAST** thing her father had told her.

Mabela: If I have to move,
MOVE FAST!

Audience: NOW!

Narrator 1: Mabela dove into the bushes so fast,

Narrator 2: So fast that the Cat pounced on nothing but thorns!

Cat: MEOOOOW!

Narrator 1: The Cat was stuck,

Narrator 2: The mice were out.

All Mice & Hooray!

Mabela: We're Free!

Narrator 1: And Mabela lived to tell the tale.

Narrator 2: She told it to her children, and to her children's children.

Narrator 1 & 2: Limba parents are **STILL** telling this story to their children.

Father: When you are out and about,

Audience: **KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN AND LISTEN.**

Father: When you are out and about,

Audience: **KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AND LOOK AROUND YOU.**

Father: When you are speaking,

Audience: **PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU ARE SAYING.**

Father: If you have to move,

Audience: **MOVE FAST!**

Narrator 1: Limba grandparents say, If a person is clever,

Narrator 2: It is because
Someone has taught them their cleverness.

THE END