

# Introduction

## **Why This Book?**

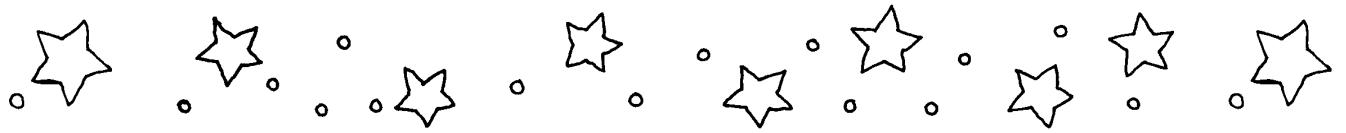
We developed this book in response to teachers' needs for good texts to teach reading fluency. In the past several years, reading fluency has become recognized as an essential element in elementary and middle grade reading programs (National Reading Panel, 2001). Readers who are fluent are better able to comprehend what they read—they decode words so effortlessly that they can devote their cognitive resources to the all-important task of comprehension. Fluent readers also construct meaning by reading with appropriate expression and phrasing.

Readers develop fluency through guided practice or repeated readings—reading a text selection several times to the point where it can be expressed meaningfully, with appropriate expression and phrasing. Readers who engage in regular repeated readings, under the guidance and assistance of a teacher or other coach, improve their word recognition, reading rate, comprehension, and overall reading proficiency.

What sorts of texts lend themselves to repeated practice? To us, texts meant to be performed or read orally for an audience are ideal texts for guided repeated reading and reading fluency development. Our goal in this book has been to collect age-appropriate texts meant to be performed or read aloud by students. We have found texts that are relatively short so they can be read and reread in brief periods of time. These texts are from a variety of genre poetry and rhymes; song lyrics; famous speeches and quotations; Reader's Theater Scripts; and other texts such as jokes, cheers, and well wishes. These delightful texts are often neglected in the regular reading program that focuses largely on narrative and informational texts. The passages in this book are also part of our cultural heritage and are important parts of the cultural literacy curriculum for elementary students. Even if you are not teaching reading fluency, your students should read the texts in this book as part of their cultural heritage.

Students will find the texts in this book enjoyable and engaging. They will want to practice reading these texts because of their engaging qualities—the language patterns, the rhyme, the melody, and the inspiration they provide. They will especially want to practice the texts if you provide regular opportunities for your students to perform the texts for their classmates, parents, and other audiences.

Have fun with these texts. Read them with your students again and again. Be assured that if your students regularly read and perform the texts in this book they will begin to develop into fluent readers who are able to decode words effortlessly and construct meaning through their oral interpretation of texts.



## I Had a Little Puppy

I had a little puppy,

His name was Tiny Tim.

I put him in the bathtub, to see if he  
could swim.

He drank up all the water; he ate a bar  
of soap.

The next thing you know he had a  
bubble in his throat.

In came the doctor, in came the nurse,

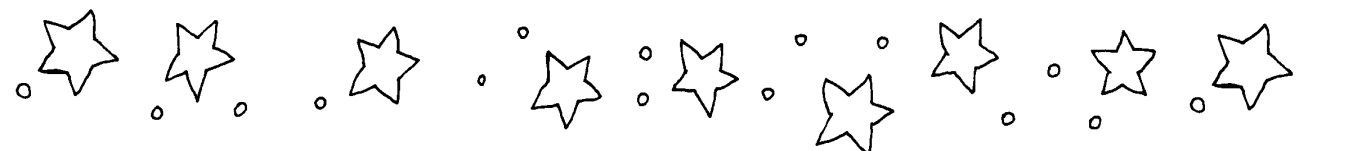
In came the lady with the alligator  
purse.

Out went the doctor, out went the  
nurse,

Out went the lady with the alligator  
purse.

I kissed my puppy's doctor, I kissed my  
puppy's nurse,

And then I paid the lady with the  
alligator purse.





## The Animal Fair

I went to the Animal Fair  
The birds and the beasts were there  
The big baboon by the light of the moon  
Was combing his auburn hair

The funniest was the monk  
He sat on the elephant's trunk  
The elephant sneezed and fell on his knees  
And what became of the monk?  
The monk, the monk, the monk?

I went to the Animal Fair  
The birds and the beasts were there  
The big baboon by the light of the moon  
Was combing his auburn hair

You should have seen the monk  
He sat on the elephant's trunk  
The elephant sneezed and fell on his knees  
And that was the end of the monk  
The monk, the monk, the monk.

## **Peter Piper**

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled  
peppers.

Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled  
peppers?

If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled  
peppers,

Where's the peck of pickled peppers  
Peter Piper picked?

# My Shadow

By Robert Louis Stevenson

For four voices

**Reader 1:** I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,

**Reader 2:** And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.

**Reader 1:** He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;

**Reader 2:** And I see him jump before me when I jump into my bed.

**Reader 3:** The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow,

**Reader 4:** Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;

**Reader 3:** For sometimes he shoots up taller like an Indian rubber ball,

**Reader 4:** And he sometimes gets so little that there is none of him at all.

**Reader 1:** He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,

**Reader 2:** And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.

**Reader 1:** He stays so close behind me he's a coward you can see;

**Reader 2:** I'd think shame to stick to nurse as that shadow sticks to me!

**Reader 3:** One morning, very early before the sun was up,

**Reader 4:** I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;

**Reader 3:** But my lazy little shadow like an arrant sleepy-head,

**Reader 4:** had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.