

READERS THEATER SCRIPT

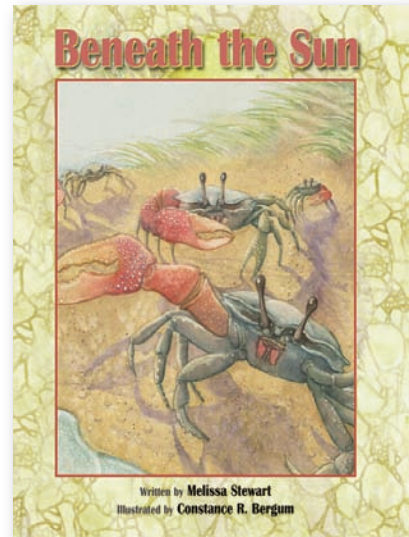
Readers Theater Script
based on the book

BENEATH THE SUN

Written by Melissa Stewart
Illustrated by Constance R. Bergum

ISBN: 978-1-56145-733-5 / HC / \$16.95
Ages 4–8 / Nonfiction / Nature

Book Level Score:
GRL M; Gr 2



ABOUT THE BOOK

Using clear, simple language, *Beneath the Sun* offers young readers a lyrical look at the surprising ways animals living in fields, deserts, wetlands, and seashores endure the hottest days of the year. Some creatures seek shade or rest underground, but others stay active. Jackrabbits lose heat through their enormous ears, and herring gulls pant to stay cool. A fiddler crab's shell lightens to reflect the sun's rays, and spittle bugs build a foamy home to stay moist and cool.

GETTING STARTED

Many readers theater scripts have just ten or twelve parts, but this script has a role for every student in an average-size class. The script also includes four separate choruses (one for each habitat) and eight lines read by everyone.

As written, the script includes twenty-three animal parts and a narrator role. The animal parts vary in difficulty, to accommodate children at a variety of reading levels. The narrator text is the most challenging. It can be read by an adult or by an advanced young reader.

If you are working with fewer than twenty-three children, some students can perform two roles. If you have a larger group, some children can share a role or you can divide the narrator role into four parts, one for each habitat (field, desert, wetland, seashore).

After you have matched students with parts, ask the class to read through the script a few times. As the children practice, provide as much support and advice as needed.

PLANNING THE PERFORMANCE

When the children feel confident about their roles, you may want to set out a variety of art supplies and ask them to make identification tags, animal hats, or even animal costumes to wear during the performance. Children acting as narrators may want to wear sunglasses.

During the final reading, the students can stand in four separate groups (one for each habitat) or the script can be performed as four separate acts, so that there is always an audience.

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Chorus 1: Beneath the sun in a field...

Narrator: A woodchuck munches on grass in the early morning light.

Woodchuck: *Chuck, chuck.* When things heat up, I'll head underground. My den is nice and cool.

Narrator: An earthworm's long, lean body is looped in a tight ball.

Earthworm: My five hearts almost stop beating while I rest.

Narrator: What does a spittlebug do on hot, dry days?

Spittlebug: I squirt white goo out of my belly and whip it up.

Everyone: What? Are you joking?

Spittlebug: Face it. I'm a genius. My foam home keeps me moist and cool.

Narrator: A black swallowtail caterpillar keeps chomping and chewing all day long.

Caterpillar: That sizzling sun doesn't bother me!

Chorus 2: Beneath the sun in a desert...

Narrator: A ringtail family sleeps all day inside a cool, rocky den.

Ringtail 1: *Click-a-click.* I could use a good, long nap.

Ringtail 2: Me too. [Yawn.]

Narrator: A golden eagle soars through the air high above the desert.

Eagle: *Kya!* My thick feathers protect my skin from the sun's hot rays.

Narrator: A turkey vulture cools down by spraying urine on its legs.

Everyone: Pee-ew! That's gross.

Vulture: Sure, it's gross. But, hey, it works like a charm!

Narrator: A black-tailed jackrabbit hides in the shadows.

Jackrabbit: My body loses heat through the thin skin on my giant ears.

Narrator: Hey, what's underneath that shady shrub? Look, it's a horned lizard.

Lizard: *Eek! Ekk!* Guess what I do if an enemy gets too close?

Everyone: Run and hide?

Lizard: No way! I puff up my body and squirt blood out of my eyes.

Everyone: Yikes! That's a great trick.

Lizard: You can say that again.

Everyone: Yikes! That's a great trick.

Chorus 3: Beneath the sun in a wetland...

Narrator: A proud papa osprey soaks his belly feathers in the water.

Osprey: *Cheer-eek!* When I get back to my nest, my chicks suck my feathers dry.

Chick: *Slurp...Burp!* That really hits the spot!

Everyone: Sizzle, sizzle. We want drizzle!

Narrator: Tadpoles grow quickly in the warm wetland water.

Tadpole 1: Hey, I've got legs.

Tadpole 2: Oh yeah? Well, I'm losing my tail.

Tadpole 3: Guess what! I'm ready for life on land. Rib-bit!

Narrator: How do crayfish and siren salamanders beat the heat?

Crayfish: We burrow into the mud to stay moist and cool.

Salamander: *Click, click.* I can't wait for cooler days!

Chorus 4: Beneath the sun on a seashore...

Narrator: A herring gull shades its chicks from the hot sun.

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Gull: [Stick out tongue and pant.] I pant like a dog so I won't overheat.

Narrator: A sea anemone pulls in its tentacles and sits tight.

Anemone: [Cross arms and tap foot.] I'm waiting.

Narrator: A sea star rests in a thick mat of seaweed.

Sea star: [Cross arms and tap foot.] I'm waiting.

Narrator: Bet you can't guess what fiddler crabs do.

Everyone: Hmmm. Do they wait, too?

Narrator: Nope. They keep on scuttling across the sand.

Crab 1: That's because we know a trick.

Crab 2: As the day heats up, our shells change from dark to light.

Crab 3: And lighter shells reflect the sun's bright rays. Hooray!

Narrator: But many other animals are waiting for the cool, dark night.

Chorus 1 & 2: So as the sun slowly sets...

Chorus 3 & 4: ...and long, dark shadows spread across the land.

Everyone: All kinds of animals come out of hiding and live their lives.

All Animals: [Jump forward and make your animal sounds.]

THE END



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melissa Stewart is the award-winning author of more than 150 books for children. She holds degrees in biology and science journalism and serves on the board of advisors for the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. Melissa

speaks frequently at conferences for educators and is available for school visits. www.melissa-stewart.com (Intended audience for school presentations: Grades K–6.)



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Constance R. Bergum has illustrated a number of children’s books, including *When Rain Falls*, *Under the Snow*, *Beneath the Sun*, and *Daniel and His Walking Stick*. She holds an MFA in illustration from Marywood

University and lives in Montana.

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR VISITS

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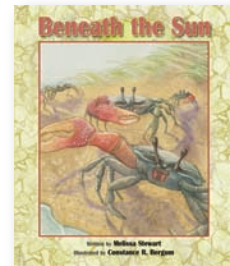
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- Under the Snow*
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Teacher’s Guides:

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- A Place for Bats*
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Peachtree Readers Theater Script for **BENEATH THE SUN** prepared by Melissa Stewart

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