

**Page 1/ Teacher Script/ UNCLE RUSSELL AND THE POPLAR TREES**

(PROPS: BONNET OR FLOWERY HAT AND EYE GLASSES FOR MOTHER NATURE).

(WHEN READING BEGINS, 2/MOTHER NATURE AND RUSSELL ARE STILL OFFSTAGE).

(2/MOTHER NATURE ENTERS AS READER 1 BEGINS TO SPEAK. SHE MIMES THE ACTION BY SITTING ON HER CHAIR AND LOOKING UP).

**READER 1:** The entire sky was blue when Mother Nature sat down beneath the poplar trees to re-examine her appointment book. She looked up at the sky, shook her head, and murmured softly,

**2/MOTHER:** "Oh dear! Too much to do. Much too much, too much to do!"

(2/MOTHER NATURE MIMES FOLLOWING FROM CHAIR):

**READER 3:** Mother Nature looked down and flipped the pages of the appointment book. Then she lifted her head again, looked across the meadow, and sighed,

**2/MOTHER:** "Let's see! The daisies are blooming, so it must be Tuesday. Yes, here we are. I've found the proper page."

**READER 4:** Mother's index finger marked Tuesday in the book. She adjusted the glasses which were balanced carefully on the tip of her nose, then continued talking to herself,

**2/MOTHER:** "It's as I suspected!

(2/MOTHER NATURE STANDS AND ADDRESSES AUDIENCE).

In just one day I'm to finish knitting down jackets for all the ducklings, prepare another large vat of perfume for the lilac bushes, take my feather duster to those dusty fir trees on the hillside, organize swimming lessons for the tadpoles, and lead an aerobics class for the tall grasses along the riverbank. There's just no time to paint my perfect clouds into the sky. That job can't be done today!"

(2/MOTHER NATURE SIGHS AND SITS).

**READER 1:** She flipped a page in her book and added,

**2/MOTHER:** "Or tomorrow!"

**READER 1:** She continued flipping.

**2/MOTHER:** "Or even next week! Oh dear, I don't know how to get the job done."

(READERS 1,2,3 RAISE ARMS ABOVE HEAD, SWAY THEM FROM SIDE TO SIDE, AND WIGGLE FINGERS TO INDICATE BREEZE AND QUIVERING LEAVES).

**READER 3:** Above Mother Nature's head the spring breezes began to play tag through the leaves of the poplar trees. The trees stood, one hundred strong, in a long line, one beside another. And as the breezes rushed through the line, thousands of poplar leaves shivered, quivered, fluttered and whispered,

(THIS LINE IS REPEATED THROUGHOUT THE STORY. ASK ALL READERS TO REHEARSE IT TO A STEADY RHYTHM OR BEAT SO THAT THE READING GOES SMOOTHLY WHEN DONE IN UNISON).

**ALL:** "WE KNOW THE ANSWER," THEY SAID.

(ALL ARMS DOWN).

**READER 4:** Mother Nature listened to the rustle of the leaves. Then she smiled.

(2/MOTHER SNAPS FINGERS. SHE HAS AN IDEA!).

**2/MOTHER:** "Russell!"

**READER 4:** she exclaimed.

**2/MOTHER:** "Uncle Russell, of course! Why didn't I think of it myself?"

(2/MOTHER STANDS AND MIMES THE FOLLOWING:)

**READER 1:** Mother Nature waved her hand in a magical way, whistled softly, and stood up just in time to see her brother, Russell,

(RUSSELL ENTERS AND MOVES TO CHAIR. HE READS HIS LINE AS HE ENTERS, BEFORE HE GETS TO THE CHAIR).

flying toward her above the daisies. A bag of painting supplies followed, gliding noiselessly behind him.

**RUSSELL:** "I got your message, Sis, but I'm not the man for the job!"

**READER 3:** called Russell when he had flown close enough for Mother Nature to hear.

(RUSSELL STANDS IN FRONT OF CHAIR, SLIGHTLY TURNED TOWARD 2/MOTHER AND SPEAKS TO HER).

**RUSSELL:** "You know my specialty is small canvases. The sky is much too big for my type of work. Besides, I'm quite busy painting the pansies. After that, I'm scheduled to dot the eyes on the Black-Eyed Susans. No time for clouds, I'm afraid."

(2/MOTHER SMILES, BUT SHAKES HER HEAD "NO").

**READER 4:** It was a nice try, but Mother Nature had made up her mind. Russell was immediately appointed Official Painter of Perfect Clouds. She kissed his cheek, collected her appointment book, and disappeared, leaving Russell alone beneath the poplar trees.

(2/MOTHER MIMES THE ABOVE BUT DOES NOT DISAPPEAR. INSTEAD, SHE REMOVES HAT AND EYE GLASSES, PLACES THEM UNDER HER CAHIR, AND SITS. WHEN 2/MOTHER SITS, THE READING CONTINUES).

**RUSSELL:** "Rats!"

**READER 1:** said Russell softly. Then slowly, he pulled a collection of delicate brushes from his paint bag, shrugged his shoulders, and looked up at the sky.

(RUSSELL LOOKS UP, DISGUSTEDLY).

**RUSSELL:** "No way!"

**READER 3:** he grumbled.

(RUSSELL POINTS TO THE SKY).

**RUSSELL:** "I don't know how to get this job done. I can't paint perfect clouds all over that canvas with these tiny brushes. Even with my extra special talents, I'll be working from now until the end of time!"

(READERS 1,2,3 RAISE ARMS ABOVE HEAD, SWAYING AND WIGGLING FINGERS AS BEFORE).

**READER 2:** Above Russell's head the spring breezes began to play hide and seek between the branches of the poplar trees.

**READER 3:** And as the breezes played, thousands of poplar leaves shivered, quivered, fluttered, and whispered,

(ALL ARMS DOWN).

**ALL:** "WE KNOW THE ANSWER," THEY SAID.

**READER 4:** Suddenly a fierce gust of wind collared the tops of the poplar trees and bent them toward the earth. Then, as Russell watched, the poplar leaves beckoned to him, shimmying and shaking before his very eyes.

(RUSSELL LOOKS TOWARD AUDIENCE AND PRETENDS TO SEE ABOVE ACTION. HE SNAPS HIS FINGERS).

**RUSSELL:** "Naturally!"

**READER 4:** he cried.

**RUSSELL:** "Certainly! Why didn't I think of it myself?"

(RUSSELL LEAVES FOLDER ON CHAIR, AND WALKS DOWNSTAGE FACING AUDIENCE).

**READER 1:** Russell walked to a row of poplars and wrapped his arms tightly around a tree trunk. Then, using one of his extra special talents, Russell effortlessly lifted the tree, roots and all, from the ground. Holding tightly to the trunk, he thrust the tree's leafy branches toward the sky.