

something to consider when you rehearse this script. However, if you are planning to use the script for a local performance or as a classroom reading activity, use the suggested staging in this script or create your own. Anything goes!

DIRECTING TIPS:

If you need to involve more than 6 readers in this script reading, simply add as many elves as you want during the marching and the chanting sections where ALL ELVES participate. These elves would enter when READER 3 says: "Come in elves, and get to work!"

Shoemaker and Wife are already in place in front of their stools with script binders on music stands and backs to audience when READER 4 enters carrying script binder, takes assigned place in front of stool, and begins the reading:

Narrator/READER 4

It was a snowy Christmas Eve in the little village, and everywhere people were making happy preparations for the next day... except at the home of the poor shoemaker and his wife.

(READER 4 sits on assigned stool and turns back to audience).

Shoemaker and wife have been standing in front of their stools with backs to audience. Dejectedly they both turn to face audience. The Shoemaker sighs and shakes his head, then begins to read. Scripts may be held by readers or may rest in front of them on music stands.

Shoemaker/READER 1

I know you are tired, my dear wife, and I wish with all my heart I could give you a hot supper and tell you to rest, but until we finish these shoes there will be no money for food and no time for rest.

Wife/READER 2

(wearily)

I know, dear husband, I know. I'll try to work. I am no hungrier than you are.

Shoemaker/READER 1

To be hungry is bad enough, but to be hungry on Christmas Eve . . .

Wife/READER 2

(points to imaginary shoe basket in front of them)

And such a big basket of shoes to finish! It's discouraging to just look at them all.

Shoemaker/READER 1

We'd better start with the party shoes that young lady brought in. She wants them for tomorrow and she was very impatient.

(A knock is heard offstage).

Wife/READER 2

There she is now – I know it! Oh, dear, and the shoes aren't finished! Go and tell her we'll have them as soon as --

(Rich Lady enters haughtily from stage R and takes her place among the readers, facing audience).

Rich Lady/READER 3

Since no one answered my knock I decided to see for myself what the lazy shoemaker was doing. Where are my shoes?

Wife/READER 2

They will be ready tomorrow, Miss.

Rich Lady/READER 3

Tomorrow! They should be ready now! You've had them long enough. What a bother! I'll have to come back.

Shoemaker/READER 1

I promise you they'll be ready first thing in the morning.

Rich Lady/READER 3

They'd better be! Or you'll get no more business from me.

(She stomps her foot, sits in assigned position and turns back to audience. There is another knock offstage).

Shoemaker/READER 1

(wearily)

Oh, now who? Come in!

(Rich Man/READER 4 turns to face audience and stands).

Man/READER 4

I want my boots and I want them now.

Wife/READER 2

One boot is finished, sir, and if you'll just –

Man/READER 4

One! What good is *one boot*? I get them first thing in, the morning or you don't get paid!

(He sits on his assigned stool and turns his back to the audience. The wife bows her head and begins to weep).

Shoemaker/READER 1

There, there, my love - - - you must rest! Please, lie down and I'll do the work.

Wife/READER 2

(weakly)

But I must help you - - I must help...

Read-Aloud Script/THE SHOEMAKER AND THE ELVES
Teacher Version/Scripts For Schools

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(Her voice trails off as she slowly sinks to her stool and turns her back to the audience).

Shoemaker/READER 1

At least while she sleeps she will not be hungry...

(There is another offstage knock).

No! I'll not answer it! I'll not face any more angry customers!
Go away!

(Knocking continues).

Why don't they leave us alone!

(Reader 3 turns to face audience. As she turns, she slips on an elf's hat, and adopts an elfish posture, grin, and voice. She stands).

Elf #1/READER 3

May I come in? The door was open.

Shoemaker

(Staring in amazement).

Who are you?

Elf #1/READER 3

A traveler. Could you spare something to eat?

Shoemaker/READER 1

I'm sorry. We have nothing. Nothing at all. Look -- there is my wife asleep from exhaustion and hunger. We have a well in the yard if you want a drink of water. If I had anything you could share it but we . . .

(The elf is gazing ahead with wide eyes).

Why do you look at me like that? - - - Why are you staring? I feel strange....sleepy....but I can 't sleep....I must work....I must work....work....work....

(Shoemaker slowly turns back to audience and sinks to a sitting position on assigned stool. He is asleep. The elf chuckles).

Elf #1/READER 3

Come in elves, and get to work!

(Elf #2/READER 4 turns to face audience also wearing an elf's hat, stands, marches in place and chants the following as READERS 5 and 6 enter chanting and marching from opposite sides of the stage. They are also wearing elf hats. They stand on both ends of the reading group. All Elves chant and march in place).

All Elves

We'll work, work, work all night,
We'll work till dawn of early light,
We'll work until it's Christmas Day
And then we'll steal away!

Elf #1/READER 3

You two do the shoes – we'll get breakfast; hurry -- it's morning!

(All elves march around the reading area and make wild magical gestures as they chant the following):

We'll tap, tap, tap all night,
We'll tap and tap, with all our might.
We'll tap till every single shoe
Is just as good as new!

(At the end of the above verse, all elves have marched into a single line, facing audience. Then, at a slower tempo, they finish the poem).

Elf #3/READER 5

The sun is up, the job is done,