

**THE CRAZY DESERT CRITTERS**  
**AFRICA/RT/ Teacher/Intermediate/I-72**

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**THE CRAZY DESERT CRITTERS**

Written and Formatted for Readers Theater

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**TO FIND THE PROPER RHYTHM:**

FIRST READ-ALOUD AND CLAP THROUGH THE PIECE AS YOU READ. EACH UNDERLINED WORD OR WORD PART FALLS DIRECTLY ON A BEAT. AS YOU READ, CLAP ON EACH UNDERLINED WORD, KEEPING THE RHYTHM STEADY (EXCEPT FOR THE OCCASIONAL SPOT WHERE THE RHYTHM IS TEMPORARILY ABANDONED). BE CAREFUL NOT TO READ TOO FAST! THIS IS A REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE AND READERS WILL NOT CLAP THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PIECE DURING PERFORMANCE.

**PROPS AND COSTUMES:**

PROPS OR COSTUME PIECES MAY BE USED AS EACH READER TAKES ROLE OF THE FUNNY OLD MAN. FOR EXAMPLE: STRANGE HAT, GLASSES WITH FALSE NOSE, AND WALKING CANE. AS READING BEGINS, PROPS AND COSTUMES ARE UNDER READER 1's CHAIR. THESE ITEMS WILL BE PASSED FROM READER TO READER AS THE READING PROGRESSES.

**SIGNS**

LARGE SIGNS WITH THE FOLLOWING WORDS PRINTED UPON THEM WILL ALSO BE NEEDED): ***SURPRISED, AMAZED, DUMBFOUNDED, BEWILDERED, ASTONISHED, MEERKET, WARTHOG, CAMEL, FENNEC FOX, SAND CAT.*** SIGNS MAY BE GLUED TO HOLDING STICKS, IF DESIRED. THESE WILL BE KEPT ON FLOOR IN FRONT OF APPROPRIATE READERS UNTIL CALLED FOR IN THE SCRIPT.

**SEATING/READING ARRANGEMENTS:**

FACING AUDIENCE, ALL READERS SIT IN A ROW ON STOOLS OR CHAIRS. SCRIPTS ARE HELD IN HANDS, LOW ENOUGH SO THAT FACES ARE EASILY SEEN.

**AFRICAN DESERT ANIMALS FEATURED IN THIS SCRIPT:**

MEERKET, WARTHOG, CAMEL, FENNEC FOX, SAND CAT

**THE NARRATOR STANDS AND THE READING BEGINS:**

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**NARRATOR:**            Late last Monday  
                              It happened, you see,  
                              A funny old man

(READER 1 PUTS ON HAT AND GLASSES,  
TAKES CANE. THE FOLLOWING READERS  
STAND AS THEY READ THEIR INDIVIDUAL  
LINES.

**READER 2:**            Shuffled up to me.

**READER 3:**            He pointed his finger

**READER 4:**            And scratched his head.

(READER 1 STANDS AND SHUFFLES  
DOWNSTAGE CENTER, PRETENDING  
TO BE THE OLD MAN. READER 1 STANDS  
FACING AUDIENCE).

**READER 5:**            Then this is what the old man said,

(THE FOLLOWING WORD MUST BE SAID JUST  
AS IT IS WRITTEN: " EX-CUE-OOOOZ" IS  
PRONOUNCED AS THREE SYLLABLES.  
"OOOOZ" AND "ME" ARE EMPHASIZED.  
REHEARSE THIS BY ESTABLISHING A BEAT OR  
RHYTHM TO BE USED THROUGHOUT THE  
STORY WHEN THESE WORDS APPEAR).

**ALL:**                    **EX-CUE-OOOOZ ME!**



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(READER 1 POINTS CANE OR WAGS FINGER  
AT AUDIENCE DURING READING OF  
FOLLOWING POEM.

**READER 1:**

Is that your mama  
Black bands on her side?  
About 12 inches tall  
But she's not very wide?

I think she's "standing guard"  
And I'll tell you too,  
That crazy critter looks a lot

(ALL READERS POINT TO AUDIENCE IN  
UNISON ON "LIKE YOU!").

**ALL:**

**LIKE YOU!**

(READER 1 RETURNS TO CHAIR AND PASSES  
PROPS AND COSTUMES TO READER 2).

**NARRATOR:**

As you can well imagine,  
I was

(READER 5 PICKS UP SIGN SAYING  
"SURPRISED." READER 5 STANDS, HOLDS  
SIGN ABOVE HEAD, AND SAYS):

**READER 5:**

Surprised!

(NARRATOR STANDS. READER 5 SITS AND  
PLACES SIGN ON FLOOR).

**NARRATOR:**

I began to feel  
Fur, grizzled and gray,  
Sprouting on my body

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Every which way.

"Oh no"! I cried.  
Shook my head and sat.  
"That furry critter is a

**ALL:** **DESERT MEERKAT!**

(READER 4 STANDS, PICKS UP AND DISPLAYS  
SIGN SAYING "MEERKAT" AS ABOVE LINE IS  
READ. WHEN FINISHED, THE SIGN IS LAID  
BACK DOWN ON THE FLOOR)

(ALL STANDING SIT, EXCEPT NARRATOR).

**NARRATOR:** Late last Tuesday  
It happened, you see,  
A funny old man

(READER 2 PUTS ON HAT, GLASSES, TAKES  
CANE. THE FOLLOWING READERS STAND AS  
THEY READ THEIR INDIVIDUAL LINES).

**READER 1:** Shuffled up to me.

**READER 3:** He pointed his finger

**READER 4:** And scratched his head.

(READER 2 STANDS AND SHUFFLES  
DOWNSTAGE CENTER, PRETENDING TO BE  
THE OLD MAN. READER 2 FACES AUDIENCE).

**READER 5:** Then this is what the old man said,

(SAME DIRECTIONS AS EARLIER).

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**ALL:** **EX-CUE-OOOOZ ME!**

(READER 2 POINTS CANE OR WAGS FINGER  
JUST AS READER 1 DID EARLIER)

**READER 2:** Is that your papa  
Bristles every place,  
Fly-swatter tail,  
And warts on his face?

He's got two tusks  
And I'll tell you, too,  
That crazy critter looks a lot

**ALL:** **LIKE YOU!**

(ALL READERS POINT TO AUDIENCE IN  
UNISON ON "LIKE YOU!").

**NARRATOR:** As you can well imagine,  
I was

(READER 4 STANDS, HOLDS "AMAZED" SIGN  
HIGH AND READS):

**READER 4:** Amazed!

(READER 4 SITS AND PLACES SIGN ON  
FLOOR).

**NARRATOR:** I felt my face  
,  
For I'm sure you know,  
A pig-like snout  
Was beginning to grow.