

# ***Summer of Riley, A play based on the book by Eve Bunting***

## **Language, level: Elementary**

by Carolyn M. Wilhelm

Materials Required: The Summer of Riley by Eve Bunting

Activity Time: Two class sessions of one hour each

Concepts Taught: Readers' Theater Approach for a Culminating Activity after reading or to inspire students to read

Summer of Riley Play (a portion of the book)

Narrator:

Reporter 1:

Reporter 2:

Grace:

William:

Lady:

Kid:

Man 1:

Man:

Little Kid:

Jim Deppe:

Ellis Porter:

Camera Man:

Person 1:

Peachie:

Red faced man(angry):

Duane:

Narrator: Welcome to Main Street. The rain has stopped, the sun is out, and today we see big yellow notices everywhere. Over there is William, and it is his dog Riley that the flyers are all about. Some people want the dog to die.

Reporter 2: This is Trixie Allen with Reporter Ellen, again from Main Street. Today we see a flyer on every lamppost and tree along the street. William is over there, and that is where I will be speaking from next.

Reporter 1: First, a commercial break.

Lady (walks by and stares straight ahead): Give up kid, you're wasting your time.

Kid: The dog is a goner. (looks angry and walks away fast)

Man: Good Luck! Cheerio! (walks away fast)

Lady: I am sorry about your dog.  
(walks away fast)

Man: A dog that chases another animal gets no sympathy from me!!!! (looks angry and walks away fast)

Woman hands a 20 dollar bill to William and says: Here, this is to help with expenses.

William: Thanks

Little Kid: (holds up stuffed animal and says) His name is Spot. You can pet him if you like.

William: (pets dog)

Grace: Hey, William!

Narrator: William looks farther up Main Street and sees Ellis Porter and Duane Smith giving out pink flyers. He could see a picture of Sultan the horse on them.

Jim Deppe: (pretend to ride bike by William and hand a pink piece of paper) Here! Take a look!

Narrator: William was stunned to read:

**THIS HORSE WAS CHASED ALMOST TO DEATH BY A VICIOUS,  
UNLEASHED DOG, NAME OF RILEY! UPHOLD THE DEATH PENALTY FOR  
ALL DOGS THAT CHASE OUR LIVESTOCK. CALL 555-6432 AND DEMAND  
THAT THE LAW IS OBEYED. SIGN OUR PETITION.**

Narrator: Sultan is the horse of Peachie. Peachie is an older woman who loves her horse more than anything. She doesn't like Riley chasing it, and now Riley is in pound and might be executed for chasing and scaring her horse!

William: Chased almost to death!! What a lie! This isn't even true!! My dog isn't vicious. Look, here's a picture of him....does he.....

Red Faced Man: Did he chase this horse or not?

William: He did. But he didn't hurt.....

Red Faced Man: Nuff said!! (walks away fast!)

Grace: William, tonight we should get our petition ready, and fast!

Scene Two: Main Street with no yellow flyers.

Narrator: Welcome back to Main Street, on this new sunny day! The yellow flyers have all disappeared from the trees and telephone poles. What is going on?

Grace and William: (walk up to Duane and Ellis) You took down our notices, didn't you?!

Duane: Us? (mean little laugh) We wouldn't do a think like that.

Grace: You know we're just going to put them up again.

Ellis: (mocking voice) You know we're just going to take them down again!!

William: It is illegal to take those down. You'll see. I'm going to talk to our lawyer.

(Ellis and Duane both laugh mean laughs)

Duane: Your lawyer? Give me a break!

William: Come on, Grace. (William and Grace push through a crowd)

Lady: If this dog gets off, what happens next time?

Red Faced Man: my two lambs last spring up on Plain Meadow?

Man: Wasn't that coyotes?

Lady: Coulda been. Coulda been a dog, though.

Kid: Yeah, well, I have two collies that would never.....

(Grace and William are now on other side of crowd.)

Grace: What's happening?

William: I think they're taking sides.

Grace: Yeah. But I don't see too many on ours.

Man: (hands a big sign to William that says THOU SHALT NOT KILL) Is it OK if I stand behind you with this?

William: Sure, help yourself.

Kid: Man! That Ellis Porter! He's such a toad! Gimme your petition and I'll sign it.

Person: William, do you know about red pepper? Put it on your dog's nose every time he looks at another animal and he'll not go near it.

William: Really? When and if I get him back, I will.

Grace: I'm tired.

William: Me too.

Grace: Sure would be nice to take the afternoon off.

William: I'm not going to.

Grace: I'm not either.

William: (bumps into Peachie) Oh, er, Hello, Peachie.

Peachie: William!

William: How ...how is the Sultan. I saw him when I went past your house. I waved to him. But he didn't wave back.

Reporter: (bumps in between Peachie and William) William? William Halston?  
(bogus smile)

William: Yes?

Reporter 1: Awesome. I'm reporter Ellen.

Reporter 2: Awesome. I'm Trixie Allen. What's going on, seven PM, Channel Three, Portland. You've probably seen our program?

William: No.

Reporter: This is Boots, my cameraman.

William: Peachie?

Reporter 1: Peachie?

Reporter 2: Would that be Mrs. Peachwood, the shall we say, instigator of this whole affair?

Reporter 1: What luck!

Reporter 2: We planned on calling you.....I have a cell phone in my pocket here, never travel without it. I hoped to come over to your house right after my interview with William.

Reporter 1: This is even better, getting the two of you together like this.

Grace: Is Riley going to be on TV? How cool. Peachie? Peachie, this is Trixie Allen, of Channel Three.

Peachie: We've met.

Reporter 2: Are you William's little girlfriend?

Grace: No, I'm his partner in trying to save Riley. It's great that you're going to do a story on him.

Reporter 1: Good, fine.

Reporter 2: Well, now William and Mrs. Peachwood.....I'm just going to ask you both a few questions. Can you fill me in. Mrs. Peachwood, as I understand it your horse.....

Peachie: I'm sorry, Miss Allen. I don't intend to answer any questions or be interviewed either.

Reporter: But I bet you're mad at each other, you and William? Won't you at least.

Peachie: I'm not at all mad at William. William is my good friend. He's looking out for his dog is all. Now if you'll excuse me.....

Reporter 1: No problem.

Reporter 2: William? Why don't you just fill our viewers in on the story?  
Just a second, we're having a little problem here with the picture.

Grace: (whispers) She's not Rosie or Oprah, but this is fabulous. Too bad we don't have the big photograph of Riley yet.

(Man with Thou shalt not kill banner stands behind William to be on TV, too.)

Reporter 1: Ready, William?

Grace: Do good!

William: Well, Riley was the most perfect dog....I mean he is the most perfect dog. It was just.....(blah, blah, blah softly like you are talking) then say: Everybody could help save Riley and if he lived, I'll never have him back here.....somewhere where he can't chase anything every again.....

Reporter 2: Except maybe his tail.

(Grace gives the thumbs up several times to William)

William: He liked to chase his tail. He was funny because he'd catch it and fall over himself.

Reporter 1: Thank you, William.

Reporter 2: And now we will hear from Mr. Ellis Porter and Mr. Duane Smith, who have taken up arms on behalf of the old racehorse, the Sultan of Kaboor. I had hoped to bring the Sultan's owner to you today, too, but apparently she is too upset over what happened to make a television appearance. Here, again, to speak for her, and for her horse are Ellis Porter and Duane Smith.

Crowd: Applaud and make way for Ellis and Duane.

Scene Three, William's House

Narrator: The next day, William was surprised at how many people the Channel Three news had. He had phone calls from Mr. Rodriguez from down the road, and Mrs. Carter, his math teacher, and the box girl in the market and a bunch of others. And his dad.

Dad: Well done, son.

William: Thanks, somebody has to do something. I mean, apart from pulling Riley down the stairs and showing him out to the animal control guys.

Dad: That's not fair. I hope you succeed.

William: Yeah, riiiigghtt. Good bye.

Mom: Now, let go of the anger you have for your father, William, let go.

William: It's not just the dog.

Mom: I know it's not just the dog. William...people change. Your dad and I parted for good reasons.

Mom: And for good reasons, we won't be getting back together. I've faced that.

William: Really?

Mom: Really. So get rid of that anger. I've gotten rid of mine.

William: You have?

Mom: Well, maybe not all of it. And maybe not all of the time.

William: OK, I'll try.