

Free Throws, Friendship, and Other Things We Fouled Up

Pause Button edition

Jenn Bishop

Reader's theater, with a twist!

As with typical reader's theater, assign roles to students and share the below script. But instead of a straight run-through performance, the teacher takes an active role in pausing the action at various points as the fictional conflict escalates.

At each pause, ask the student audience:

- What could the characters have done differently?
- What are some different choices the characters could have made to de-escalate the conflict?
- What were the characters feeling?
- What feelings were beneath their anger/frustration?

Depending on time and audience maturity, you can even add in some improv, encouraging the student actors to fully embody their characters and try out some of the offered solutions. The opportunities are endless!

Benefits: reading practice, performance, expression, fluency, speaking and active listening skills

This script is taken from chapter 21, pages 210-213, when Rory finds out that Abby applied and got into a private school . . . and never told her.

STAGING:

The narrator stands at the front of the stage. Rory and Abby are seated beside one another on the floor with backpacks open beside them and open notebooks on their laps. Students A and B stand just off-stage.

Rory Abby
X X

X Student A
X Student B

Narrator
X

NARRATOR: We will be recreating the hallway fight scene from *Free Throws, Friendship, and Other Things We Fouled Up* by Jenn Bishop. The characters are Rory March, the self-confident eighth grade transfer student and daughter of the UC basketball coach, read by _____; and Abby Allenbach, her awkward classmate, new friend, and daughter of Xavier's basketball coach, read by _____.

As the scene opens, the two girls are sitting by their lockers doing homework together at the end of the school day when some fellow students walk by.

STUDENT A: *(notices Abby)* Abby! I didn't know you were going to St. Mary's next year. Maybe we can carpool?

STUDENT B: *(tugs on her friend's shoulder to hurry her along)*

STUDENT A: *(waves goodbye)*

RORY: *(to Abby)* What's St. Mary's?

ABBY: *(startled)* Oh, Lord. *(hesitates)* I didn't want to tell you like this, I swear.

RORY: Tell me what?

ABBY: I'm, um—I'm transferring to St. Mary's in the fall. *(beat)* For ninth grade.

RORY: *(angrily)* Yeah, I got that. So, you're just straight up going to a totally different high school? When were you going to say something?

ABBY: I don't know. I know I needed to. Roar, there's so much more and I—

RORY: Oh, there's more? *(sarcastically)* Great. Fantastic. *(slams notebook shut)*

PAUSE

ABBY: Rory.

RORY: This is why you stopped caring about fixing things with our dads, isn't it?
Because you knew you were leaving?

ABBY: No, that's not it at all. Roar, you don't understand what it was like here before you came. I've never had the chance to be the new kid anywhere. Not like you. I've been stuck with the same people since kindergarten. I needed a fresh start.

RORY: A *fresh* start? Wait—you think being the new kid is fun? (*angrily shoves her notebook in her backpack*) Why'd you even raise your hand? You! You did that, my first day. You should've just kept it down like everyone else. (*getting more emotional*) Were you one foot out the door, the whole time?

PAUSE

ABBY: Honestly, if you'd just listen, Roar, you'd understand. It'll be different for me at St. Mary's. I can play basketball there.

RORY: You're going to play *basketball* for them?

ABBY: I know, it sounded crazy at first to me too, but it was Sister Louisa's idea and—

RORY: That's who you were just texting, wasn't it?

ABBY: Sister Louisa? No.

RORY: Well then, who?

ABBY: I was just about to tell you about Dontrell when—

RORY: Wait, who the heck is Dontrell? No. I don't even want to know right now. I've heard enough. You know, for someone who can't ever shut up, you sure have a lot of secrets. (*angrily puts her backpack on her shoulder*) Maybe my dad messed things up way back when, but this? This is all on you.

PAUSE

ABBY: *(scrunches up her face in frustration)* This is why I didn't tell you earlier. I knew you wouldn't get it. How could you? You're Rory March? You're so freaking perfect at everything. Basketball and school and—

PAUSE

RORY: That's how you see me? Some obnoxious overachieving know-it-all?
Thanks, Abs.

ABBY: No, Rory. Look—

RORY: You think all this comes easy to me? That I don't work my butt off to be good at basketball and get good grades? Maybe you'd be better at basketball and school too if you put in half as much work as I do. *(turns and walks off in a fury)*

ABBY: *(looks lost, confused, and hurt)*