

# John Knox: Reader's Theatre

## Length:

There are two options available:

1. Knox as a performance (approximately 45 min)
2. Knox as a Dinner Theatre (approximately 2 hrs) and needs a point person to organize the dinner.

## Cast of Characters:

Teacher

Narrator

Student #1

Student #2

Student #3

Student #4

Student #5

Student #6

John Knox

Patrick Hamilton

George Wishart

Adam Wallace

Walter Mill

Bagpiper or Singer

## Setting:

# Stage and Prop Suggestions

*Time in History*

*1513–1572AD*

Read the notes on Reader's Theatre that are provided with this script. (See accompaniments)

### **A Few Notes:**

Church history made accessible through theatre, the Teacher introduces you to John Knox and the Scottish Reformation. The audience participates, playing the role of student. The Teacher's focus is a fateful chapter in Protestant church/political history that is filled with both triumph and Christian martyrdom.

This show may be performed for any audience but for a more interactive family event consider pairing the Reader's Theatre with a family dinner. The hall becomes Clan Knox Schoolhouse and Cafeteria, with both food and costuming are themed accordingly. Encourage the attendees to dress Scottish! During the dinner, table groups may come up with their coat of arms and motto.

## Dinner Theatre:

A dinner invitation could look like this:

### The Teacher

Respectfully requests your presence for dinner and

"The story of JOHN KNOX"

at the Clan Knox Schoolhouse

on Saturday, November 7th, at 6pm

Scottish costuming from the year of our Lord 1550 is suggested

(Go ahead! Get creative!)

The menu will include Shepherds Pie, salad, bread and cheese

Hard cider for adults; soft cider for children

The doors to the schoolhouse will be open to all martyrs, militants, and missionaries

The topic of discussion:

FREEDOM

Presented as an interactive Reader's Theatre

written by Norma Bennett

*(Put this quote on the back of the invitation)*

Lord, give me Scotland or I die!

and/or

The Scriptures of God are my only foundation and substance in all matters of weight and importance.

## Setting:

Clan Knox Schoolhouse present day; and Scotland 1550AD

## Staging:

Before you stage this, read the notes provided by Norma Bennett on Reader's Theatre.

Set up a classroom on stage. You may change the number of students to suit your group and your stage space. Teacher and Narrator are on stage R, L, with stands and stools. The teacher encourages the students to look at history from a different perspective. At a certain point she gives

each a pair of plastic black-rimmed glasses with the eye glass knocked out. When the students put on the glasses, they are in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—when they take their glasses off, they are in their classroom. Students need to develop their own character and stage business.

Note about the Martyrs:

This is a very sobering enactment, but presented tastefully.

Open the event with the Bagpiper playing a traditional Scottish tune.

# John Knox: Script

BAGPIPER PLAYS (or singer sings) “Non Nobis” or “Amazing Grace” entering from the back, coming all the way to the stage, then exiting the same way. Knox stands DC, back to audience, arms raised overhead, sword held with both hands.

*(Non Nobis is a Latin invitational: “Not to us; Not to us; But to thy name be glory”)*

*(Scene opens with the teacher UL, narrator back to audience UR, Knox back to audience DC. Teacher rings a bell. Students wander in. Stands (podiums) and stools are set across the center of the stage for each student, split in the middle to make room for Knox. The students do not respond to, or appear to “see” both Knox and the Narrator.)*

Teacher: Take your seats, class. Quickly now. Don’t doddle (etc). Today's history class will focus on John Knox and the Scottish Reformation. *(students groan, some ad-lib back and forth with teacher)* Alright. That’s quite enough. Back to the lesson at hand... I hope by the end of this class you will acknowledge that Knox was a man of amazing courage, tenacity, wisdom, and energy.

Student #4: Was he anything like Braveheart?! Because if he wasn’t then...

Teacher: *(interrupts)*

Hmmm...I suppose you could make a connection there. But I would place him with the great heroes listed in Hebrews:

Narrator and Teacher: Enoch! Abraham! Isaac! Joseph! Moses! Rahab!

*(Narrator still has back to audience)*

Teacher: He could easily be compared to an Old Testament prophet.

Student #4: Sure, but Braveheart....

*(Knox, back still to the audience, shouts out the underlined words, with the teacher, pounding his heavy wooden stick on the floor each time and shrugging his shoulders.)*

Teacher: *(Interrupts)*

Moving on...often misunderstood, Knox has been accused of being a woman hater, of being arrogant, harsh, and even cruel.

He certainly was one of John Calvin's more rugged converts. But he was living in dangerous times that demanded vigorous faith. He was single minded in his devotion and had a burning sincerity.

All: A thunderous Scot! *(Knox bangs his stick 3X)*

Student #4: Yes! Braveheart!

Teacher: Unfortunately, still, today in Scotland, Knox gets blamed for any censorship or restriction of artistic freedoms.

*(Student #3 flies a poorly-made paper airplane toward the teacher....she picks it up...)*

What is this?

Student #3: It is my expression of artistic freedom.

Teacher: Hmm...Perhaps you haven't heard that we've already gone through the renaissance.