

Reader's Theatre: "A Native American Cinderella"

To Read Aloud in Class or to Perform

*Based on a Story Retold by Elaine L. Lindy
Adapted as a Play Script by P.J. Rittiger*

► **Note:**

If you read this play script aloud in class, skip the stage directions. The stage directions are the words shown inside the brackets and in italics:

[Like this.]

► **2nd Note:**

If you read this play script aloud in class, skip the descriptions of props, set changes and backdrops.

Characters in Order of Appearance:

NARRATOR or NARRATORS
BRAVES AND MAIDENS *(no speaking lines)*
STRONG WIND, THE INVISIBLE
STRONG WIND'S SISTER
FEATHER BRAID
WHITE FOX
CHIEF
OLDEST DAUGHTER
MIDDLE DAUGHTER
YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

ACT I

NARRATOR or NARRATORS:

(If one person is the NARRATOR, then that person introduces the play. If more than one person is a NARRATOR, then all of the NARRATORS together introduce the play.)

This play is "A Native American Cinderella," a folk tale from the Abenaki tribe of eastern Canada. It is brought to you by Whootie Owl.

On the shores of a wide bay near the Atlantic Ocean in what is now called Canada, there once lived a great Native American warrior. He was called Strong Wind, the invisible.

Strong Wind lived with his sister in a wigwam near the sea. For a long time, he did not marry. It was known that Strong Wind would marry the first maiden who could see him as he came home at night. Many tried, but Strong Wind used a clever trick to test the truthfulness of all who sought to win him.

*[The curtain opens on a scene in a Native American village. Several Native American BRAVES and MAIDENS are sitting in front of a forest backdrop and a few wigwams, pretending to weave blankets, grind corn in wooden bowls, string beaded jewelry and make arrows. (For more information on the **wigwam**, see page 15.)]*

[STRONG WIND and STRONG WIND'S SISTER enter and face the audience. STRONG WIND'S SISTER seats herself on the floor in front of a wigwam that she shares with her brother.]

STRONG WIND:

(Looks at the audience.)

I would like to have a family someday. I would like to have a wife and children of my own and a wigwam with a fire to warm us on cold nights.

STRONG WIND'S SISTER

A family might be nice but you already have a wigwam. Go build a fire in it if you're cold.

STRONG WIND:

No...that's not what I mean. I want a wife and a family.

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

There are a lot of nice maidens in our village. They all seem to like you, but you didn't like the ones I brought to you before

STRONG WIND:

(Turns to faces STRONG WIND'S SISTER, but has his side to the audience.)

BUT the woman I marry must be an HONEST woman!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

(Stands up. Walks to STRONG WIND with hands on her hips.)

How do you expect to figure out who is honest and who is not, brother?

STRONG WIND:

(Holds STRONG WIND'S SISTER'S shoulders, gently.)

You will help me!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

How can I help you?

[STRONG WIND'S SISTER pulls away from STRONG WIND. Walks across stage with arms crossed, keeping her back to him. STRONG WIND walks behind his sister.]

STRONG WIND:

By helping me to learn which maiden is honest and which one is not. You do want me to be happy, don't you?

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Of course I want you to be happy, but ...

STRONG WIND:

Come on! You trust me, don't you?

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Well, okay. Is this going to be hard?

STRONG WIND:

Not at all, sister. Every woman who walks by the wigwam will have to pass a test. I will stay right here but I will make myself invisible. You know I am the only brave in the world who can do that. Ask each maiden if she sees me and by her answer we will know if she is a truthful woman.

STRONG WIND:

(raises a fist and faces the audience)

I will marry the first honest woman who passes this wigwam!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Okay, I see what you mean. The first woman, huh? What if she can't cook?

STRONG WIND:

(keeps arm raised)

I'LL MARRY HER!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

What if she's can't mend your buckskins?

STRONG WIND:

(keeps arm raised)

I'LL MARRY HER!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

(looking off-stage)

Okay, brother, let's try this plan of yours. Look, here comes Feather Braid...

[FEATHER BRAID enters. She walks to center stage carrying a basket.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Hi, Feather Braid. What's going on?

FEATHER BRAID:

Not much! I was just coming from the beach. I was fishing this morning.
(FEATHER BRAID shows STRONG WIND'S SISTER the fish she has caught. The fish "smell." STRONG WIND'S SISTER holds her nose and turns away for a moment.)

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Nice catch. Hey, you like my brother, right?

FEATHER BRAID:

He's amazing, the way he can make himself invisible.
(sighs dreamily)
Is he around?

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

You tell me! You know, he has decided to marry the first girl who can see him, although he's invisible.

FEATHER BRAID:

(FEATHER BRAID looks around. It is clear that she does not see STRONG WIND even though he is standing right beside her. Finally she points ahead of her.)
I see him over there! He's wearing a blue bead in his hair! He is carrying a bear hide.

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

What is he using to draw his sled?

FEATHER BRAID:

A pole!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

R-I-G-H-T, Feather Braid. See you later.

[FEATHER BRAID exits. STRONG WIND grabs his head and sways as if he cannot believe what FEATHER BRAID just said.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Strong Wind, I don't know about this idea of yours, but let's try it again. Here comes White Fox.

[WHITE FOX comes up to STRONG WIND'S SISTER, smiling. She carries a basket filled with ears of corn.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Hey, White Fox! Good to see you! What's in the basket?

WHITE FOX:

I was just picking corn to grind into flour. Tomorrow I will bake it into bread for my family. How is your brother, the bravest warrior of our village?

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

He's fine. Did you know he's promised to marry the first maiden who sees him?

[STRONG WIND is dancing around WHITE FOX.]

WHITE FOX:

(turns around in a circle and points out toward the audience)

Yes, there he is with a fishing pole. You are truly lucky to have a brother like that.

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

What does he use to draw his sled?

WHITE FOX:

A great cord!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

So, that's where that cord went. Better luck next time, White Fox.

[WHITE FOX sulks and leaves the stage.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Well, I don't know, Strong Wind. This is not going so well . . .

STRONG WIND:

There must be one honest woman in this village and we are going to find her! Come on!

(Takes his sister by the hand and leads her off-stage.)

(End of Act 1)

ACT 2

[CHIEF, MIDDLE DAUGHTER and YOUNGEST DAUGHTER are seated around the entrance to a large wigwam. YOUNGEST DAUGHTER is dressed in rags. Her face is dirty. OLDEST DAUGHTER runs on-stage to the group. She is excited.]

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

Guess what, father? OOOHHHH you'll never guess! So, I'll have to tell you. Strong Wind is looking for a bride!
(twirls in a circle, excited)

MIDDLE DAUGHTER:

WHAT? How do you know such a thing, sister? Has he chosen yet? When will he choose? How will he choose?

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

I do not know, sister. I just heard this when I went to pick berries. Strong Wind and his sister were talking about it and they did not see me in the bushes! I could not hear how or when he will choose but we should go talk with Strong Wind's sister. She will know. We are the daughters of the great CHIEF! He must choose one of us!

MIDDLE DAUGHTER:

That's the best news I have heard all season! But sister, we cannot go in these plain garments. We must make ourselves beautiful. We should take food, to show that we can cook . . .

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

...and jewelry and baskets to show that we can make fine things...

CHIEF:

But neither of you CAN cook. My YOUNGEST DAUGHTER does the cooking in this wigwam or we'd all starve. She also makes the baskets and mends the clothes and makes the jewelry to trade.

[CHIEF walks over to YOUNGEST DAUGHTER.]

CHIEF:

Get up, girl! You look a mess. It is a disgrace on my name to have such a messy daughter. Look at your clothes...

MIDDLE DAUGHTER:

Father....father....she did that to herself earlier today.

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

She did, father. We saw her rubbing ashes over her face.

(giggles)

I think she likes to be dirty.

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

(wipes at her cheeks)

That's not true, father! They pushed me down. They rubbed ashes all over me!

CHIEF:

Do you expect me to believe such a silly story? What a thing to say about your sisters!

CHIEF:

(CHIEF turns toward OLDEST DAUGHTER and MIDDLE DAUGHTER.)

One of you should marry Strong Wind. He won't know that you cannot cook or mend clothing until after the wedding. By then it will be too late. He is such a great hunter that none of us will ever be hungry again. Go on, then. Make yourselves as pretty as you can.

(Turns back to YOUNGEST DAUGHTER.)

YOU...for making yourself look so dirty, you will mend your sister's clothes so they will look as nice as possible.

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

I want to seek Strong Wind, too.

[OLDEST DAUGHTER, MIDDLE DAUGHTER and CHIEF burst into laughter.

This part is ad libbed and all three characters say, for example, "Who? YOU?" "He'd never notice such a mess as you!" or "Look at what a mess you are!"

CHIEF:

(Claps his hands. All of his daughters are quiet.)

Go, now! Quickly, before he chooses someone else!

[The three girls exit. YOUNGEST DAUGHTER follows behind the two older sisters, who are excitedly talking about how they plan to win STRONG WIND.]

(End of Act 2)

ACT 3

[ACT 3 opens on the village scene again. Several BRAVES and MAIDENS sit before wigwams as in ACT I. STRONG WIND walks slowly to the center of the stage as if he is very tired. STRONG WIND'S SISTER follows him as if she is also very tired. She flops down at his feet.]

STRONG WIND:

(faces the audience)

I will not give up! There MUST be an honest woman in this village. If I have to, I will go to another village!

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

(groans)

Another village! But I am so tired...Your idea does not seem to be working. We've already been through all the maidens of the village! Haven't we?

[CHIEF, OLDEST DAUGHTER and MIDDLE DAUGHTER enter. They take turns gently nudging each other toward STRONG WIND and STRONG WIND'S SISTER.]

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

Yoo hoo! PPPSSSSSSsssssstttttt Could I speak with you, oh sister of my village?

[STRONG WIND'S SISTER gets up slowly to face OLDEST DAUGHTER. STRONG WIND steps back until he is behind his sister and off to the side.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

What's up, daughter of the Chief?

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

I understand that your handsome brother, who is the bravest of the brave, is looking for a wife. Could this wonderful news be true?

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Yes, it's true.

(Walks slowly around OLDEST DAUGHTER, admiring her dress and the beads woven in her hair.)

You look pretty nice today. Are you interested in being Strong Wind's wife?

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

Yes, I would make the best wife! I can sing and dance and I am a very good cook...Just ask my father how well I can cook!

[STRONG WIND'S SISTER looks at CHIEF, who nods his head.]

CHIEF:

She's not a bad singer, really.

[At this point, YOUNGEST DAUGHTER appears on the side of the stage. Her clothing is simple but clean. Her face has been washed.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

I'm sure that would please Strong Wind. Well, let me ask you this. Do you see him?

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

See who?

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Strong Wind, the Invisible, the fellow you want to marry. Do you see him anywhere?

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

(Puts a hand over her eyes and looks all around the stage and out toward the audience. She points to a spot in the rear of the room or auditorium.)

YES! I see him there! Look at how tired he is from hunting all day. Oh my! He's a little grimy, but, oh boy, he'd make a great husband.

[STRONG WIND'S SISTER taps OLDEST DAUGHTER'S shoulder.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

What is his shoulder strap made from?

OLDEST DAUGHTER:

Well, he is a little far away, you know. I can just tell that it's...it's...it is RAWHIDE! Yes, it is definitely RAWHIDE!

[STRONG WIND'S SISTER'S sighs. STRONG WIND silently laughs in the background.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Sorry, I guess we're not going to be related.

[MIDDLE DAUGHTER rushes forward. Gently, she moves her sister out of the way. She also shades her eyes from the sun and looks to the spot where OLDEST DAUGHTER said she could see Strong Wind. At the side of the stage, CHIEF places an arm around OLDEST DAUGHTER, who is weeping.]

MIDDLE DAUGHTER:

I CAN SEE HIM! I CAN SEE HIM! My older sister always was a little nearsighted. Oh, he's dragging a buffalo...yes, it's definitely a buffalo. He is so very strong to be able to do that all by himself. Let me see...his should strap is made from...WOVEN GRASSES. That's it! IT'S MADE OF WOVEN GRASSES!

[STRONG WIND'S SISTER starts to speak. She is interrupted by YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, who now steps to center stage.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Sorry! It isn't made of...

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

There isn't anyone coming over that hill!

CHIEF:

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER! Who told you that you could come here? HOW DARE YOU DISOBEY ME? YOU GET BACK TO THAT WIGWAM.

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

(STRONG WIND'S SISTER puts her arm around CHIEF'S YOUNGEST DAUGHTER. Both girls move to center stage. STRONG WIND'S SISTER looks at CHIEF.)

Hey, Chief, give the girl a break!

(turns to YOUNGEST DAUGHTER)

You know, I always thought that you were the nicest one in your family.

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

(to Chief)

Father, I mean you no disrespect. I cleaned the wigwam, ground the corn, cooked the food for dinner and mended all of your buckskins. I also helped my sisters prepare to meet Strong Wind, the Invisible, but none of you have seen him at all. Actually ...

(turns her head to the left and to the right)

... I don't see him anywhere.

(turns again and points directly at STRONG WIND)

Oh! Now, I see him. There he is!

[The BRAVES and MAIDENS who are still sitting in front of the wigwams say, "ooohhhh" and "aaaaahhhh."]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

(to the audience)

Oh! My brother must have made himself visible to her because she told the truth.

(to YOUNGEST DAUGHTER)

What does my brother use to pull his sled?

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

He pulls the sled with a rainbow.

[More "oooohhhhssss" and "aaaaahhhhhssss" from the other actors on the stage.]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

What is his bowstring made from?

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

His bowstring is the Milky Way. That's amazing!

[More "oooohhhhssss" and "aaaaahhhhhssss."]

STRONG WIND'S SISTER:

Because you were honest, I think you're going to be a bride before long. Welcome to the family!

[STRONG WIND takes YOUNGEST DAUGHTER by the hand and goes up to her two sisters. He waves his hand in front of them and they become trees. The actors lift their arms and twist their bodies until they sort of look like trees. STRONG WIND kneels before YOUNGEST DAUGHTER. More "oooohhhh's" and "aaaaahhhh's."]

STRONG WIND:

They will be aspen trees forevermore. No one will ever be cruel to you again.

(to YOUNGEST DAUGHTER)

Will you be my wife?

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:

For as long as the stars shine.

The End