

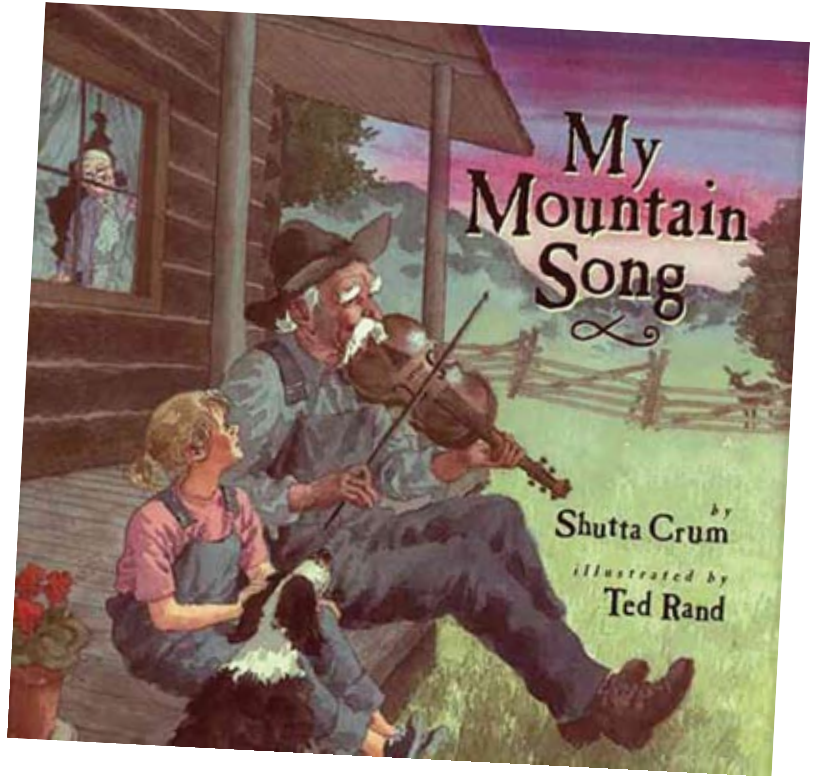
My Mountain Song

• Reader's Theater •

Grades
1-4

by | Toni Buzzeo

Read the book aloud to children first, so that they can enjoy the illustrations and become familiar with the story. Then, hand out a set of photocopied scripts to seven students. Ask the remaining children to be the audience. If you have plenty of time set aside, allow students to practice their parts individually or as a group until they are reading fluently. If time is limited, have performers face the audience and simply read their parts on the first run-through. Once all readers are comfortable with their parts, have a second reading with the opportunity to use props or costumes if desired, and to act out the story while reading.



Roles

Brenda Gail **Narrator One**
Gran Pap **Narrator Two**
Melvin **Narrator Three**
Big Ma

After Reading

Visit www.librarysparks.com for an interview with Shutta Crum about *My Mountain Song*. Also visit Shutta's Web site at www.shuttacrum.com.



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My Mountain Song

Narrator One: In the mountains down South, morning is musical.

Brenda Gail: Moses, the rooster, wakes us with his cry from the top of Munson's rock. My great-grandparents, Big Ma and Gran Pap, clink about the kitchen, whispering.

Narrator Two: The screen door swishes open and snaps closed.

Brenda Gail: I can hear the chickens in the yard greeting each other, cackling and scolding. Then I hear Gran Pap's voice.

Gran Pap: Brenda Gail! You up, sleepyhead?

Brenda Gail: Coming!

Narrator Three: She jumps out of bed, hugs her dog Duke, and pulls on her overalls.

Brenda Gail: This is my first summer here all by myself, without a little brother tagging along or a big brother telling me what to do.

Narrator One: They go to the henhouse, just Gran Pap, Duke, and Brenda Gail, to collect eggs.

Narrator Two: Gran Pap slides his knobby long hands down in the shallow nests, pulls out eggs, and gently lays each one down in the blue bowl Brenda Gail carries.

Narrator Three: Gran Pap sings under his breath.

Brenda Gail: What's that you're singing?

Gran Pap: Just my mountain song.

Brenda Gail: Your mountain song? What's that?

Gran Pap: Mine's a real old song. It's made out of bits and pieces, like one of your great-grandmother's quilts.

Narrator One: Gran Pap moves little Dolly off her nest.

Gran Pap: It's got good memories in it—like meeting her when she was a young girl, or drinking cold spring water after we've just brought it down the mountain. Everybody born in the mountains got a song inside them.

Brenda Gail: They do? What about Big Ma?

Gran Pap: Yup, she's got one.

Brenda Gail: What about me? I was born here in the mountains, too. What about *my* song?

Gran Pap: You got one, too. It's just waiting to come out. You'll find it by thinking about things you like about the mountains and putting them all together.

Narrator Two: Brenda Gail looks down at the blue bowl. She and Gran Pap have nine eggs so far.

Narrator Three: Gran Pap takes an egg out from under Morning Glory, Big Ma's favorite hen.

Brenda Gail: Can I put gathering eggs with you and Duke in my song?

Gran Pap: I'd like that a lot.

Brenda Gail: I can put Morning Glory in, too. She's the prettiest hen and the best mama.

Gran Pap: I expect she'd be pleased.

Narrator One: Gran Pap tips his hat to Brenda Gail and she giggles.

Narrator Two: Gran Pap always treats Morning Glory like a lady.

Brenda Gail: Now my pesky cousin Melvin comes jumping over the creek that flows through the bottom and starts up the path.

Melvin: *(Yell.)* Hey, Shuck Beans! Pap!

Brenda Gail: *(Shout.)* My name ain't Shuck Beans! Pap, I don't have to put Melvin in my mountain song, do I?

Gran Pap: You don't have to put anything in you don't want in.

Narrator Three: Melvin spends most of his time at Gran Pap's house when anyone's visiting.

Narrator One: Brenda Gail knew she'd have to put up with him this summer. But she was hoping to have Big Ma and Gran Pap to herself at least for her first whole day.

Melvin: Hey there, Dog Dust.

Brenda Gail: If Gran Pap hadn't been right there, I'd have whumped Melvin for sure—even if he is bigger than me!

Narrator Two: Melvin stops to scratch the dog's head.

Brenda Gail: My dog's name is *Duke*.

Narrator Three: Brenda Gail clenches her teeth and heads for the house.

Narrator One: Big Ma's got potatoes and biscuits and gravy ready. There is sliced tomatoes, homemade jam, and cold fresh milk, too.

Brenda Gail: I put the bowl of eggs down on the counter, wash my hands, and sit at the table.

Narrator Two: Great Gran Pap and Melvin are right behind her.

Brenda Gail: I wiggle my bare toes back and forth in Duke's warm fur and think about my mountain song.

Narrator Three: She tugs at Gran Pap's shirt and he leans over.

Brenda Gail: *(Whisper.)* I think I'll put Big Ma cooking up breakfast in my song.

Gran Pap: *(Whisper.)* She's a-cooking in mine, too!

Narrator One: Later, Melvin and Brenda Gail go down to the bottom with Gran Pap to dig early potatoes.

Narrator Two: Gran Pap lifts the mounded soil with his garden fork.

Narrator Three: Then Melvin and Brenda Gail come along behind him and dig in with their hands, racing to see who can uncover the most.

Brenda Gail and Melvin: We can hear Gran Pap's high singing voice as he works his way toward the far end of the potato patch.

Melvin: What's Pap singing?

Narrator One: Brenda Gail sits up and listens for a moment. She smiles.

Brenda Gail: It's just a song.

Melvin: I know a song.

Narrator Two: Melvin jumps up and starts caterwauling.

Melvin: *I been workin' on the railroad—*

Brenda Gail: *(Shout.)* It ain't that kind of song!

Narrator Three: Melvin stops and frowns at Brenda Gail. She rolls her eyes at him.

Brenda Gail: It's a special song.

Melvin: What do you mean, a special song?

Brenda Gail: If you must know, it's Gran Pap's own song about special things, like the mountains and people he likes and such. He told me all about it himself. He says Big Ma's got one, also. And I'm going to have one.

Melvin: I got one too.

Brenda Gail: No, you don't.

Melvin: Yes, I do!

Brenda Gail: No, you don't.

Melvin: Yes, I do!

Brenda Gail: No, you don't. 'Cause I just now told you about them. So there!

Melvin: I bet any song you make up will be too stupid to sing.

Brenda Gail: Oh yeah? You know something? You're always spoiling everything by hanging around!

Melvin: Well, I ain't *ever* putting you, or that pile of dog dust, in any song of mine!

Narrator One: Melvin backs up and kicks dirt at Brenda Gail.

Brenda Gail: *(Yell.)* That's fine with me! And quit calling him *dog dust*—his name is Duke.

Narrator Two: As Melvin turns and stalks away, Brenda Gail grabs a handful of dirt and stones and throws them at his back.

Narrator Three: Just then, Morning Glory comes pecking around the end of the potato patch—and right into the shower of stones. Suddenly she's lying on her side.

Brenda Gail: *(Scream.)* Oh, no! Oh, no, no!

Narrator One: Gran Pap comes in a hurry, taking big leaps over the garden rows.

Brenda Gail: *(Cry.)* Morning Glory!

Narrator Two: She's staggering and flopping around, trying to get back up, and falling back down.

Brenda Gail: Oh, Morning Glory. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you!

Narrator Three: Gran Pap bends down and quickly examines her.

Brenda Gail: Oh, Gran Pap! I didn't mean to hurt her, Pap!

Narrator One: Brenda Gail can hardly see for the tears washing down her face.

Gran Pap: I know. I know.

Narrator Two: Brenda Gail buries her face in her hands.

Brenda Gail: I can't look! How hurt is she?

Melvin: (*Whispers.*) Is she dead? Big Ma's gonna go plumb crazy.

Narrator Three: That makes Brenda Gail feel worse. She looks up as Gran Pap carefully lifts Morning Glory in his big hands.

Gran Pap: I think she's gonna be all right. We'll see.

Brenda Gail and Melvin: We follow Gran Pap back to the house. Big Ma's out on the porch.

Big Ma: (*Groan.*) Mercy!

Narrator One: She clutches at her apron.

Big Ma: What happened to Morning Glory?

Narrator Two: No one answers Big Ma, but they all stand looking at Brenda Gail.

Narrator Three: Finally, Gran Pap pipes up.

Gran Pap: Now don't take on so, Jennie Belle. Morning Glory's gonna be fine. You got your clothes basket right handy?

Narrator One: When Big Ma returns with the wicker basket, Gran Pap lays Morning Glory in it.

Gran Pap: Look. I think she's coming around.

Narrator Two: Big Ma leans over to run the tip of her finger along the side of Morning Glory's head.

Big Ma: (*Whisper.*) You poor little thing.

Narrator Three: Then she straightens up.

Big Ma: What happened?

Narrator One: Brenda Gail is almost afraid to look at Big Ma, but she does.

Brenda Gail: I'm sorry.

Narrator Two: She wipes her arm across her eyes and nose.

Brenda Gail: I was throwing rocks at Melvin.

Narrator Three: Brenda Gail hangs her head.

Brenda Gail: I didn't mean to hit Morning Glory.

Narrator One: Big Ma takes a good hold of Brenda Gail's chin and tilts her head up.

Big Ma: I know you didn't mean to hurt her.

Narrator Two: She looks Brenda Gail right in the eye.

Big Ma: But you know better than to throw rocks.

Brenda Gail: Yes'm.

Big Ma: Go on in and sit in the corner. I don't want to set eyes on you til supper. You hear?

Brenda Gail: Yes'm.

Big Ma: And you, young man, you git on and help your gran pap with his chores.

Narrator Three: Brenda Gail sits in the front room with Duke. She stares at the linoleum and thinks about how Morning Glory's going to be in her song.

Brenda Gail: So she's *gotta* be all right! I have Morning Glory, and Gran Pap collecting eggs, and Big Ma cooking, and Duke to put in my song.

Narrator One: She traces her finger around and around the yellow flowers on the floor.

Narrator Two: And then a little bit of song comes to her, and she closes her eyes and starts to sing.

Narrator Three: After a while, Melvin brings her a sandwich.

Melvin: Here. Big Ma said to bring you some lunch. I made it myself.

Narrator One: She lifts the top slice of bread and peeks in to be sure it's OK to eat.

Narrator Two: He's got jam all around his mouth.

Melvin: It's just butter and Big Ma's strawberry jam.

Narrator Three: Brenda Gail takes a big bite.

Brenda Gail: Thanks.

Melvin: Morning Glory's been walking around a little.

Brenda Gail: That's good.

Melvin: Gran Pap says she got stunned a bit.

Narrator One: He clears his throat.

Melvin: And he said I had to apologize for kicking dirt at you. Besides, you were right. I don't have my song yet. Gran Pap says I have to make it up as I go along. So ...

Brenda Gail: So?

Melvin: So, I was thinking about putting you and Dog Dust—um, your dog—in my song. That is, if it's all right with you.

Narrator Two: Brenda Gail can hardly believe it. Melvin is actually trying to be nice!

Brenda Gail: His name's *not* Dog Dust.

Narrator Three: Melvin bows low to Duke.

Melvin: His Highness, the *Royal Duke* of Banner Mountain! (*Laugh.*) I know. We can make him a crown.

Brenda Gail: Yeah!

Narrator One: Brenda Gail thinks maybe it won't be *so* bad to have Melvin around.

Brenda Gail: I'm sorry, too. About throwing rocks at you.

Melvin: What about your song, Shuck Beans? Am I in it?

Brenda Gail: Maybe. But my name ain't Shuck Beans.

Melvin: Oh, all right, Miss Brenda Gail Munson.

Narrator Two: Then he quickly upends, stands on his hands, and crashes to the floor.

Narrator Three: That's when Duke jumps up and starts licking his face. His Royal Highness likes Big Ma's jam, too!

Brenda Gail, Gran Pap, and Big Ma: After supper, we all go out on the long front porch to watch Melvin run home.

Brenda Gail: I can hear Big Ma singing softly to herself. I try to catch some of her song. She shakes her head and smiles.

Big Ma: That Melvin. He's just like Gran Pap when he was a boy.

Brenda Gail: He is?

Narrator One: Brenda Gail looks at Gran Pap. He winks at her.

Brenda Gail: Big Ma, tomorrow can we go up the mountain to get spring water?

Big Ma: Just me and you? No boys?

Brenda Gail: No boys.

Narrator Two: Gran Pap laughs out loud.

Big Ma: I can't wait. I've always loved summer here in the mountains.

Brenda Gail: Me, too!

Narrator Three: Brenda Gail knows that this exact moment will be in her song.

Narrator One: Later, raindrops plip-plop lightly on the tin roof.

Gran Pap: Summer rain.

Narrator Two: All around them is the sweet-smelling dark.

Brenda Gail: Gran Pap, how do I get a good smell into my song?

Narrator Three: Gran Pap rocks in the old applewood rocker and scratches his head for a bit.

Gran Pap: Now that's something I've been studying on for years, Brenda Gail. But I haven't rightly figured it out. If you'll help me work on it, we can put it in both our songs.

Brenda Gail: I will!

Brenda Gail, Gran Pap, and Big Ma: And then we turn to the summer night and breathe in deep.